

Outcomes Paper

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Introduction

The Center for Leadership and Service (CLS) at the University of Florida has been through many changes, re-structuring, and relocations since its inception. It began as a student organization G.I.V.E (Gators Involved in Volunteer Endeavors) in 1992, then served as an umbrella program through Student Activities in 1998 where it was known as TreeHouse, to eventually becoming an Office for Community Service in 2000, and finally in 2005 becoming what it is known as today. This office taught me many things as a student participant, student leader, and also an employee. At the time I couldn't articulate what it was that I was learning, now I am able to question if that was a reflection on the intentionality of the office back then, but my Student Affairs program has given me more than enough vocabulary to engage in scholarly conversations about the operations of the office now. This past weekend was now my fourth time having returned to UF since commencing my program at Penn State, and each time I return, the conversations I am able to engage in with my staff become even more educational. For the purposes of this paper, I wanted to search for what I felt I gained throughout my time interacting with this office and put a word to it. That task was a bit difficult given that the CLS has many goals for its students, but conversations with my Director, Dr. Tracey Reeves, cleared up any doubts I might have had in regard to my focus for this assignment.

The educational/institutional outcome chose to explore in this paper is Character Development, and I would say more specifically as a result of civic engagement. Many colleges and universities aim to foster this outcome but I chose to examine how my Center at the University of Florida works toward achieving this goal. I chose character development because I view it as an all encompassing term, able to describe the qualities that the CLS aims to foster for its students throughout the time they spend as members and beneficiaries of the office. Through

student organizations, programs, and office standards, the CLS aims to create socially responsible leaders, strong in character, and ready to serve their global community. In this paper, I will discuss how the mission of the office relates to the development of character, what programs and services the office provides to ensure that development, how the CLS assesses whether or not it is meeting the outcome, and finally the leadership model intentionally utilized by the Division of Student Affairs.

Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Center for Leadership and Service reads: “The mission of the Center for Leadership and Service is to engage students and cultivate opportunities for personal and academic achievement to prepare students to become leaders in the service of the global community.”

There are a few key words I want to highlight in the mission statement: personal, academic, and global. For the CLS and Division of Student Affairs ensuring the intentional integration of all programming and services with the mission statement has been of high priority recently. It’s no surprise to me that these three words are included in the office statement as they strongly relate back to the overall desired outcomes of the office as well as the institution as a whole. Although it may not be directly quoted in the mission, I believe it is apparent that the CLS strives to develop the individual person holistically. Summed up by “personal and academic” the office seeks to develop character as a result of focusing on the growth of all aspects of a person and their identities.

Beginning from the end with “service to the global community,” UF has had a very strong push to create “Global Gators”, in that gaining an education abroad is now seen as an

essential part of the full collegiate experience for Florida students. But more than just studying abroad, UF wants its students to understand what it means to be a global citizen, and that desire has transcended to all departments. Since this push, we have seen the need for one of the CLS' programs rise dramatically. The CLS houses an alternative break program known as FAB or Florida Alternative Breaks. This organization has been sending students internationally (and also domestically) for years before this push; gaining a global perspective not only educationally but also experientially is very important to becoming a global citizen and the CLS recognized that, assessed the needs, and has widened the scope of international services being provided. Before embarking on a service trip internationally to serve as a "global citizen" however, we expect that our students be educated on the issues they plan to work with; this incorporates another aspect of the mission, education.

The CLS aims to have all students be educated advocates for social change, and thus they are very intentional in ensuring programming around education as well as collaborating with professors and departments is a constant. The student organization, Lead101, works solely around educating the UF community about the CLS and the wide variety of opportunities available for service and service-learning in the Gainesville area. In regard to education, the organization has two focuses, one is delivering presentations for students either in their classes or in their respective organizational meetings, and the other is working with professors and educational departments. Professors can either seek out the CLS to assist in the incorporation of service-learning into their curriculums, or the CLS identifies courses and professors that they feel would benefit from adding a service-learning component to their classroom. With the variety of available locations around Gainesville, there are organizations of all genres that need assistance and can benefit from classroom/professor cooperation. The CLS benefits simply by exposure but

also the satisfaction that comes from making connections between civic partnerships to enhance educational outcomes. To ensure that the relationship remains successful, CLS representatives serve as mediators between both entities to continuously examine that needs are being met on both sides, and that ultimately the students are gaining knowledge, as assessed by reflections and qualitative analyses which will be discussed later in the paper.

The final piece of the mission is personal achievement. It is not necessary for an individual to have a personal desire for service-learning in order to benefit from the experience; it can be developed as a result of. Of course the personal motivation for engaging and serving in one's community could enhance the experience, but good will come either way. It is also important to remember that even if someone has a great desire to help others, that doesn't necessarily mean that it will be easy or even possible. If advocates for the CLS do a good job of relaying the wide variety of opportunities available to students, and the ways in which these experiences can enhance and complement one's educational/academic focus, recruiting students won't be an issue, the issue will be where to house everyone. The mission statement discusses cultivating opportunities for this achievement and also preparation for living in the global community, everyone can benefit personally in some way by engaging in service and service-learning, they only need to be made aware of the opportunities.

The mission statement is a constant reference point for assessing that the work being done within the office, and the holistic focus of developing individuals, will ultimately lead to growth in character. The CLS aims to channel this growth towards engagement and servitude in a global context, fortunately the staff is very educated, and does a great job of ensuring that the mission statement is being complemented by the programs the CLS oversees, which will be explored in more depth in the next section of this paper.

Programs

The CLS' student organizations provide educational programs, workshops, conferences, community service and service learning opportunities, and leadership development, for its students; it provides and encourages reciprocal relationships with community members and community organizations and provides counsel for those seeking community opportunities; and the office serves as a resource and trainer for faculty and staff on topics of service, service-learning, and leadership. There are a multitude of student organizations: After School Gators, Florida Alternative Breaks, Gator Non-Profit Professionals, GatorTeen Mentors, and Service Ambassadors, to name a few, each focused on a variety populations and issues. There are leadership retreats such as Gatorship and LeaderShape each incorporating differing social justice issues, while Lead101 and the Women's Leadership Council offer leadership retreats and conferences focusing on specific areas. And there are smaller scale opportunities to provide service to others such as Wish upon a Star, Projects for Peace, and Gator Plunge, almost all of these of which are housed and run by student advocates of the Center for Leadership and Service.

It doesn't matter whether you are a returning Director for a student organization, a first-year student getting acquainted with the university and the center, or a community partner unaffiliated with student life but working in the area and wanting to reach out to students, the Center for Leadership and Service aims to provide programming that will aid in your personal development and enhance your understanding of the world around you. The Center for Leadership and Service through their programs prepares individuals to become productive citizens and assume roles of leadership and service in a culturally diverse society; culturally diverse" not only revolving around issues of race/ethnicity but also conversations around other

differences such as in sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, political status, etc. The center aims to foster civic engagement by students' learning and their taking action in the community. The CLS was founded on the idea of integrating leadership education and programs; community service and service learning; and community engagement, all of this ultimately with the hope that the students would then make changes in their own communities.

The programs available for students can be imagined almost as a hierarchical ladder. It is the hope of the staff that students will be able to move upward within the organizational structure of the CLS. The one-day programs although bringing good to the community on their own right, serve as a great recruitment tool for future members of the CLS' student organizations by creating opportunities for exposure. Programs such as GatorPlunge, a one-day service event, bring in students by the thousands. The hope is that as a result of the gained exposure, students will develop a curiosity towards the office and seek out other opportunities that may more closely correlate with their own personal interests. Once students move from the "community-service" to "service-learning" stages, students become more committed and invested in not only their student group but the Center as a whole. Hopefully this passion transcends the boundaries of their own organization and moves onto supporting others' as well as continuing up the leadership and service ladder to eventually gain ownership of their UF community and beyond.

After the service-learning phase, students may or may not seek out further opportunities for their development. If students do desire to continue on there are many leadership opportunities available within the CLS, one main highlight being Gatorship. Gatorship is a two-day retreat in conjunction with Multicultural and Diversity Affairs and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Ally Office. This retreat focuses on personal reflection, understanding one's own lens, what it means to be an advocate for understanding difference, and ultimately

personal growth and development. All of these opportunities, programs, services, and events work towards the fundamental goal of developing one's on character. The experiences gained, the opportunities utilized, all culminate in a developmental process that hopefully continues even after the conclusion of their collegiate career. But, as a center, they can do more than just hope; they are able to make programs better. Taking feedback from program to program, year to year, and student to student, the office does its best to ensure that each and every program exceeds its predecessor. This is measured in different formats, but all under the umbrella of assessment; how the CLS assesses its programs will be covered in the next section.

Assessment

How do you know if the outcomes, goals, desires, etc. you have for a program are being met? The CLS is very intentional with the assessments they do, as well as when and how they do them. To begin the assessment piece of this paper, I think it is important to first note that the variety of structural changes the CLS has undergone in the last few years alone (none of which have been due to budget cuts or restructuring financially) displays assessment on the part of the institution as well as the office for attempting to meet the growing needs of the student body. The CLS has only gotten bigger in the last few years, moving from no to minimal to a full staff and even having additional funding to hire AmeriCorps volunteers, as well as growing in physical space, relocating to new areas and expanding the space for more offices. The privilege of stability, due to having a full staff, allows programming and the overseeing of students to be much more efficient and it also provides the opportunity to take closer looks at the pre and the post pieces of programming, that is the pre-planning and post-assessment. One thing the office

focuses heavily on is the training program for its Student Directors, the main component being working with learning outcomes.

The staff of the CLS places a great deal of emphasis on developing learning outcomes for each program, presentation, student organization, its leaders, conferences and so forth. However, they have been reevaluating how they create their learning outcomes for each of the dimensions previously listed. The consistency and emphasis from program to program is lacking. Some areas have learning outcomes that speak volumes as to the amount of time that has been spent on them, while others are created more out of necessity and being done directly before a program. In speaking with the Director for the CLS however, she noted that the intentionality behind the learning outcomes has been of recent discussion. The office staff recognizes the importance of learning outcomes, and because of that recognition, the staff wants to dedicate more time solely to this areas. Tracey mentioned that for the conference, Florida Leadership Institute (FLI), that the past two years they have developed learning outcomes after they have received the content of the presentations, but still before the conference itself. They have utilized the material and designed around the presenters. They have decided that the ‘after thought’ outcomes were not as successful as they wanted it to be, and would also like to see more intentionality behind the conference as a whole, thus, as of this year, they developed learning outcomes from the onset, and then asked for presentation materials to be developed around those outcomes. One advantage of having a large office staff is that when they focus on changing something, it gets done quickly. As part of their Strategic Plan, a renewed concentration is assessing learning outcomes to ensure that they are not just filling space.

Another aspect the CLS stresses very heavily on is personal reflection as a form of assessment. When viewing UF’s theoretical model that is utilized across the Division of Student

Affairs, one can see the physical presence of reflection in the model and how heavily it weighs within all other sections. Reflection is done in almost every program, every student organization, every group, every conference, and so forth. When students process externally, staff uses that as a time to collect qualitative data from individual students. But the staff also uses traditional methods of qualitative and quantitative assessment. This is done more so with the larger-scale events and/or the one day programming. Pre and post assessments are also done with participants of almost all student organizations to see how they've grown as leaders and as individuals as a result of their roles.

And finally, an assessment of the theoretical model's value within the office was made of high priority in 2008. The model can be utilized as a form of assessment simply by using it as a point of reference. This is explored in greater depth in the next section.

Model of Research

In 2008 a committee representing all areas of the Division of Student Affairs was charged with finding or developing a model that would be practical and representative of all of its functional areas. After debating for weeks, the committee agreed to utilize the Social Change Model of Leadership Development. The model was created in 1993 by the Higher Education Research Institute of UCLA; its intention was to focus on and enhance student learning and also facilitate positive social change. (www.ucla.edu) The model was lacking however for the University of Florida, so the committee changed, created, and adapted a new version of the model with which they could identify more strongly.

Each unit within the Division of Student Affairs follows this model and adapts their programs, outcomes, and strategic plans around it. The model has three main sections:

individual, group, and community. As you move outward the word 'reflection' is outlined a few times over, displaying the emphasis the Division wanted to place on reflection. From there each section has a subsection, or sub-goal ranging from self-awareness as individuals to social responsibility as part of the community. The circular nature of the model in itself is a display of the continuous personal re-evaluation that the administrators desire for their students. You don't simply accomplish the goals of each section and move on, you are continuously moving through the circle at various stages in your development, and the more you grow, the more differently you are able to see each section.

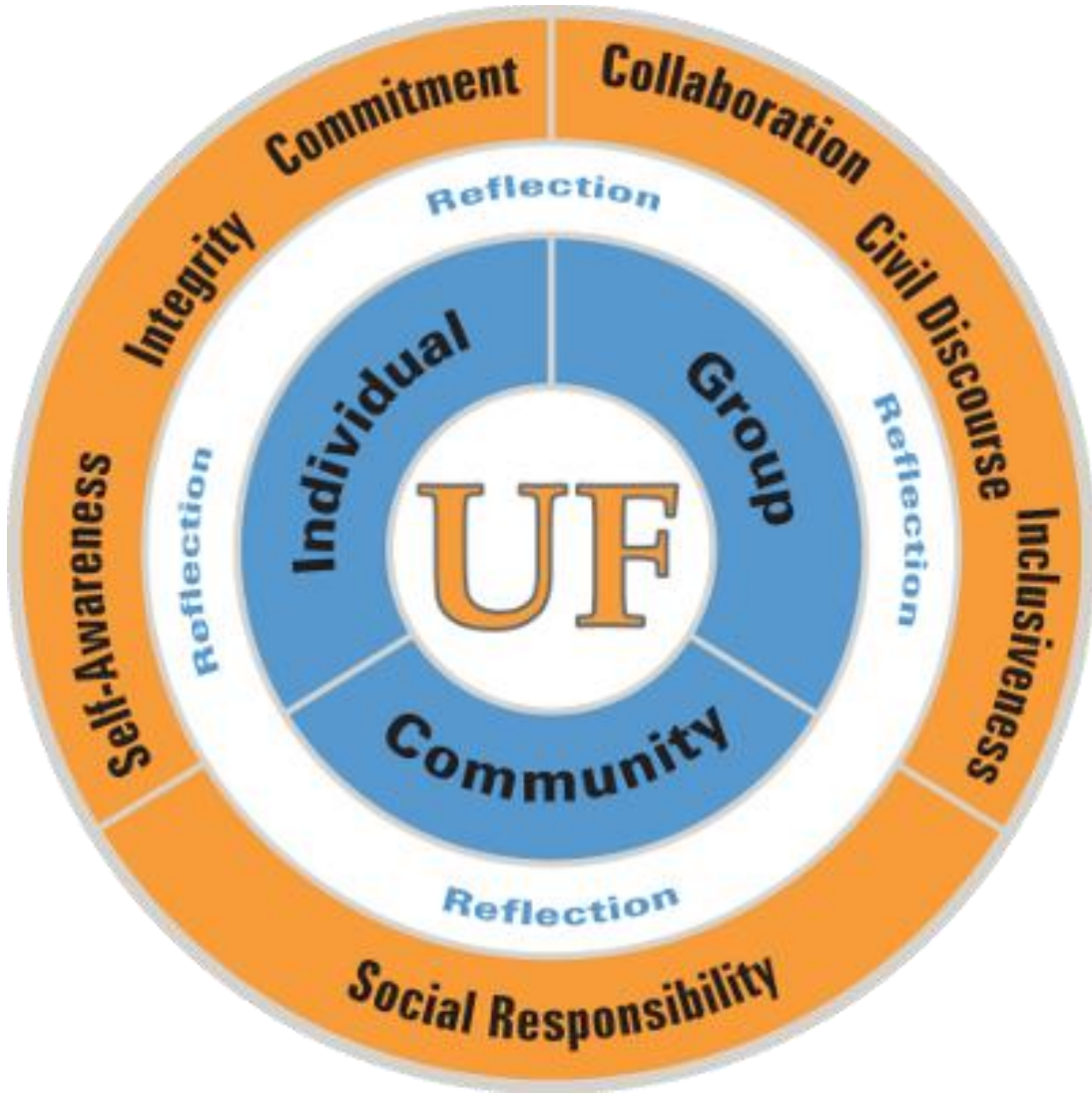
In speaking with Tracy, she believes the office is very intentional about utilizing and following the model. An explanation of the model is also included in the presentation delivered by Lead101 to students and faculty about the CLS and the Division of Student Affairs. I have noticed if only through informal observation how many more students understand what our model is and what it means. During my time there I knew we had a theoretical model and what it stated, but I didn't really understand what it meant. I believe that the students are getting so much more out of their experience as a result of simply understanding the office and all the components of their learning, better. A picture of the model is attached.

Conclusion

In this paper I have focused on the educational/institutional outcome of character development and how the Center for Leadership and Service functions to meet that specific outcome. Although there may be differences in terminology for achieving the same things, the CLS does a great job of continuously being intentional about the work they do. We explored the mission statement and how that directly relates to the outcome, the programs and services

offered by the CLS and how character development comes from them, we explored how the office assesses whether or not they are successful in meeting their goals as they relate to the outcome, and finally we discussed how the Social Change Model of Leadership Development works to tie in the educational outcomes the office hopes to achieve. I hope this has proven to be educational for the reader, and that a greater understanding for the operation of the Center for Leadership and Service at the University of Florida has come through.

Appendix I



References:

(Reeves, T. PhD., personal communication, October 8, 2010)

www.leadershipandservice.ufl.edu

UCLA.EDU