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Service-Learning and Civic Engagement: A Return to our Roots

Deena Sue Fuller

One of the most dramatic changes in higher education during the last 2 decades is the proliferation of service learning as part of the academic curriculum. Service learning is defined as a

course-based, credit bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (Bringle and Hatcher 1995, 112)

Successful service-learning classes establish reciprocal relationships between the campus and community, with each party giving and benefiting. Accordingly, the service activities must be relevant to both the educational goals of the course and the needs and issues of communities.

Tennessee State University (TSU), like many other Historically Black Universities (HBCUs), was built on a tradition of service in and with the local community, with students actively involved in solving community problems and meeting community needs. Especially during the Civil Rights Movement, HBCUs and black churches provided leadership by mobilizing volunteers, raising money, and participating in demonstrations. In 1960, students from Tennessee State University, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary led the movement to desegregate downtown Nashville, TN. For three months, the students organized sit-ins and other non-violent protests against unfair practices. The students' principles of direct nonviolent protest and consistent rules of conduct became models for later protests in the South. As a direct result of the students' persistent efforts, on May 10, 1960, Nashville became the first major city to begin desegregating its public facilities (Sumner, 1995, 102-113). During that

period, service and civic engagement were central to the mission of TSU, making us a valuable resource in our local community.

In the wake of desegregation, many HBCUs, including TSU, focused attention and funding on research and teaching missions in order to be competitive with white institutions. As TSU became more comprehensive, expanding the academic curriculum and building challenging research agendas, active community engagement was often relegated to cooperative extension, therefore receiving less attention as a university-wide endeavor. It wasn't that TSU stopped working with our community; TSU just assumed that service was part of its mission, so work with the community was not documented. Today, however, TSU sees a revival of the focus on civic engagement and community problem solving, moving faculty, staff, administrators, and students out of the "ivory tower" mentality to collaborate with communities, government, and non-profit and corporate structures to create meaningful learning opportunities for students while meeting community needs.

Although TSU has always had a rich tradition of service, the formal and intentional integration of service into the curriculum began in 2004-05 when Dr. Sue Fuller, professor of Educational Psychology, proposed that the University establish a Service-Learning and Civic Engagement initiative. She developed a strategic plan aligned with both the TSU and Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) Strategic Plans, led faculty development activities, and wrote grants to support the initiatives. Faculty across all disciplines volunteered to be part of the Service-Learning Task Force to develop service-learning initiatives. By the spring of 2006, Dr. Fuller had successfully secured two Housing and Urban Development Office of University Partnerships (HUD OUP) grants worth over \$950,000 to implement community projects, one in the North Nashville community surrounding the campus and one to support Hurricane Katrina recovery in New Orleans. In 2006 the Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement (CSLCE) was formally approved by the TBR. The Center was modeled after similar centers at other institutions and incorporated "best practices" in service-learning. From a vision of one faculty member, the Center for Service-Learning and

Civic Engagement has become a force for strategic and intentional community engagement at TSU.

In 2012, TSU is reinvigorating service traditions by integrating civic engagement initiatives into the academic curriculum across a wide variety of disciplines. Students now have multiple service opportunities, such as tutoring and mentoring in high needs schools; working on fund-raising initiatives for local non-profits; developing health promotion programs in low income communities; teaching community members about environmental issues that could improve their quality of life; developing business and marketing plans; teaching computer skills; developing needs assessments; providing community garden space; and participating in healthy lifestyle programs in local schools. Every field of study can include service opportunities that help students connect theory with practice. What better way to learn how to solve the world's problems than to actually be engaged in addressing real-world problems as a part of the college curriculum! TSU is intentionally integrating service and civic engagement into academic programs to not only better prepare students for productive careers, but also to inspire them to live lives of purpose. Through service-learning opportunities, TSU is equipping students to apply academic knowledge and skills to the improvement of our neighborhoods, our cities, and the world.

The practice of service-learning and engaged scholarship has the potential to leverage the intellectual assets of TSU to identify and address pressing social issues in a collaborative fashion with community partners. Together, service-learning and engaged scholarship, as parts of an overall civic engagement initiative, integrate TSU's three educational missions of teaching, research, and service and reinforce our theme, "Enter to learn. Go forth to serve." Undergraduate as well as graduate students benefit from participation in well-structured and academically rigorous service-learning and engaged scholarship opportunities. The strategic integration of high quality service-learning experiences into the curriculum can promote greater cognitive complexity, make learning more relevant to today's social issues, and foster the civic skills and inclinations necessary for future leaders. Working with

communities to address local and broader problems (e.g., struggling P-12 schools, inadequate health care, and urban poverty) holds enormous promise for creating institutional alignment and improved image.

At TSU the Center for Service-learning and Civic Engagement serves a three-fold role as a public service, research, and instructional support unit. Its primary purpose is to promote service learning and civic engagement; however, embedded in the service is applied research and instructional pedagogy. The Center's identity is one of faculty transforming curriculum to include direct service and "research as service" to improve student learning and scholarship. The Center staff provide education, training, technical assistance, support, and inspiration to TSU administrators, faculty, and students because they are the ones whose work make us a truly community-engaged university.

One of the primary functions of the Center is to connect campus and community resources to create diverse learning experiences and to serve community needs. Its programs integrate the academic, service, and reflection components of service learning by providing resources --- including training and technical assistance--to students, faculty and community. In doing this, the Center advances TSU's goals of quality teaching, research, and service.

In addition to service-learning, there are many terms that describe universities' work with communities; TSU has approved the following definitions to guide our discussions and work: Civic engagement denotes "collaborative activity that builds on the resources, skills, expertise, and knowledge of the campus and community to improve the quality of life and to advance the campus mission. Civic engagement includes teaching, research, and service in and with the community" (Bringle and Hatcher 2004). Engaged scholarship is "scholarship in the areas of teaching, research, and/or service. It engages faculty in academically relevant work that simultaneously meets campus mission and goals as well as community needs. In essence, it is a scholarly agenda that integrates community issues. In this definition, community is broadly defined to include audiences external to the campus that are part of a collaborative process to contribute to the public good" (The National

Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement). Community Engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching).

Since its creation in 2005, the CSLCE has aligned its goals and activities with both the TSU and the TBR Strategic Plans; and since 2008, in support of the Academic Master Plan, the Center led TSU efforts to become a Carnegie Community Engaged Campus. All of the Center's activities support TSU's *2010-15 Strategic Plan*. The goals reflect our commitments to social justice, inclusion, and community development consistent with the Carnegie Elective Classification of an Engaged University. Goals and activities are designed to strengthen and support the institutionalization of campus-wide community engagement, leading to increases in retention, achievement, and graduation rates of current TSU students while also attracting highly qualified applicants to TSU.

The Center has also utilized external funding sources to further support its initiatives. Since 2005 the Center has received \$5,261,755 in grant funding from US Department of Education Title III, HUD OUP, Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health (HHS OMH), TBR, Corporation for National and Community Service, and other universities. Most of the grant funds are used for community development initiatives focused in North Nashville. Our educational and economic support for the North Nashville community, especially our mentoring and tutoring initiatives, are aimed at raising the level of educational development and motivation for both P-12 and college students.

The Center has cultivated mutually beneficial partnerships with a multitude of community organizations, including P-12 schools, federal and state agencies, and all types of non-profit organizations, including faith-based institutions, small grassroots organizations, after-school programs, youth centers, hospitals, YMCAs, and neighborhood associations. We take seriously our responsibility to relate academic work to communities in ways that are mutually beneficial, so we continuously develop our community relationships through town hall meetings, focus groups,

surveys, and individual interviews. Our grant activities fund educational and economic development in the communities surrounding the campus. The Center links faculty with community sites whose needs are relevant to their course objectives and facilitates communication between community organizations and the University.

This collaborative work in and with communities is consistent with the goal that TSU be a model urban university, provide leadership to others in all facets of integrating service with teaching and research, and engage educators, staff, and students in activities that benefit their communities as well as themselves. Through this collaboration, TSU is distinguishing itself nationally as a campus that creates interdisciplinary approaches to generating and communicating knowledge that meaningfully contributes to the well being of society. Thus, our service-learning initiatives have resulted in TSU being nationally recognized for its civic engagement accomplishments. Title III funds have supported our CSLCE infrastructure, which has enabled us to apply for and earn the numerous national awards/recognitions. In October 2008, we were one of 5 institutions to receive the Civic Engagement Award from the Washington Center for Academic Programs and Internships. We were also one of the recipients of the 2008 Outreach Scholarship W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award and one of five national finalists for the 2008 C. Peter McGrath University Community Engagement Award presented annually by NASULGC, a public university association. In years 2008, 2009, and 2010, we were included in the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, and in 2009, we were the only institution in TN to receive the "With Distinction" honor. And in 2010, we also earned the "Carnegie Community Engaged Campus Classification" from the Carnegie Foundation.

Through the leadership of TSU, Tennessee became the nation's 33rd State Campus Compact. The State Compact serves as a vehicle for integrating teaching and scholarship throughout campus programs while impacting identified community needs and services, recognizing how closely our own futures are linked to the well being of our surrounding regions. Being the first HBCU to develop and host a State Compact brought TSU high visibility as a champion for the ideals of civic engagement and service-learning in Tennessee and nationally. The Tennessee Campus Compact (TNCC) was formally

launched with 31 member campuses from all three higher education systems in TN (TN Board of Regents, University of TN, and TN Independent College and University Association). As part of the TN Campus Compact project, TSU applied for and received an AmeriCorps* VISTA Project grant to provide up to 20 VISTA members across the state at member institutions. Each VISTA member is a \$20,000 asset to the institution.

The Center's website (www.tnstate.edu/servicelearning) provides a wide variety of resources for faculty, students, and community partners. It includes a community partner database; comprehensive Service-Learning Handbooks for faculty, students, and community partners; risk release forms; information about grants and service activities; training resources for faculty; slideshows of service activities; links to other helpful sites; and online end-of-course surveys for students, faculty and community partners.

The Center's support services include training and development of faculty across all disciplines to enable them to integrate service-learning projects into their academic courses; development of community partnerships; technical assistance; and tools to systematically document the service activities and outcomes. The Center provides Service-Learning Course Construction Workshops that cover best practices from an introductory level through more advanced levels of assessment of student learning. Our approach to faculty development has primarily been shaped by learning theory (Bringle and Hatcher 1995, 112-122; Bringle et al. 1997, 43-51; Bringle et al. 2000, 882-894). The experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984) is often referred to as the theoretical framework for service learning, and this model of learning is also recognized as a valuable framework for faculty development (Chism et al. 2002, 34-41). The faculty development workshops aim to increase faculty understanding of pedagogies and practices associated with service-learning and civic engagement. Each year, the CSLCE offers the workshops such as "Introduction to Service Learning," "Step-by-Step Integration of Service-Learning into a Course," "Using Reflection to Enhance the Learning in Service-Learning," "Assessing the Learning in Service-Learning," and "Working with Community Partners." One of the key benefits of these workshops is to establish face-to-face interaction between

faculty and CSLCE staff, which often leads to further consultation and collaboration. The goal is to develop a collective faculty culture that can expand and sustain civic engagement within departments and colleges. Faculty begin to see civic engagement not only as something important to themselves as individuals, but also important to a department and its mission. The Center works with faculty to help them improve both their learning and service outcomes in their courses. This is done through individual consultations, visiting individual classes, strengthening community partnerships, and assisting with reflection and assessment activities. We use a systematic course evaluation system for all service-learning courses in order to continue improving the outcomes for the students and the community. As a result of feedback from the end-of-course evaluations, we have offered discipline-specific workshops to help faculty learn about quality service-learning practices in their disciplines and develop collaborative partnerships with other faculty.

Since the beginning of the service-learning initiative in 2005, more than 117 faculty have attended service-learning workshops. Title III has also enabled the Center to support faculty presentations at conferences to showcase their service-learning accomplishments. Each year Service-Learning Mini-Grants are available for faculty to integrate service-learning into a course or to expand and deepen their service-learning projects. Through the Center's support, faculty members facilitate learning by creating opportunities for their students to understand and analyze their service experiences in the context of their coursework. Through discussions, readings, and writings students reflect upon and integrate their service experiences into the academic content of the course. Students document their learning in the form of project reports, action research, presentations, journal entries, essays, and portfolios.

Based on the *CSLCE Strategic Plan*, the *TSU 2010-15 Strategic Plan*, and the *Academic Master Plan*, CSLCE staff designed a comprehensive Assessment Plan to document and assess our programs, activities, and processes for continuous improvement. Our Assessment Plan includes 1) assessment of our service learning courses, 2) assessment of our programs/processes and institutionalization, and 3)

documentation of volunteer community service by students. The assessment of our service-learning courses includes on-line evaluations of service-learning courses by students, faculty, and community partners. At the end of each semester, we send out the link to the on-line surveys, collect the data, analyze, summarize, and communicate it. We summarize each faculty member's course data and send them the results. The aggregate data are used to improve service learning programs and processes. At the end of each year, Center staff review data summaries and make changes based on the data. The Center continually tries to improve documentation of service activities and outcomes and provide results to all stakeholders. In 2009-10 more than 1,296 students provided more than 23,328 hours of service through 72 service-learning courses across 22 departments, and by May 2012, that number will have doubled.

One of the Center's primary areas of focus has been on cultivating P-16 initiatives. Nashville is a growing, diverse community, and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) is the second largest public school system in Tennessee, serving more than 75,000 students, with the largest population of English Language Learners in the state. Over 70% of Nashville public school students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Income disparities affect educational and economic opportunities and result in achievement gaps between racial and economic subgroups. The north Nashville neighborhood in which TSU resides has one of the city's largest service-to-need gaps in the areas of educational equity, poverty, crime, chronic health problems, and deteriorating housing that lowers the quality of life for all community members. The Center collaborates with many government and non-profit organizations, including schools and faith-based organizations to develop service programs that will improve the quality of life for university and community members alike. An urban university that takes its commitment to the community seriously must be engaged in improving the quality of the local public schools. The logic for this level of engagement is unequivocal. In urban communities like Nashville, the quality of potential university students depends partly on the quality of the local P-12 schools.

Thus, one long term goal of our P-16 initiatives is to reduce the savage inequality in educational achievement by decreasing the gap in academic achievement between African-American and other children. This includes increasing the numbers of African-American youth who complete high school, enroll in college, and graduate from college. Our programs in the P-12 schools are improving school programs and school climate, providing academic support, improving both college and P-12 students' skills and leadership, connecting college student mentors with P-12 school children, and helping teachers with their work. Our ultimate goal is to create partnerships that help youngsters succeed in school and in later life.

The Center has already participated in numerous projects and partnerships with the P-12 schools. In 2007, through a partnership with Metro Schools and the CSLCE, TSU faculty member Dr. Tammy Lipsey created a Reading Clinic in McKissack School, adjacent to the TSU campus. This Reading Clinic, which started out serving 76 students in one school, has now evolved into the Tennessee Literacy Partnership which includes 14 Reading Clinics serving more than 900 K-9 students who are classified "as struggling readers." Housing and Urban Development and TN Board of Regents grant funds provided educational materials for the clinics. To create the reading clinics, the University worked collaboratively with the schools' leadership to identify the children in most need of assistance. College student tutors participate in a 4-hour training session before they work one-on-one with their struggling readers twice a week for 30-minute sessions under the supervision of a faculty member. From 2007 through June 30, 2011, approximately 887 undergraduate and graduate students have worked with more than 900 K-9 students, providing more than 6,000 hours of tutoring to struggling readers. Many of the tutors were TSU teacher education students. Since the beginning of the project, 98% of the K-9 students made gains in reading fluency and comprehension, some improved as much as three grade levels. In 2008, the principal of the school with the first reading clinic credited TSU's reading clinic program with helping the school meet No Child Left Behind Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). On surveys, the TSU teacher education student tutors said that being part of this project was one of their most meaningful educational

experiences, and because of it, they felt well prepared to teach reading effectively when they have their own classrooms. The TN Literacy Project, which was started by Dr. Tammy Lipsey in 2007, is now fully sustainable with support from Metro Schools, the Mayor's Office, the YMCA, and 5 other universities. (Dr. Lipsey is now employed full time by Metro Nashville Public Schools to manage the TN Literacy Partnership.)

The Triple Impact Youth Empowerment Program is a collaborative effort between TSU, two Metro Nashville schools, the Oasis Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Nashville, Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship Peniel Initiative/Nashville Community Coalition for Youth Safety, and the Department of Family & Community Medicine at Meharry Medical College that increases the academic and health outcomes of college and high school students across their respective, four-year educational experiences. This partnership promotes positive youth development by providing mentoring, academic support, health education, plus coping skills and leadership training by pairing high school students with college youth to enhance their academic performance, basic life skills, self-esteem, and personal resiliency. All partner organizations coordinate efforts to provide caring adults; structured weekly programming both during school hours and after school; and opportunities for the youth to develop healthy lifestyle behaviors and to achieve academically. The goals of this 3-year \$900,000 Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health funded project are to improve the academic performance, health knowledge, basic life skills, self-esteem, career awareness, and personal resiliency of 50 high school youth and their 50 TSU college mentors. The program title, *Triple Impact*, describes the intent to positively impact three groups: high school youth, college mentors, and the community around the school and campus. As a P-16 initiative, this project is a model for merging university, school, and community resources to improve academic achievement, motivation, and lifestyle choices that lead to increased graduation rates, college access, and success, especially among the low-income African-American students that make up 98% of the target school's population.

In 2009 Dr. Judith Presley's Special Education students developed a math clinic at Buena Vista Elementary School, and as a result, math scores improved for 93% of the children tutored. The principal asked that the project be expanded with more TSU tutors to provide a wider range of tutoring at more grade levels in future years.

In 2010 Dr. Nicole Kendall's technology education class assisted new K-12 teachers in integrating technology into their classrooms to improve teaching techniques. TSU provided free technology instruction and troubleshooting to these new teachers. The TSU students go into the schools and work one on one with teachers to help them effectively integrate technology to improve student learning. The TSU students report that one of the greatest challenges is that many of the K-12 schools do not have up-to-date technology systems or hardware, so they have to adapt strategies to the technology that is available.

Geospatial Technology Academy Project came about during the 2008-2009 academic year when TSU students enrolled in Dr. David Padgett's Urban Geography and Cartography courses exposed Pearl Cohn High School students to data and information systems related to inner-city emergency response. The TSU students taught their mentees how to use geographical information systems (GIS) to map locations of Red Cross emergency shelters. The spatial relationships between the shelter sites and community demographic, socioeconomic, and transportation-access characteristics were analyzed and reported to the Red Cross and city officials. A State Farm Good Neighbor Service Learning Grant that was awarded to the students funded the project. Pearl Cohn is a high school that serves the very low income and mostly African-American community surrounding TSU. The high school students saw the relevance of mathematics to important projects and enjoyed their association with college student mentors.

TSU's support of the educational needs of the community have extended beyond the school system to nonprofits that operate after school and summer programs for youth. One example is TSU's collaboration with Grace M. Eaton Childcare Center, a nonprofit center serving about 85 children (infants -12 years of age), most of whom are low income and minority. With funding through the U.S. Department of Housing

and Urban Development, the Center for Service Learning completed \$200,000 in renovations at Grace Eaton: replacing plumbing, windows, and doors; removing lead-based paint; and replacing the heating and cooling system. TSU occupational therapy students serve one day a week at Grace Eaton Childcare evaluating the mobility of children and identifying potential problems. They organize physical activity days for the kids and work on their handwriting skills. TSU speech and hearing students conduct hearing and speech tests, interpret the results, and work with the children to improve their communication skills. A student service group goes each afternoon to Grace Eaton to mentor the kids, play with them, and read to them. In addition, early childhood education majors conduct their practicum activities, assisting the classroom teachers with developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices. Thanks to TSU Professor Stephen Penick in the College of Health Sciences, Grace Eaton now even has access to fresh produce in its own garden.

Preston Taylor Ministries (PTM), a local nonprofit, provides an afterschool and summer program for K-4 children who live in the Preston Taylor Housing Development adjacent to TSU's campus. Graduate psychology students have worked with the middle school students on career exploration and interview skills. Doctoral psychology students conducted focus groups to evaluate a "lunch-mate mentoring program" that pairs adult volunteers with the Preston Taylor children. Each mentor commits to have lunch with his/her designated child once a week for at least one year with the intent to build positive relationships. Education and occupational therapy service-learning classes assist kids with their homework, handwriting, math, and reading skills. The Center for Service Learning has used grant funds to purchase math and reading educational materials for the organization and has donated used University computers to create a computer lab for the kids. According to Chan Sheppard, PTM's director, "TSU's gift of resources and mentors has upgraded our ability to improve math skills in an exciting and effective way. TSU students have made a huge impact on PTM's programming. PTM remains grateful for the generous and steady partnership with TSU." TSU also provides at least one Federal Work

Study student to PTM each year.

Public engagement, expressed in words and actions, has long been a core value of the TSU and of its faculty. This means that we strive to prepare our students not only for productive careers, but also to live lives of purpose. The Center aims to make service and civic engagement an integral part of students' education by providing hands-on learning opportunities, expanding students' knowledge of social issues, fostering a sense of civic responsibility and social justice, and creating an expectation of service as an intentional part of the collegiate experience. Each year 300 to 400 students, faculty, and staff participate in our Annual Community Service Day, working on a wide variety of service projects across the city. Through this annual day of service, students contribute approximately 1,200 volunteer hours of service. In keeping with the TSU motto, Think, Work, Serve, the goals for Service Day include the following:

1. Demonstrate one of our core values by engaging in meaningful service to the community
2. Build positive relationships in the community
3. Demonstrate TSU's commitment to "making our world better" starting right in our own back yard

Faculty and staff also model the core value of service through their own personal volunteer service, often through their faith-based institutions. In 2009 the CSLCE, the College of Health Sciences, and the Red Cross collaborated to offer a full day Red Cross Disaster Training Institute on campus that was attended by 104 faculty and staff who are now qualified to help the Red Cross with disaster relief both locally and nationally.

Led by Associate Director Ginger Hausser, the CSLCE has partnered with the City of Nashville, TN Department of Transportation, and Metro Development Housing Authority to improve the Jefferson Street commercial district. The Center coordinated meetings between TSU facilities management and Chief of staff and city officials and architects from the EDGE group to design and maintain landscape improvements of over \$800,000 that will take place in 2012 at the Jefferson Street

and 28th avenue exits from interstate I-40. The Center was awarded over \$425,000 to turn the interstate underpass into a public plaza to create a destination in North Nashville that celebrates the heritage of the African American culture in Nashville focusing on its universities, music, businesses, and the civil rights movement. The Center is working with faculty and students in Art, Engineering, Geography, and History, along with the City of Nashville, the EDGE group, and the Metropolitan Development Housing Authority to design the plaza.

The HBCU Wellness Project is a statewide collaboration of HBCUs led by Meharry Medical College that is designed to enhance community and academic partnerships while addressing health disparities in TN. At TSU, selected “Student Health Ambassadors” are developing research protocols to address 4 serious health issues: HIV/AIDS, Infant Mortality, Obesity, and Breast Cancer. The projects will target the reduction and elimination of conditions that disproportionately impact the low-income citizens of TN by promoting healthy changes in behaviors, knowledge and attitudes. The HBCU Wellness Project is enhancing students’ understanding of the power of service-learning and civic engagement in making our communities better.

Following Hurricane Katrina, TSU faculty and students looked for ways to turn their sympathy and concern into action. The first opportunity to make a difference came when the Red Cross asked TSU to assist the thousands of evacuees who had sought shelter in Nashville. TSU faculty, staff, and students volunteered their time to assist with meeting evacuees at the airport, working at the various shelters, sorting donations, registering evacuees, preparing food, and assisting with other needs. As time passed and evacuees found temporary lodging, the Red Cross asked TSU to fulfill a longer term need by hosting an on-campus event to help the evacuees connect with services in Nashville. On a beautiful Saturday in November, 2005, TSU faculty, staff and students welcomed evacuees and their families to a special event: Open Arms, Open Hearts: TSU’s Service and Information Fair for Victims of the Hurricanes. TSU students, together with faculty and staff, offered information and services that included legal aid, mental health services information, housing

information, free dental cleanings, health screenings and information, and personal interviews to assess individual needs. Children's activities included games, science experiments, arts and crafts, a puppet show, free books, toys, and winter clothing. Musical entertainment, breakfast and lunch were enjoyed by all, as well as socializing with the TSU community. The evacuees were eager to meet people in Nashville and to find out more about the community. This was a huge collaborative in which TSU and our North Nashville community partners combined heart and hands, specific skills and just good old warm-hearted generosity.

As awareness of the plight of the children in New Orleans spread, faculty, staff, and students at TSU were searching for other ways to help these young victims who had lost so much. When the US Department of Housing and Urban Development offered the Universities Rebuilding America Grants to provide funds for universities to develop programs to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina, it seemed like the perfect opportunity for a service-learning project. The children of New Orleans had lost precious weeks of learning while schools were closed during and after the evacuations of their communities. Transitioning through various living arrangements in the aftermath of the hurricanes, their educational journeys were disrupted. Many students experienced the loss of loved ones and the devastation of their homes and neighborhoods. Academics were a low priority in the wake of emotional survival and recovery. As these young learners transitioned back to their communities, there were few opportunities for them to catch up academically and emotionally. The Center responded to the grant opportunity by proposing to plan and lead a free 4-week academically focused summer day camp where young hurricane victims would experience high quality learning activities, receive emotional counseling and mentoring, and have fun in a safe and engaging environment. We called the camp "*Supercharge Summer Camp*" because we hoped the children would be "*supercharged*" for the new school year and more prepared to cope with the continuing challenges of their lives.

Located on the beautiful Loyola University campus near the heart of New Orleans, the camp served 250 elementary-aged children. Working closely with

certified New Orleans teachers, 29 TSU students provided leadership, direct instruction, and mentoring for *Supercharge* campers each day. A high quality, research-based curriculum was used to teach and reinforce Math, Reading, and Language Arts fundamentals. Campers who attended all sessions received 60+ hours of supplemental instruction plus motivational speakers, structured games, music, field trips, and arts and crafts. Positive outcomes of the program include increased academic abilities and better self-esteem, coping skills and overall emotional health.

TSU has a rich tradition of service and an opportunity to instill in our students an ethic of caring and a sense of responsibility for making our world better. Public engagement expressed in words and actions has long been a core value of TSU. Remember the leadership role of TSU students in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Although TSU has a rich history of service in and with communities, we want to elevate that commitment---to collaborate more closely with community organizations, schools, government, and business to address the pressing social, economic, health, and education issues of today. Because of our mission and location, TSU has an enlightened self-interest in building and sustaining reciprocal campus-community partnerships through the practice of service-learning, civic engagement, and engaged scholarship---thereby fulfilling our educational mission of teaching, research, and service and reinforcing our theme, "Enter to learn. Go forth to serve."

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