

**The Service Leadership Seminar: Creating an environment for civic engagement and leadership development among freshmen students**

**Gina Kittel, Cristy Sibila, Ashley Tull, Christian Ulvert, The Florida State University**

Presenters

Gina Kittel currently serves as the Assistant Director of the Center for Civic Education and Service at Florida State University. Gina graduated from Florida State University with bachelors and masters degrees in Speech Pathology and Audiology and Elementary Education.

Christy Sibila currently serves as a Public Relations Associate with the Kidd Group, a Tallahassee, FL based advertising and public relations firm. She obtained her bachelors and masters degrees from Florida State University in Business Communications and Marketing and Management Communications.

Ashley Tull is currently a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration at Florida State University and is Coordinator and Research Assistant for the Center for the Study of Values in College Student Development. Ashley graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi with bachelors and masters degrees in Counseling Psychology and College Student Personnel Services.

Christian Ulvert is an undergraduate student in Criminology with a minor in Public Administration at Florida State University. Christian currently serves as the Fiscal Assistant for the Center for Civic Education and Service at Florida State University.

Abstract

The Center for Civic Education and Service, FSU Service Corps and Organization and Leadership Services at Florida State University launched a new program in the Fall

of 2002 aimed at developing civic engagement and leadership skills. The Service Leadership Seminar was a four-day intensive session designed to promote skill development and encourage participation in service and leadership initiatives. This workshop focused on the outcomes and value of the Service Leadership Seminar as a method for developing civic mindedness and leadership skills among new freshmen students.

### Purpose of the Service Leadership Seminar

Early in the planning and development process of the Service Leadership Seminar, members of the planning committee drafted a vision and mission statement as well as goals for the Seminar. These included:

#### *Vision*

The student leader will have the desire to serve others and not themselves; initiate new programming; and take risks for the benefit of others.

#### *Mission*

- Awareness of service opportunities in and around the Tallahassee community
- Awareness of leadership opportunities at FSU
- Knowledge of skills and potential procedures for program planning
- Introduce leadership concepts and skills through workshops and seminar speakers for utilization in service activities and future campus involvement

#### *Goals*

- Learn event planning and execution skills
- Become active citizens through leadership and service
- Familiarize incoming students with service opportunities

- Promote leadership through future participation in program (seminar) development
- Learn how to communicate for student, faculty and staff support and with media for publicity
- Get hands on experience in a fun environment
- Make new friends

### Participants

The Service Leadership Seminar planning committee recruited students from several constituencies at Florida State University to participate. These included students from the Service Scholar program, Genesis program (Freshmen Emerging Leaders Residential program) and C.A.R.E.'s (Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement) Summer Bridge Program.

The Service Scholar Program “is designed to recognize students entering Florida State University with an outstanding record of service and to promote service as a integral part of the liberal arts education at FSU,” (Center for Civic Education and Service, 2002-2003 p. 4). Scholars are chosen each year based on selection criteria. Scholars are awarded scholarships for their demonstrated excellence in service and for their interest in continuing service to enhance their learning.

The Genesis Freshman Leadership Program is a living and learning community for freshmen. Fifty freshmen students are chosen each year based on selection criteria. Students in the Genesis Program attend a weekly class, where they are exposed to different leadership theories and participate in teambuilding and leadership development

activities. The Genesis program also incorporates social and service activities into its curricular and extracurricular programs.

Students in the C.A.R.E. Summer Bridge Program are a part of an alternative admissions program for first generation college students, or those who are disadvantaged due to economic, cultural or educational circumstances. Students are chosen each year based on selection criteria. The Program is designed to ease adjustment to college and assist students in building strong academic foundations for success. Some students in the program, who qualify for federal aid, receive tuition, housing, meals and books at no cost.

### Program Overview

The Service Leadership Seminar incorporated several elements of service and leadership development. Seminar activities spanned four days and included icebreakers, social activities, a tour of area service agencies, team builders, skill development workshops, service projects, reflections and an experiential activity (Super Service Scenarios) designed to bring all elements together in a capstone project. A detailed agenda for the Seminar can be found at the end of this document (Appendix A).

### *Welcome/Icebreakers/Ground Rules*

Seminar participants assembled at the Center for Civic Education and Service on Tuesday August 20, 2003 for the start of the Seminar. The Seminar began with a welcome from the planning committee, members of the Center for Civic Education and Organization and Leadership Services staffs and student affairs administrators from the University. Participants had the opportunity to get to know one another through icebreakers. Ground rules for the Seminar were developed by Seminar participants and

each agreed to abide by these during the course of the Seminar. Participants then attended a social/open house at the Leach Center, FSU's campus recreation facility.

### *Facilitators*

Facilitators were selected by members of the planning committee to work with Seminar participants in small groups. The assigned facilitators were upperclassman at FSU, who have demonstrated a commitment to service and leadership development activities. Facilitators worked with their small groups on icebreakers, workshops and in the preparation of the solutions and presentations for the Super Service Scenarios. The facilitators and brief background information on each is presented below.

#### *E. Alan Brock*

Alan, from Wakulla, Florida is a senior theater and interdisciplinary social science major with a minor in African American studies. He is a service scholar, and serves as the Fundraising Chair for alternative break corps where he has also been a participant in several spring break trips. Alan has served on the Service Corps Board as the past Celebration of Service Chair.

#### *Jennifer Lostumbo*

Jennifer, from Weston, Florida is a sophomore at Florida State majoring in Elementary Education with a minor in Business. Jennifer founded H.E.L.P. (Helping Every Little Person) in 1998 and currently serves as the President. H.E.L.P. has chapters at 3 high schools in the Ft. Lauderdale area, as well as Florida State. H.E.L.P.'s goals include expanding to two additional high schools this year and ultimately expanding it into a national non-profit agency. Jennifer also works with ECHO, cleaning and decorating apartments for the homeless and works with KIDS Inc.

*Lee Lovingood*

Lee, from Gainesville, Florida is a sophomore at Florida State majoring in political science and history and ultimately plans to become a high school principal and then branch off into politics. While at Florida State, Lee has been an active member of the service scholar program where he will be serving for a second year. Lee is involved in a variety of service projects throughout the community; his favorite is the Boggy Creek Gang Camp for terminally ill children in Cassia, Florida. Lee has also been mildly involved in SGA and the World Affairs Program at Florida State.

*Ladanya Ramirez*

Ladanya, from Miami, Florida is a junior majoring in international affairs. Ladanya currently serves as the Director of the Hispanic and Latino Student Union, an agency of the Student Government Association. She is also a service scholar and a sister of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc.

*Service Agency Tour*

Seminar Participants went on a tour of several service agencies in the Tallahassee Community. The tour was designed to expose the participants to service agencies in the area, that they might consider volunteering for, during their time at FSU. The tour started with breakfast at the Leon County Volunteer Center. The Volunteer Center serves as a central point for service activities in the Tallahassee/Leon County area. The Center serves as a link for all types of volunteers in many areas. Participants then went to ECHO, an agency that provides holistic services to promote self-sufficiency and empowerment. ECHO's services include: tutoring, job links, housing, day care, money management classes and employment preparation services. Next participants visited Big Bend Cares.

Big Bend Cares provides education, support and compassionate care for people and communities affected by HIV/AIDS and other diseases. The service agency tour ended with lunch at the Mary Brogan Museum of Arts and Sciences. The mission of the Mary Brogan Museum is to stimulate interest in and understanding of the visual arts, sciences, mathematics and technology through experiences that both educate and inspire.

### *Super Service Scenarios*

Super Service Scenarios (Experiential Learning Opportunities) were designed as a capstone project to bring together the different elements of the Service Leadership Seminar. An example (ECHO Playground Project) is provided as Appendix B.

Participants were divided into groups and given a real world problem faced by three of the four agencies from the service agency tour. These included: ECHO, Big Bend Cares and the Mary Brogan Museum. Participants were asked to use their newly acquired knowledge on these agencies along with skills gained through workshops to come up with creative solutions for solving the problems. Participants were given information on the agency, the problem, guiding questions and suggestions for solution and presentation ideas. Each group was given time to work on their solution/presentations during the course of the seminar. Some groups made return visits to the agencies and phoned them for more specific information for use in solutions. Each group presented their problem and solution on the final day of the Seminar. Participants were very creative and informative in their presentations. This project and its outcomes exceeded our expectations as a planning committee.

## Workshops

Workshops were offered on a variety of topics designed to give participants an opportunity to develop skills needed to design and carry out service activities. Workshops were offered on: the importance of service and leadership, project management, campus involvement and meeting management. Workshops were conducted by staff and student members of the university community who are actively involved in service and leadership development initiatives. Details of the Seminar workshops are as follows:

### *The Importance of Service and Leadership*

Presenters: Anna O’Sullivan and Diane Standaert. This workshop will focus on past, present and future leaders who are or have been active in serving the community. We will look at trends and differences in qualities of these exceptional leaders.

### *Follow the Yellow Brick Road (Effective Project Management)*

Presenters: Danielle Leonardi, Christian Ulvert and Holly Williams. This workshop will focus on components of program management. Specific attention will be given to event planning, conflict resolution and delegation. Participants will be given instruction on the stages of planning an event and will examine an actual timeline for a service event held annually.

### *How Do You Increase Involvement in Decision Making Without Losing Control?*

#### (Effective Meeting Management)

Presenters: Gina Kittel, Greg Pierce and Ashley Tull. This workshop will focus on effective meeting management skills. Participants will discuss elements of effective meetings and how member’s personalities can influence the outcome of a group meeting.

Participants will also spend time in a “mock” meeting and evaluate their interactions upon completion of the meeting.

### *Campus Involvement*

Presenters: Jamie Gant and Patrick Sullivan. This workshop will focus on familiarizing Seminar participants with the many opportunities for extracurricular involvement at Florida State University. Specific attention will be given to participation in Organization and Leadership Services, Student Government, Center for Civic Education and Service and Union activities. Time will also be spent on effective publicity strategies for organizations and events on campus.

### *Service Projects*

Seminar participants were randomly assigned to two different service projects on Thursday, August 22. The two sites (Second Harvest Food Bank and Good News Outreach) are sites that FSU students regularly visit for service activities throughout the year. The service project gave participants a chance to learn about two more service agencies in the Tallahassee area in addition to those that they visit on the service agency tour. Second Harvest Food Bank serves as a central food bank for many shelters and after school programs in the Tallahassee area. Those participants that went to the Second Harvest Food Bank boxed donated peanuts from a farm in Georgia for distribution to local shelters and after school programs. Good News Outreach is a foster home for boys in the Tallahassee community. Seminar participants who visited the Good News Outreach painted parts of the home, while the residents were away at school. Both agencies were pleased with our efforts and many of the Seminar participants pledged to come back in the future to volunteer for future projects.

*Dinner and Reflection*

A dinner was held at the FSU International Center on the final night of the Seminar. Participants discussed their experiences with their service activities during the day. Participants were also lead in a group reflection exercise by Christina Ulvert, where participants from each service project shared with the group information about their service project site and the nature of their work with the site. This gave members of opposite groups an opportunity to learn about the service activities each group. Prior to leaving dinner, participants were asked to document their thoughts on note cards anonymously and turn them in. The following are several comments that have been extracted from the cards:

*I was very much enamored with the Good News Outreach. As a matter of fact, the reflections that went through my mind caused me to want to volunteer throughout the year with this organization. Believe me...I will! (Female)*

*It is amazing how a group of individuals can come together as one to make a difference in the community. I truly believe that the service project had a great impact on our lives and we've become better people from it. (Female)*

*The service today had a great impact on my life. I am seriously considering organizing an outreach group that visits the food bank on a regular basis with another group member. (Female)*

*Today's service greatly impacted me because it helped me realize that even the smallest job can have the largest impact, as well as how important determination and desire to help can be. (Female)*

*This service our group provided was just a small display how a group that composed of such a small number can make such a big difference. We all work simultaneously together and we completed something in two hours that would have taken 40 hours by one or two people. (Male)*

*This service project really made an impact on my perspective of actually trying to start my own project. Instead, I will like to continue to volunteer with programs and organizations that are still in need. (Male)*

*I think this whole project was beautiful. I (and my group) gained a greater sense of appreciation for the small things people can do to help. Also, knowing that in a sense, “it’s not all that hard” anybody can do it. (Male)*

*I feel that today’s service had a magnificent impact on me. I would like to help these kids through the outreach program. (Male)*

#### Participant Feedback

Seminar participants were asked to complete a detailed evaluation on each of the elements of the Seminar. Included in the Seminar evaluation were questions on workshops, volunteer experiences, facilitators, Super Service Scenarios, Seminar materials, overall Seminar experience, meals, preferred activities and demographic information. Significant results of interest to the program planning committee included the following. Detailed results of evaluations may be obtained from the authors.

**I feel that my volunteer work helped the community at large.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	13	54.2	72.2	72.2
	Agree	4	16.7	22.2	94.4
	Neutral	1	4.2	5.6	100.0
	Total	18	75.0	100.0	
Missing	9.00	6	25.0		
Total		24	100.0		

**I was satisfied with the work I was assigned to do .**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	17	70.8	94.4	94.4
	Agree	1	4.2	5.6	100.0
	Total	18	75.0	100.0	
Missing	9.00	6	25.0		
Total		24	100.0		

**My overall volunteer experience was a positive one.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	18	75.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	9.00	6	25.0		
Total		24	100.0		

**In the future I plan to volunteer with the Center For Civic Education and Service.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	16	66.7	88.9	88.9
	Agree	2	8.3	11.1	100.0
	Total	18	75.0	100.0	
Missing	9.00	6	25.0		
Total		24	100.0		

**As a result of my participation in the Service Leadership Seminar, I feel prepared to take on leadership roles at FSU.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	14	58.3	82.4	82.4
	Agree	2	8.3	11.8	94.1
	Neutral	1	4.2	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	70.8	100.0	
Missing	9.00	7	29.2		
Total		24	100.0		

**I would recommend the Service Leadership Seminar to future freshmen.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	16	66.7	94.1	94.1
	Agree	1	4.2	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	70.8	100.0	
Missing	9.00	7	29.2		
Total		24	100.0		

References

Center for Civic Education and Service. (2002-2003). *Service Scholar Handbook*.

## Appendix B

### ECHO (Emergency Care Help Organization)

#### The Playground Project

##### *The Organization*

Emergency Care Help Organization (ECHO) is a local organization in the Tallahassee community that assists over 3,000 people annually. Some of the goods and services that ECHO provides community members include: food, clothing, emergency rent payments, utility payments, and job placement. Many of the services (housing specifically) are provided through the Bethany Family Apartments, Bethany Family Assistance Program and the Jubilee Job Link.

##### *Your Task*

Many children live at the Bethany Family Apartments with relatives who are receiving assistance from ECHO. Safe after school and weekend activities are needed for the children living at the Apartments. Many of the children like to play at playgrounds and would love to have one at the Apartments. ECHO would love to provide the children of their residents with a nice playground. ECHO currently owns a plot of land next to the Bethany Family Apartments that would be perfect to a playground. ECHO lacks the financial and human resources to provide a playground or a fence (required by law) to

surround it. Here's where you can help. How can you as a group help ECHO in providing a playground for the residents and children of the Bethany Family Apartments?

Guiding Questions

1. What are the positive benefits of finding a solution to your problem? What are the negative benefits of finding a solution to your problem?
2. What costs are associated with the solution of your problem?
3. If costs are involved, what creative solutions can you develop for meeting the associated costs?
4. What staff, volunteers are needed to accomplish a solution to your problem?
5. How would you go about involving staff and volunteers in the solution of your problem? How would you recruit and train your staff and volunteers?
6. What planning techniques are needed for the execution of your solution to this problem?
7. What setbacks could you expect to encounter in solving this problem?
8. What publicity would be needed to generate interest in your project or the positive outcomes as a result of your project? What would you do to publicize this project?
9. Explain the process that you went through in developing your solution to the above problem.
10. Identify the service and leadership traits/skills that were needed for the solution of your Super Service Scenario.