

Project SHINE: Building Partnerships Across Ages, Cultures and Institutions

Every week in Chicago, Sarah, a college student, visits the home of an elderly Bosnian refugee to help her prepare for the U.S. citizenship exam. In Miami and San Francisco, students “coach” older immigrants and refugees who are struggling to learn English and U.S. history in overcrowded citizenship/ESL classes. Bilingual and native- English speaking students in Boston and Philadelphia work together at community-based organizations to conduct individual and small group tutoring sessions for Russian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Haitian, Korean, and Latino older adults. All of these students are participating in SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders), a multicultural, intergenerational service-learning initiative that mobilizes a diverse group of college students to provide language, literacy, and citizenship tutoring to elderly immigrants and refugees in 5 cities across the country.

Funded by the Corporation for National Service and the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund, Project SHINE has expanded the capacity of community-based organizations to serve older immigrants and refugees by building partnerships with institutions of higher education. The institutions currently involved include: San Francisco State University, City College of San Francisco, Loyola University, Northeastern University, Florida International University, and Temple University. The Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple serves as the national coordinator of the project. Tutor materials and a program manual developed by Temple have facilitated the replication of the program. Since 1997, over 1000 college students have provided over 25,000 hours of instruction to approximately 3500 limited-English speaking elders at 37 community sites in Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, Miami, and Philadelphia.

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SHINE is unique in a number of ways. First, it intentionally recruits bilingual/bicultural students to work with native English-speaking students in the provision of service. In some cities, the bilingual students function as site coordinators, serving as a linguistic and cultural bridge between the college tutors and the elderly learners. Secondly, SHINE integrates three streams of service. Students can participate as part of a service-learning course, through the work-study program, or as a community service volunteer. This approach not only increases the potential number of participants, it also enables students to continue their service over a sustained period of time. A recent study by the Rand Corporation (1999) found that service-learning opportunities that involve more than 20 hours/semester have the greatest impact on students. At least 1/3 of students have participated in SHINE more than one semester. Thirdly, this project provides real life opportunities for students to learn more about their own and/or other cultures. Stereotypes are debunked and understanding is enhanced as young and old from different ethnic groups form relationships and learn from each other. A student from Miami captures the reciprocity inherent in these relationships: *“I thought I was the one who was going to do the teaching, but to my surprise, I was the one doing the learning. I learned not to give up so easily...If an 83 year old Hispanic man can learn to read and write English, I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.”*

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SHINE volunteers tutor elderly immigrants and refugees in English and citizenship preparation.

In each city, SHINE has become an integral part of the service-learning infrastructure of the universities in which it is housed. Typically, a part-time coordinator recruits students through existing service-learning courses and through courses which are closely connected in content to the multi-cultural/intergenerational focus of the program (e.g. political science, education, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) anthropology,

family studies, English, modern languages, sociology, urban studies, Asian studies, La Raza, and social work/human services). Identifying faculty who are willing to promote the program among their peers has been a successful strategy for expanding the number of courses in which SHINE is offered. In addition to courses, SHINE tutors are also recruited through the work study program, student organizations, and general advertising in student publications and/or the web.

SHINE coordinators build and maintain partnerships with local community organizations; recruit, train, place and monitor students at various community sites; and provide support and technical assistance throughout the semester. Students receive approximately eight hours of training that sensitizes them to the needs and resources of older immigrants and refugees, helps them develop specific techniques for teaching ESL and civics, and increases their understanding of the naturalization process. Following training, they select the site at which they'd like to volunteer. In cities like San Francisco and Miami, well-organized, centralized literacy delivery systems exist through community colleges and/or the public schools where students provide individualized instruction to older learners in overcrowded classrooms. Students in other cities provide one to one or small group tutoring to older learners at community centers, temples and churches, senior housing developments, and ethnic-based organizations. Students are supervised on site by classroom teachers, staff of community organizations and, in some cities, bilingual students who function as site coordinators. Training and supervision are two more best practices cited by the Rand study which contribute to quality service learning for students.

Temple University is also piloting a SHINE high school-college partnership program in Philadelphia where poor, inner city high school students are buddied with experienced SHINE tutors at selected community sites. Because SHINE is a content-based, service-learning project that focuses on English language, literacy and U.S. civics, it can provide a powerful educational opportunity for high school students, as well as serve as a bridge to higher education. Working side by side with college students will help high school students, who may not see college as an achievable goal, develop the concrete skills college-bound students need and help them overcome some of the barriers to higher

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education. As service learning increasingly becomes a requirement for high school graduation, there is great potential for establishing high school-college partnerships in cities across the country.

Evaluations of SHINE show that this is clearly a “win-win” program for both older learners and college students. Citizenship teachers and staff at community-based agencies emphasize the value of providing older learners opportunities for individualized attention from tutors who are enthusiastic and motivating. Elders appreciate the interest expressed by tutors and particularly value the relationships they develop with both American-born students and young people from their own ethnic community. College students have consistently reported a deeper understanding of civics and the meaning of citizenship, a new-found respect for older adults, and a greater appreciation of diversity. Some students have changed majors, choosing careers in education or human services as a result of this experience. Many of the students who were immigrants themselves have become motivated to become U.S. citizens and help their parents and grandparents prepare for the citizenship exam.

Project SHINE has demonstrated over the past three years that it is a highly successful vehicle for promoting partnerships across ages, cultures, and institutions and addressing the literacy needs of elderly immigrants and refugees. Plans are underway to replicate SHINE in six new cities over the next three years. If you would like more information about how to become involved in this exciting program, contact Tina Kluetmeier, National Director, at 215-204-3212 or tinak@astro.temple.edu. *

Facilitators to Faculty Participation in Service Learning

Two studies¹ conducted by the staff at the UCLA Service-Learning Clearinghouse Project found that various factors help to facilitate higher education faculty involvement in service learning.

Having a service-learning coordinator or a service-learning center on the campus was extremely helpful to getting faculty to participate in service learning since they often offer the following types of services:

- Provide training workshops and resource materials
- Connect faculty with other faculty who are engaged in service learning
- Provide logistical support (coordinating transportation, documenting student hours, arranging service placements, etc.)

Other factors which facilitate faculty engagement in service learning included the opportunity to collaborate or team teach a service-learning course and receiving grant funding, or incentive awards to integrate service learning into their curricula. *

¹ Ikeda, E.K. (1999) *How does service enhance learning? Toward an understanding of the process*. Unpublished Dissertation.

Sizwe, N. (1999) *Service learning needs assessment*. Available from <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/slc/>