

Abstract

There is a pervasive problem among college students, universities, and honors colleges in the modern day. With a focus on their academic pursuits, students and faculty remain in their "campus" mindsets and lose sight of the community and the people living in it. Universities may throw around words such as community engagement or service learning, but very few actually execute these ideas to make a genuine difference in the community. Even among honors colleges, community engagement is more often visualized as one-off volunteering requirements for students. While this type of volunteerism is beneficial, there are problems with short term volunteering. When students only involve themselves in community projects for short, disjointed periods of time, there is no lasting impact, no relationship built, and no long-term benefits to all involved. Our research examines what community engagement is, why it should be an integral component to any honors program, and the best practices for creating a sustainable community engagement program in any university or honors college community. With so much focus on service learning in honors communities, this research strives to push further and add a new perspective to the conversation, a perspective where the focus is almost entirely outside of the classroom. In our research, we use our campus, Ball State University, and its position in the Muncie, Indiana community to conceptualize how honors colleges and their students can lead the way to blazing a new path in community engagement. In the appendix, we have shared a few materials to help jumpstart the creation of long-term community engagement programs, including the "Ten Ways to Fail" handout we created in the process of this research.

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