

## **BUCCS 15: Learning Beyond the Classroom**

**Tuesday, October 21, 2008**

### **What do students do outside of the classroom?**

- There will be more activities on campus as alternative to alcohol consumption as a consequence of the new Alcohol Policy
- Residential Life sponsors activities, and provides leadership development and opportunities for RA and ARAs. There are roughly 2000 students in BU residential halls.
- Greek Life sponsors activities and philanthropies
- HEAT (Help Empower and Teach)
- BU has 240 student organizations, each of which require 4 student officers. This provides a wealth of leadership opportunities, administrative and organizational experience.
- BU has many opportunities for students to engage in community service, including Rotaract, Circle K, student assistants in various courses (e.g., EHS 120), America Reads.
- Many students have on- or off-campus jobs.
- Some students have families that they live with; some have parental or child care responsibilities.
- Students attend plays, concerts, athletic events.

### **How do these out-of-class activities contribute to their learning?**

- If students list life skills that they gained in college, many of them did not come directly from experiences inside of a classroom.
- Living and working with other students provides opportunities to learn to work/get along with other people.
- Leadership development might be occurring predominantly through the leadership opportunities via holding office in student organizations. Leadership opportunities can build organizational, managerial and administrative skill.
- Community service can build collaborative working skills, gives them broader experience with people and situations beyond their own experience or the college landscape.
- Students gain intellectual and cultural breadth through exposure to concerts, plays, seminars, etc.
- Competition drives some students to excel.

### **How can we increase learning via out-of-class activities?**

- Challenge advisors of student organizations to develop some goals that also increase student learning opportunities. Develop guidelines or suggestions to facilitate organizational advisors in this effort.
- Ask Greek and Residential Life directors to include a discussion of learning objectives/outcomes in their annual reports.
- Look at how the Smith Career Center helps students build resumes that include how their out-of-class activities helps build their skills. This could provide some ideas for developing materials or reporting structures in support of student organization advisors and Res/Greek Life directors.
- Involve students in initiatives to encourage students to engage in more intellectual and cultural activities. Develop a program that recognizes students who engage in intellectual and cultural activities, Intellectual and Cultural Scholars. This could be a designation on students' transcripts, similar to Global Scholars.

### **How do we know if these out-of-class activities are having positive impacts on student learning?**

- Do we find out whether or not they stay involved in out-of-class activities? What about leadership positions or philanthropy? First, we can look at if this is impacting students at the time of graduation. What is the culture of students? Assessing this at the end of the senior year might be negative.
- An alumni survey 5-10 years down the line might be a better indicator of how this impacted their learning? People may/may not be reluctant to answer questions. General education can also be asked 5-10 years out: how have these experiences been useful to them?
- We as an institution are trying to accomplish these out-of-class goals. Are there ways we can impact their learning? How do we know? We can ask them how did things outside the classroom impact who you are now? Did working in a study group affect you? Is this something we need to assess? 20% return in surveys from students who graduated 10 years ago may not be helpful.
- Do students apply what they learned once they leave here? What are commonalities from year to year? What did our students experience while they were here? Where they exposed to these activities? We can develop our own survey and ask how students are spending their time.

**Wednesday, October 22, 2008**

**What do students do outside of the classroom?**

- Interesting that 32% of FY students and 30% of SR students either want to or have worked on research projects with faculty members. One of our key words right now is collaboration. There is nice involvement across the board. Do we expect a higher percentage? Can we really get more than 30% of students to participate in research? Do they have the time? The dedication?
- 74% of SR worked with classmates outside of class: this demonstrates more time spent on group projects. Are they working with their social groups? Friends?
- How do our percentages of involvement compare to other schools? Is there a way to compare school data through NSSE?
- What about professional development activities (e.g. activities through the Smith Career Center: Resume Writing, Internships, and hearing speakers)?
- What does 59% of students working mean? Smith Career Center data indicates 78% of graduates had related work experiences while students. The item asks working for pay and most internships aren't paid.
- Teacher education students seem to be working minimum wage jobs. Student teaching is worth 2 hours of credit, and students have to pay tuition to participate. They don't get paid and this is a large amount of work. Communications and Fine Arts students also generally seem to have unpaid internships, whereas Engineering and Business internships may be paid.
- There is no shortage of activities to fill the day of a student. We have 200+ sanctioned organizations on campus: think of the leadership positions, advisors, and ways these organizations can impact campus and the Peoria community.
- What about time spent on Facebook? Is this a time sink or is it productive? Is this a form of electronic caffeine? Does it somehow replace coffee by energizing students to talk to one another?

**How do these out-of-class activities contribute to their learning and how can we increase learning via out-of-class activities?**

- Students learn that they should provide assistance in the community in order to be successful. They are helping low income people with tax returns; working with Habitat for Humanity; Faculty deliver back to the community and students do the same.
- How do our volunteer numbers compare to other comprehensive Universities? 87% FY and 80% SR involvement in volunteer work.
- A lot of our data seems to support the 90/10 or 80/20 rule. Is it really that 90% of our students are involved? Do you see the same students everywhere you go?

- Students acquire life skills & leadership skills developed through self-engagement. These activities help them become young adults. Those that don't self-engage as much may be able to learn skills?
- BUCCS 1 had these types of skills included in the conversation. A fair portion of the list of skills that came from the conversation gave opportunities to develop.
- Greek students need to be involved in community service. What is the variance between those riding the coattails and those leading the charge?
- You need both leaders and others willing to work for an organization or program to be successful. Too many leaders is a problem.
- What about best practices for getting people involved or to come to an event? There is a right way to write an invitation, to compose thank you notes, etc. How are they learning that compared to conversations happening on facebook? Students may be sending emails saying, "Hey, what's my grade?" as opposed to a more formal writing style. How does this type of communication translate into writing cover letters or job applications or different types of writing for different audiences?
- Millennials as trophy children entering the workforce. Generally they want to do what they want to do. They are used to casual exchanges and step into the professional world used to these exchanges. What about etiquette of how to address people.
- Through these activities, aren't they also learning time commitment and problem solving as well as things we can't quantify and shouldn't necessarily quantify?
- Should students be required to participate i.e. service learning that is tied to courses? Students may participate in something that they like that they ordinarily would not have tried. Events/activities required by a course should be related to the course objectives.
- Graduates may look like a student for the first couple of professional years of work, but they need to be able to dress professionally.
- These students are comfortable with technology.
- This generation of students have never encountered failure. It is a privilege to earn more responsible jobs or to do more responsible tasks.
- Yesterday's conversation talked about requiring students to participate in X number of cultural experiences. There is a difference between requiring students to attend events versus 100 hours of volunteer time through student learning.
- 33% of FY students and 25% of SRs are participating in exhibit, play, etc. Is this reflecting our general education program and individual course requirements? We shouldn't mess that up too much as it is getting some students out there and participating in these types of activities.
- Is there a way we can force failure on our students? What if they played soccer for a year and lost every game and did not get a participation trophy at the end. Kids don't value trophies anymore. They may actually just sell them.

- What about an ability of our students to differentiate between personal and professional criticism. During the simulated audit activity, faculty treats students as employees with very candid remarks. Reports need to be written in a professional, client-centered way. Reports would be sent back. This is a sophisticated project and it is what they do. There is clear organization with real world activities. We need to set expectations, review the expectations, and then tell them they aren't meeting expectations, whether or not they have tears in their eyes.
- How can we provide additional opportunities to learn with out of class experiences as well: Interns are often "beaten about" as regular employees? Are we sure their experiences really translate.
- This does inform some good things about group projects, but still have others who do not pull their weight and don't do their jobs.
- There needs to be a happy medium within learning how to work with others. There needs to be a commitment on the part of students as to how to confront conflict. They can choose a path and perhaps deal with hard choices and adversity. This can be more difficult with actual students than actual classroom or lab experiences.
- Are students just participating in these activities to pad their resumes?
- Can Bradley become more distinctive through using measures of common sense in addition to academic sense?
- How is it that some student groups thrive without adults, such as the Barbeque Kittens or the sci-fi group? Students keep these groups going. Do these groups fill a need that kids have or want that other groups may not provide?
- What is our responsibility to students who put together a poor resume and post it on the Smith Career Center site for future employers? How do you get them to come to activities? Smith Career Center works with students and employers, what is their responsibility?
- Do we have a way to measure what outside activities are achieving? Can you assess this? Prove what they are learning to be true? Can we get rid of the groups that need to go? Are students overscheduled? Are they doing too many extra activities? International students seem to stick to the basics and focus on education.
- It is more important for students to do a few things well than to be overscheduled.

### **How do we know if these out-of-class activities are having positive impacts on student learning?**

- In general is there a need to find out in a more formal way how these activities impact our students?
- Employment related activities may have more direct measures of learning. It is harder to assess those experiences not employment related.
- Do we know that the 80/20 rule is applying to Bradley students? True leaders in these organizations may be someone else? Do we need to know this?

- Have we ever done an alumni survey on their activities outside the classroom? Maybe in an alumni survey we can ask: How have extracurricular activities impacted your experiences? Now that you're out in the world.
- Can we reach alumni through the Bradley alum facebook site?
- Have we studied ourselves?
- What about NSSE data? What have we done with it? How has it been shared? (Is this the first time NSSE has been shared?)
- Fundamentally, do students understand they are building resumes? Does it matter? Is that our job?
- There is worry that our students are not competitive in the workplace because they are spending more time developing social skills.
- There is an amazing amount of data "out there."
- Employers pump money back into schools with high performing students. They keep lists of schools where they prefer not to get students from, because they may mess with the organizational culture.
- There is more money spent on recruiting and attracting personnel. Employers have good data on people. Some of that needs to be translated back to the real world.
- What about employer surveys?
- Smith Career Center conducts a recruitment survey, a survey comparing Bradley students to other students from other schools.