

- "April 22, 2011"

Posted by gavazzi.1

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*"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."* (Mahatma Gandhi)

While I do not want to get too far ahead of things, I wanted to let everyone know that there are some fairly exciting conversations beginning to happen on our campus around service learning. What exactly is service learning, some of you might ask. According to the OSU Service Learning Initiative website ( <http://service-learning.osu.edu> ), service learning "is a form of experiential education characterized by student participation in an organized service activity that is connected to specific learning outcomes, meets identified community needs, and provides structured time for student reflection and connection of the service experience to learning."

There have been a number of service learning initiatives on the OSU Mansfield campus in years past. One such recent example is the "Mission Possible" project that Terri Bucci headed up in order to provide reading and math tutoring assistance to the Culliver Reading Center here in Mansfield. With other campus partners on this project that included Kris Moloney and Ed Wachtel, students who were involved in coursework (taught in both the Math and Ed T&L programs) became participants in this very worthwhile service learning project.

What's new about the most recent conversations is that they revolve around taking our service learning opportunities to another level through linkages to an expanded set of four-year degrees offered on our campus, and possibly to student housing as well. Think for a moment how the student experience at the OSU Mansfield campus might look if we had curricula that offered active involvement with youth, families, schools, and communities throughout Richland County. Now ponder how that experience might be shaped by courses that met general education requirements while concurrently meeting vital community needs. And finally, imagine that those students participating in such programming might have the opportunity to "live" the connection between their educational pursuits and their life aspirations while residing in the very community they are serving.

Are any of these ideas etched in stone right now? Not at all... in fact, it's more like sketches on a cocktail napkin. However, you will be asked to participate in conversations about these ideas in the days and weeks ahead. And I especially will want to hear from anyone who has been involved (or would be interested in future involvement) in service learning efforts. In the meantime, speaking of cocktail napkins, please take the time to enjoy the weekend with family and friends!

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