

ISSUES AND ACTION RESOURCE MANUAL

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ISSUES AND ACTION RESOURCE MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

This resource manual has been written for students, faculty, and administrators to involve students in examining the issues that surround the action of community service and begin Issues and Action projects on your own campus. The purpose of this manual is to pass along the best of these ideas so that students on campuses nationwide can benefit from exploring the issues relating to their service work.

NEED FOR ISSUES AND ACTION PROJECTS

Issues and Action projects enable students to examine issues they encounter through their community service work. Through Issues and Action projects young people examine the causes of community problems, as well as related government and social policies. Through the process suggested in this manual, students can become more actively involved in creating effective solutions to community problems.

Issues and Action projects can serve as the vehicle for providing students with information and educational programming on the issues relating to their service work. By adding an issues component, students not only serve

in local literacy programs, food lines and shelters, but they can increase their understanding of underlying factors that might have caused someone to be without basic skills, food or a place to sleep.

When students develop this deepened understanding of important issues, they undoubtedly become more effective volunteers. This understanding can also motivate students to act as informed and responsible citizens in the future. By researching issues and taking action, students can encourage program coordinators, project directors, staff, faculty and other students to create ways to increase campus awareness of crucial community issues. Reflecting upon these and similar questions while engaged in community service will help to achieve this goal:

- What is the purpose of doing service work?
- How can service build self-sufficiency rather than continued dependency?
- How can reflection lead to improved service work?
- What issues/policies are affecting the communities where students serve?
- How can the knowledge gained from studying these issues be used to find solutions to community problems?

- What arenas are available to students to affect policy on a personal, community, university or government level?
- What strategies/methods have led to prolonged, effective social change?
- How can change come from service work?
- What are the limitations of service work for promoting change?
- Can these limitations be overcome by supplementing the action of service with other types of action that address the same issues from another level (e.g., advocacy work, community organizing, or political involvement)?

On many campuses students have begun to address these and similar questions. They are creating ways to involve other students and faculty in examining the issues of homelessness, hunger, literacy, the environment, the elderly, the disabled, and many more. Students are doing this by sponsoring films, discussion groups, lecture series and letter writing campaigns; by starting teach-ins and issue-focused classes, and by writing articles in campus and national publications.

For example, while continuing to serve in overnight shelters, students should also seek long-term solutions to the homeless crisis, possibly by advocating for increased government funding to

build new low-income housing units and community-based mental health clinics. Similarly, a campus environmental project might help organize the local community to implement a paper recycling program, while literacy volunteers could urge elected officials to support the work of local adult basic education programs.

This manual does not endorse advocacy, direct service, community organizing, political involvement, or any other method of action. Rather, Issues and Action projects should emphasize the need to employ all these methods to promote effective social change.

OUTLINE

The manual provides examples of effective programs and suggestions on how to start similar issue-oriented programs on campus. Below are summaries of the each chapter to help you decide which sections will be most beneficial as you initiate an Issues and Action event or program on your campus.

1) Examining and Presenting an Issue

The essential aspects of a fair and thorough presentation of an issue are included in this chapter. This format can be used as a guideline to leading discussions or debates, writing issue-oriented papers, and in planning a variety of other types of presentations. It offers guidelines for researching the

history of an issue; past, current and proposed public policy; current programs and proposed solutions for addressing an issue. It also gives suggestions on how to synthesize these elements into an organized presentation.

2) Educating Students Involved in Community Service

This chapter gives concrete examples of orientations, in-service training, and other programs used to inform student volunteers about the issues relating to their specific service projects and to improve the quality of service offered. The programs highlighted are designed to supplement agency training by giving background information on the constituencies served and seminars on the root causes and other complicated aspects of a particular issue.

3) Campus-Wide Education on Community Issues

While emphasizing the importance of student awareness of the issues affecting the community in which they live, this chapter gives specific examples of how committed and experienced student volunteers have organized campus-wide educational events on community issues.

4) Community Service and the Classroom

Some of the best programs which have tied classroom experience to service and addressing community problems are profiled in this chapter. It includes sections on integrating

community service into regular course listings, for-credit internships with community agencies, peace and justice studies programs, and guidelines for starting issue-oriented course work.

5) Issues and the Local Community

This chapter demonstrates how students can use the knowledge they have of major issues to keep the local community informed. It also highlights projects students have organized to reach out to their communities.

6) Avenues for Community Involvement

The avenues for direct action profiled in this chapter demonstrate a range of means for students to take other the action of community service and attack the same issues from another perspective. Sections on how to organize a letter writing campaign or petition drive, write newspaper editorials supporting a cause, do advocacy work and/or community organizing are included.

The examples cited in the manual include contacts who can provide more information about a particular project. If you have further questions or can offer other ideas for effective issues projects which could be included in the second edition of this manual, please call or write the Youth Policy Institute, 1221 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite B, Washington, D.C. 20005, (202) 638-2144.

EXAMINING AND PRESENTING AN ISSUE

"The great end of life is not knowledge, but action."

Thomas Henry Huxley

After spending a great deal of time and effort serving in the community, you may have decided that your service organization must make an effort to educate the *campus* and *local* communities about root causes of the problems you are working to address. Your group's work in homeless shelters, soup kitchens, elderly homes, and local schools has probably given you enough background knowledge to begin raising awareness about the issues relating to your work. This will heighten student sensitivity and help increase your volunteer base.

PLANNING AN ISSUE PRESENTATION

It is important to remember that the purpose of examining and presenting an issue is to help students and communities improve strategies for *taking action*, not simply to be an end in itself. If the process of presenting an issue becomes so time-consuming that it undermines an organization's ability to be a force behind positive change in the community, some needed perspective has been lost.

Remember, we cannot study a community's problems away. We also cannot be effective volunteers without a real understanding of the issues relating to our service work.

The key is to balance the need to be informed and the need to take effective action.

The guidelines offered below provide a systematic way to increase student and community awareness of major issues. They should prove useful in writing academic papers on an issue and in planning nearly all of the types of educational programs cited in this manual. Here's how to get started:

- First, gather a group of interested students to discuss the scope of the problem and to determine who has the power to push through necessary changes (i.e. the mayor, the local chamber of commerce, and/or the local citizens).
- Figure out what involved students have done to address the issue. Consider how the group's experience can best be illustrated to entice others to work for solutions to local problems.
- Actively seek the input of community members and those who work on the issues full-time, rather than planning blindly for them.

Once you have gathered your planning committee, it is time to plan the content of your presentation. Comprehensive issues presentations should include brief analysis in each of the following areas:

- 1) History of the problem (origins, causes, milestones);
- 2) Current status (how many are affected, cost to the individual and society);
- 3) Existing and future federal, state and local legislation addressing or perhaps even magnifying a community problem;
- 4) Proposed solutions for eliminating the problem (i.e. non-profit/non-governmental program initiatives);
- 5) Avenues for student involvement;
- 6) Resources available for those wishing to learn more about an issue.

Further explanations of what each of these sections entails and how to go about finding this information are offered below.

HISTORY

Gather enough information to outline a concise history of the problem. This will help give people a sense of how a problem has evolved to its current status. Providing a summary of what strategies have/ have not worked also can help ensure that successful efforts will be repeated

and that mistakes will not. Be sure to include the following in the analysis:

- When an issue first became recognizable;
- How the problem has grown;
- What regions/populations have been hardest hit historically;
- Details on the causes of the problem and efforts to curb its scope, placing particular emphasis on the local history (i.e. When did the area's soup kitchen first open and why?).

Several groups can be of help in preparing these histories:

- Professors in history, urban studies, sociology, environmental science and other academic departments.
- The research or outreach coordinators of community service, grass roots and non-profit organizations.
- City, state, and federal government human services agencies for statistics, budgets, and other relevant data.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE PROBLEM

After reviewing the history, the next step is to provide information on the current status of the problem. Use this portion of the presentation to demonstrate two things:

- How the problem is impacting people's lives,
- The need for the community to become involved.

Here are some pointers on how to bring a contemporary issue to life and motivate a community to take action:

- Include demographics of those currently affected (i.e. is the problem worst among women, a particular age or ethnic group, or single-parent families).
- Illustrate connections between these statistics and personal experience. For example, encourage students to think about the number of homeless people they pass downtown. Your audience may unknowingly be facing the problem everyday.
- Use statistics that are relevant to your audience. Show how unsolved problems cost taxpayers money and result in a loss of productivity and wasted human potential. More people grow

concerned about environmental issues when forced to pay higher taxes to purify toxic water supplies.

LEGISLATION AND THE ISSUES

It is very difficult to separate major issues from the legislation affecting them. Because laws can contribute to community problems or help to eliminate them, reviewing past, current and proposed legislation is essential to comprehensive analysis of almost any issue. Many of the issues students confront in their service work can also be addressed through legislative action. Use detailed information about related legislation to encourage students and community members to affect change through the political arena as well. Starting this chain of action may not be a simple process, involving research at the municipal, state and federal level.

The approach to following legislation should be two-fold:

- Research the immediate efforts to provide resources and relief to the problem.
- Study legislation that may *cause* a problem or promote its continued existence. Policy institutes and special interest groups usually are abreast of such legislation. The remarks of government officials also occasionally point to specific laws magnifying community problems.

Start by researching the activities of these arenas where policy is formed and restructured:

- City/town council or county seat
- State capitol including the governor's office and state assemblies
- The United States Senate and House of Representatives

Be sure to keep track of legislation at all levels of government as they are all likely to impact the issues of concern to you. Here are some examples of how legislation at every level can effect the local community:

- County and local governments control the distribution of federal block grants for housing renovation and educational programs;
- States determine environmental codes or the size of welfare payments;
- Federal funds affect countless aspects of public welfare, including money for state and municipal programs.

Legislative records tracking enacted laws are published on each of these jurisdictional levels. Contact your city or county government offices about recent local legislation. State legislative records and the

Congressional Record are available at most college libraries. These resources index and catalogue legislation by general categories such as health, education, and the environment.

Other resources which should prove helpful are the *Federal Yellow Book* and the *Congressional Yellow Book*. The *Federal Yellow Book* lists phone numbers and contact persons for all agencies and divisions of the federal government. The *Congressional Yellow Book* list contacts for the various congressional committees and sub-committees that review and write national legislation. Phone books with information on the services state and local governments provide are available in most areas.

These resources can help your organization to do the following things:

- Determine which congressional committee or federal agency is most involved in a particular issue area;
- Find out which bills are currently addressing the issue under consideration;
- Research what government funding is available to relieve or eliminate the problems on which your group is working;
- Find out which agencies have been allocated money and for what specific programs;

- Contact the administering agencies for more detailed information about various government funded programs and their effectiveness.

After finding the agency which oversees a particular policy area or program, the process for tracking state or local legislation is largely similar to the above outline for reviewing federal policy.

Providing information about how to respond politically to an issue is the final step in the process of tracking legislation. Petitions, letter writing campaigns, and community organizing are among a number of strategies used to press for effective and humane laws. Some of these avenues for involvement may be workable within the structure of your service organization. If not, your organization can also refer students to other organizations which address these issues on another level. (For more information on how to develop these responses, see the chapter *Avenues for Community Involvement*.)

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The next step in presenting an issue is highlighting potential solutions to a particular problem. This requires two things:

- examining the effectiveness of existing programs;
- investigating new and proposed initiatives.

First, look at programs already working on an issue. Start with the programs the campus service organization knows first hand. Then use the contacts students have developed with various community and national organizations to investigate other programs.

After assembling a variety of approaches (both governmental and private sector) for attacking an issue, compare the effectiveness of all of these methods. The following factors should all be considered in making this comparison:

- The time and monetary costs of each;
- The number of people each has involved;
- Tangible measures of change that have come about as a direct result of the various programs (i.e. number of tons of aluminum a drive has recycled, rising achievement test scores for enrollees in a specific tutorial program).

After comparing existing solutions, solicit student's opinions on the issues presented. Encourage them to reflect upon why certain elements of a program did or did not work. As they have in the past, students may

be able to synthesize this information and propose creative new initiatives. Actively involving students in discussing an issue will add life to a presentation, heighten interest and increase the likelihood of their becoming involved.

AVENUES FOR STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Once your audience has received a thorough education on an issue, take the problems under discussion beyond the theoretical realm. Make a concerted effort to motivate students to respond personally to the knowledge they have just gained. Some specific tips on how to do this include:

- Highlight your campus organization's service programs for those wishing to get involved.
- Follow-up with specific ideas to match individual interests.
- Invite participants to come by the campus service organization to ask questions.
- Encourage students to spend a day looking at how a soup kitchen runs, or an afternoon working on a special project with a youth recreation center.
- Have them accompany a volunteer on his/her weekly visit to an elderly home or to tutor in a local school.

- Bring sign-up forms and your organization's brochures or public relations materials if available.
- If your student volunteer organization does not do political advocacy work for the homeless, disabled, or other groups you serve, refer interested people to a campus- or community-based organization that does.

After students are introduced to different ways to get involved, they will likely find it to be an enjoyable starting place for making a commitment to an issue.

Also try to coordinate with other issues forums presented by campus groups not directly affiliated with your service organization: Amnesty International, political clubs, scholar's and honor societies, residence hall associations, college speakers series, religious groups, or academic departments. Find out when they are holding their events. Ask in advance if you can join their discussion to make a presentation on how students can get involved in the issues they are learning about. Even if the service is only mildly related to the issue under consideration, do not miss the chance to capitalize on the increased sensitivity to the need to become involved.

The community service centers that are effectively using their issues programs as a recruitment tool are tightly networked with other campus programming groups. They are

benefiting from these relationships by employing the help of these groups to spread the word about the issues and the need for community involvement.

RESOURCES

While many students who attend an issue presentation will want to become involved immediately, others may wish to learn more about the topic before making a commitment. This is perfectly acceptable. However, your organization can help its cause by taking the first step for these individuals. Provide a list of organizations to contact, as well as books, newsletters and films which students can use to satisfy their curiosity. Take note of students who ask for more information and call them a few weeks later to see how their search is going. This way no interested students slip through the cracks.

ORGANIZING A PRESENTATION

With so much information to cover to thoroughly analyze an issue, it is crucial that your presentation be well organized. While in-depth study of any one element of an issue could be exhaustive, the purpose of such a presentation is to provide a *comprehensive, yet concise overview* of the issue under discussion. Here are some tips that will help to reach this goal:

- While you may have five pages of notes on each of the six broad subject areas listed above, cover only the major points in each area;
- Try to speak for only three to five minutes on each area—“lecturing” for over thirty minutes will quickly bore most audiences;
- Avoid unnecessary or excessive use of technical jargon;
- If possible, supplement your presentation with articles and “fact sheets” providing background information on the topic;
- Leave time for a question and answer period. This is when your audience can plunge into an issue in greater depth;
- Become well versed on the topic. Background research not used in the presentation will help you to answer questions. This will establish your authority as an expert and aid students in making informed decisions;
- Unlike personal presentations, academic reports and research papers can cover each area in greater detail as they are more formal and allow little opportunity for follow-up questions or activities.

In following these guidelines, there are two types of presentations students can organize:

- Those that offer a variety of perspectives on an issue (i.e., issue forums, debates).
- Those that offer a single viewpoint of or solution to a community problem.

Both strategies are legitimate and have their own advantages and disadvantages. For example, a debate on homelessness sponsored by a neutral party may attract students from a variety of political perspectives to become involved. In contrast, your organization's purpose may be best served by advocating a particular solution to a community problem. Broad-based support, though often desirable, is not necessarily a prerequisite to taking effective action in the community.

Regardless of which type of presentation your organization chooses, it will become more legitimate if:

- you understand a variety of viewpoints on an issue, and
- can answer questions relating to a broad range of proposed solutions.

Following the above guidelines should provide the framework to begin planning an issues presentation. As these are only bare-bones suggestions on structure, much of the decision making regarding creativity and style will be left to the presenter. Numerous examples of presentation methods are profiled throughout the manual, particularly in the section *Campus-wide Education on Community Issues*.

EDUCATING STUDENTS INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

When most colleges and universities begin their community service programs, the initial emphasis is placed on challenging large numbers of students to become actively involved in their communities. Students enthusiastically work in shelters, soup kitchens, classrooms, and countless other action programs designed to meet some of society's most urgent needs.

As these campus-based community service organizations become more established, they are able to concentrate on addressing problems that arise amid all the excitement of initiating their programs. One obvious need for improvement is to keep students better informed about the issues affecting their communities.

Many campus service organizations have worked to improve their service training and education programs to prepare students for the new situations they encounter in the community. To this end, these organizations develop "in-services" and other educational programs which are useful in working with the homeless, the physically disabled, "at-risk youth," and other groups with whom students may be sharing their talents. Such programs are designed to:

- sensitize students to the economic, racial, and social backgrounds of those served;
- promote an understanding of the issues essential to providing effective community service;

- supplement and support any training provided by community agencies.

These educational programs are increasing student sensitivity to their community and helping volunteers to develop specific skills which improve the quality of service offered. The most effective of these programs are those that follow the student from start to finish with up-to-date resource materials and a comprehensive support network.

SERVICE EDUCATION

Here are some examples of successful service education programs:

Campus Edge at Fordham University

- The project houses twenty-two students on a dormitory floor. The campus housing arrangement is specifically structured for students who are active in community service work and are seeking an environment which supports their concern for the community. The program offers structured and informal opportunities to share and build upon the varied experiences that result from working in the community. Events might include speakers, films, and discussion groups. The primary benefit lies in having students, most of whom are tutors, share their experiences and exchange ideas in the relaxed setting of the dormitory. [Contact Fordham University Community Service Program, (212) 579-2482].

Appalachian State University's Student Service Learning Project

spend a day, as a group, becoming oriented to community service work, poverty, and the policies and procedures of their organization. They also participate in exercises designed to raise consciousness and sensitize students to local social problems. Once assigned to an agency, volunteers are given specific training based on their responsibilities and the needs of the population served. All volunteers are provided with in-service training on a variety of topics including: communication, crisis intervention, child welfare, careers in human service, first aid, adolescent development, hunger and nutrition. Students are encouraged to initiate community issue forums for discussion for these and other topics as need or interest arises. [Contact *Appalachian State University Appalachian + Community Together (ACT)*, (704) 262-2193.]

Georgetown University' District Action Project (DAP) begin volunteering at their projects throughout Washington, they must attend a weekend retreat where they discuss the upcoming community service requirement and what it means to them and the people they will serve. DAPers meet weekly in small groups to grapple with current events and issues affecting the community. The DAP coordinator, who works in the Volunteer and Public Service Center, is always available to discuss

issues and problems relating to the students' placements. [Contact *Georgetown University Volunteer and Public Service Center*, (202) 687-3703].

University of Pennsylvania's Penn Extension provides volunteers with a number of in-service and information sessions. They have an on-going issue related support group for women volunteers and recently completed a workshop on racism and classism designed to increase sensitivity to the differing economic resources of most Penn students and their Philadelphia neighbors. Penn's hospitality coalition is planning a workshop with the Delaware Non-Violent Training Collective to teach volunteers how to interact under stress and reduce tension in difficult situations arising during their work in Philadelphia's homeless shelters. The program came about as a direct response to student concern about minimizing stress in the shelter environment. [Contact *University of Pennsylvania Program for Student Community Involvement*, (215) 898-4831.]

Brown Community Outreach (BCO) has a system in which four program coordinators serve as a support system for Brown students volunteering in the Providence area. With offices in the broad groupings of children's issues, crisis intervention, educational issues, and mental/health issues, volunteers having difficulty with a situation, task or person can relate this to their respective coordinator.

The coordinator, usually a senior or long-time volunteer with expertise in a particular issue area, can either offer advice, research the issue, or refer the volunteer to a helpful community organization. [Contact Brown Community Outreach, (401) 863-3676.]

Harvard University's Phillip Brooks House insists that all interested students first spend a day observing the program with which they will be working. This allows them to see the neighborhood, meet some of those already involved, and ask questions about the program. Thus the volunteer has a feel for the program from the start [Contact Phillips Brooks House, (617) 495-2116].

Columbia University in New York, Community Impact has welcomed a homeless person, Mike Zudak, into its office as an informal means of educating volunteers. Zudak spends a few hours a day talking with students about the plight of the homeless. He also helps Community Impact by selling rummage items to raise funds for their continued work with the homeless. [Contact Community Impact, (212) 854-1492.]

ORGANIZING VOLUNTEER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organizing training sessions for volunteers is not difficult to do, but requires some planning. As part of

any successful service education program, students should be informed about the following things:

- the purpose, goals, and structure of the campus service organization through which students will be working;
- the goals and objectives of the community agency and its program;
- background information about the people involved in the program;
- the role of volunteers in the program and a description of what their first day might be like;
- background about the clients students will be working with;
- the history of the program;
- an overview of the issues which closely relate to the program (i.e. why is there a need for the program, etc.);
- information and skills training necessary to make effective decisions during the course of the student's work;
- an opportunity for students to ask questions on any of the topics covered during their training.

OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

In addition to this basic orientation to a program, it may be helpful to offer seminars or speaker series.

The following scenarios show how for outside speakers can be useful to your program.

- Because the new volunteers lacked exposure to mentally ill people, they had little idea of how to handle such situations. One possible solution is to invite a counselor, social worker, or psychologist from the local mental health clinic to speak about particular mental illnesses most common among homeless people. The speaker can offer students suggestions on how to handle similar episodes or emergencies until professional help becomes available.
- The student coordinator and the teacher agree to organize a seminar with a learning specialist from the school system. The seminar is designed to teach volunteers ways to identify specific learning disabilities and present some basic strategies for working with learning disabled students.
- The students did not know enough about drugs to verify their suspicions, so they worked with the center staff to recruit a specialist from a local drug rehabilitation center. The specialist outlined ways to detect signs of possible drug abuse and gave information about where to refer young people for help. The program was repeated for students serving in Boys and Girls clubs, Big Siblings, and school tutoring programs.
- Conflict resolution is becoming increasingly relevant to a number of other service arenas, including work in domestic violence, with at-risk youth, or in stressful environments such as homeless shelters. Such skills can also benefit students personally in arenas unrelated to their service work.

While such seminars may not be a part of the regular training offered by a community agency, these speakers are extremely helpful and are usually not hard to find. (For more information, please see the section on Speakers Forums in the chapter Campus-Wide Education.) In fact, most agencies would delight in having their students receive such excellent background training. The agencies may be able to help organize the seminars or even pay for a speaker if he/she does not offer his/her services free of charge.

HINTS ON PLANNING STUDENT TRAINING

A few other helpful hints on planning these in-services:

- Be considerate of students' schedules. Avoid scheduling speakers during mid-terms, early mornings or weekends. Students are most often available in the late afternoons and early evenings, times most likely to fit the schedules of people working in the community as well.
- If the event is mandatory for all participants in a particular program, make sure it is highly publicized well in advance so students can put it on their calendars early. It is a good idea to schedule the training at least twice to minimize conflicts if many

people are expected to participate.

- Keep the sessions to an hour when possible. Although these in-services are a crucial part of their training, students have many demands on their time and will resent further meetings if they anticipate long, drawn-out affairs.
- Serving a meal or free food is always popular.

Whether the campus service organization chooses to offer in-services or some other type of volunteer education program, the benefits to the program, the volunteers and the community are substantial. Students will be better informed and more likely to offer higher quality service. The university will also be presenting itself well to the community it serves, further improving town-gown relations.

for up-to-date information on developments on community and national issues.

The strength in this concept is that it is so easy to do. Students involved in community service have first-hand knowledge of the major issues of our day. The student working in shelters may not truly know what it means to be homeless, but can certainly teach the university community a great deal about what the problem entails. Similarly, students serving in local schools and boys or girls clubs can offer insights about why some of our nation's youth are considered "at-risk." Given their wealth of direct experience and many contacts with community resources, students should be challenged to use their varied talents to educate the entire campus.

This educational programming will attract new members to your organization for one reason: volunteering is like most anything else in that the key to getting people to take action lies in raising their awareness of a need. Heightening awareness to a point of taking action requires that people come to realize three things:

- The existence of many community problems;
- How these problems affect our entire society;

- The impact determined people can have on societal problems.

Effective issues and action programs continually challenge students with information about the causes of community problems and the need for community involvement. By providing the campus with numerous educational forums through a variety of mediums and by actively recruiting new members, your service organization can make it difficult for students to ignore crucial issues affecting your community. Films, lecture series, articles in campus publications, discussion groups, and individual presentations can all be used to demonstrate the need for personal involvement.

SUCCESSFUL CAMPUS-WIDE EDUCATION EFFORTS

Although any number of tactics might be successful in raising students' awareness levels and fostering their involvement in regional, national, and international issues, here are some distinct characteristics of successful endeavors:

- 1) *Blitz*... whether it is the environment or education, handicapped or hunger, literacy or latch-key, do not hesitate to employ any medium available to draw attention to your issue. Use newspaper articles, poetry readings, lectures, films, songfests, plays or the classroom to make your point. The key is to draw upon numerous resources so the issue becomes visible and pervasive.

2) *Imagination*... Do not be afraid to try unusual or entirely new ideas to publicize your issue. A lip-sync contest, tricycle race or junkyard car destruction party can help raise money and make an issue the talk of the campus! Challenge rival groups to "outdo each other" in publicizing an issue.

3) *Inclusion*... Ask a fraternity or ethnic organization to throw a benefit party or plan a dinner fundraiser, have the debate club sponsor a forum, get a communications class to produce a film or video, and ask the English department to hold an essay contest. The more people you involve, the more people who will consider the issue and who will feel empowered that their contributions have an impact.

4) *Follow-up!!!!* If an audience is to become actively involved, you must show them how to do so. After every event, give concrete examples of how to take action on the issue under discussion. Bring recruitment cards, forms, and flyers about your organization and the specific programs you offer. Encourage the enthusiasts to make weekly visits to a local shelter, school, boys club, or community agency. Keep a list of new names and call them promptly so that no potentially interested people are lost to the organization.

Profiled below are a few programs that are both imaginative and thorough in their effort to raise awareness of community issues on campus.

RESIDENCE HALLS

• *Emory University's College Freshman Seminar* program is a dorm-based weekly discussion series in which students choose a different topic or activity every week. Each seminar has a faculty moderator and student facilitator. One strength of the program is that it is closely tied to Volunteer Emory, the school's community service center. As a result, seminar groups in the four participating dorms become involved in at least one service project in the Atlanta community per semester. A group of fifteen to twenty students might spend an afternoon at an elderly home, work with Atlanta's Boys or Girls Clubs, or listen to a presentation on domestic violence or the environment. These activities are usually followed by group discussions led by informed community organizers. Presentations can be followed by information on how students can get involved on a more permanent basis. The Freshman Seminar program has proven extremely effective in both raising awareness of important local issues and increasing Emory's volunteer base. [Contact Volunteer Emory, (404) 727-6268.]

- The *Stanford Volunteer Network* uses Community Service Representatives in each of the halls to keep dorm members informed about community issues and service opportunities. The CSRs are strongly encouraged to organize at least two dorm service events each semester and frequently offer issue-oriented education programs. [Contact the *Stanford Volunteer Network*, (415) 725-2865.]

NEWSLETTERS

Several community service programs use newsletters to keep the student body informed about the latest in volunteer opportunities and concerns. Most of these newsletters are published monthly or more frequently. Some programs, like the Tufts Leonard Carmichael Society, publish a general newsletter describing past, current, and future involvement of all student volunteers. Other schools like SUNY Cortland use articles from the COOL newsletter, *Campus Outreach*, to update the campus on major issues relating to community service.

Some individual projects within a campus service organization publish their own newsletters. The latter option has worked particularly well for Harvard University's Phillip Brooks House Association, where the environmental action and homeless committees publish the most current information on local, national, and international issues. [Contact *Phillips Brooks House Association*, (617) 495-2116.]

CAMPUS NEWSPAPERS

Student-run newspapers can serve as a strong and much needed voice for a campus service organization. At *Rice University* in Houston, Texas the campus daily features a regular section that tells of current and one-time volunteer opportunities available through the school's community service organization, RSVP. In addition to providing reminders of special projects and registration information, many schools use these weekly or bi-weekly columns to highlight successful programs and present reflection essays by individual volunteers as a way to heighten awareness of community issues and spark interest on campus. [Contact the *Rice Student Volunteer Program (RSVP)*, (713) 527-4970.]

TABLE TENTS

Students at *Yale University's Dwight Hall*, Connecticut put 'table tents' in the center of tables in all the main dining facilities. The tents, which are actually small pieces of cardboard standing folded in half, focus on a different issue every week. They provide a brief synopsis of an issue such as homelessness, illiteracy, or the disabled as well as information on how interested people can get involved. After eating, students will frequently get involved in informal

discussions of the highlighted issue. The tents have also served as an extremely effective way for finding last minute volunteers for understaffed projects. [Contact Dwight Hall, (203) 432-2420.]

BROWN BAG LUNCHEONS

At *Lafayette College* in Easton, Pennsylvania, the Chaplain's office sponsors a series of discussions on topics relating to contemporary issues and community concerns. The hour-long weekly discussions over lunch occasionally feature speakers, but are primarily designed to give students, faculty, and staff a chance to talk about subjects such as AIDS, nuclear arms, the Central American political situation, homelessness and world hunger. [Contact Chaplain's Office, *Lafayette College*, (215) 250-5320.]

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

The *Stanford AIDS Education Project* offers several workshops on AIDS each semester for both the Stanford and greater Palo Alto community. The workshops are designed to offer factual information on AIDS, including specifics about how AIDS is transmitted and ways to prevent the spread of AIDS, ARC and other sexually transmitted diseases. [Contact the *Stanford Center for Public Service*, (415) 725-2865.]

FILM SERIES

St. Michael's College in Winooski, Vermont presents a film series with accompanying discussions each semester on a number of topics of interest to both the local community and the nation. Some of last year's films focused on Apartheid, nuclear conflict, civil rights activism, political revolutions, television and cultural conditioning, and homophobia. While last year's series relied primarily on documentaries as a prelude to discussion, the new schedule will rely on both documentaries and feature films.

For example, students in the group will see both "Kramer vs. Kramer" and "In the Best Interest of Children" before talking in an informal setting about their views on divorce as part of a film series on the family. The other two "mini-series" headings focus on "Young People," with separate films on depression, suicide, and alcohol, and on "Societal Awareness," which includes sessions on racism, sexism, and sexual ethics [Contact *Campus Ministries*, (802) 655-2000].

PHOTO ESSAYS

The Community Service Network (CSN) of *Duke University* was one of several campus programs to participate in the first annual Day in the Life of Youth Service. The Day is a project co-sponsored by Youth Service America and COOL in an effort "to document, promote, and celebrate young people making a difference."

As part of The Day, members of CSN took pictures of their work in the community. Duke's chapter of Habitat for Humanity also submitted pictures for the display to publicize their work and to draw attention to the housing needs of low-income families in the Durham area. Other campus service organizations have kept ongoing picture displays in highly frequented areas on campus. Such displays may also help to publicize a specific issue relating to your organization's work. [Contact the Duke University Community Service Network, (919) 684-5154.]

MULTI-CAMPUS ISSUES PROGRAMS

- Student Volunteer Service Weekend in San Diego - In the Spring of 1988, students from *San Diego State University*, *University of California-San Diego*, and the *University of San Diego* joined together to organize a volunteer service weekend. The event was designed to publicize the efforts of student involved in community service as well as some of the issues they are confronting in their work. With presentations on homelessness, education, and AIDS, each campus hosted one issue event open to students from all three schools. After the three issues presentations, the schools cooperated on a clean-up project in affiliation with the National Student Campaign Against Hunger's annual Hunger Clean-up. [Contact UCSD Volunteer Connection, (619) 534-0540, or Volunteer Services at the University of San Diego, (619) 260-4780.]

SPEAKERS FORUMS

Many schools have used speakers with backgrounds in service, advocacy, or community organizing to draw attention to community issues and service work. On other campuses, "big names" and celebrities who are committed to specific issues have been recruited to endorse community involvement. Both options can be used effectively to reach diverse elements of a student body.

Whether it is the celebrity's ability to relate a clever or amusing story, students are sometimes drawn to these events for reasons having little to do with the topic discussed. These programs can still be quite beneficial because these people often possess strong powers of persuasion. Students may be surprised and moved by a dedication to good causes such as the peace movement or the AIDS crisis. *Fordham University* in Bronx, New York has had great success in presenting forums with well known figures such as actor Martin Sheen and activist Howard Zinn.

If your service organization chooses to invite a local activist or government official, there are a number of resources available. These people have direct experience, know the issues thoroughly and can challenge students to become involved by asking the tough questions that others who do not confront these issues full-time may not. Their extensive backgrounds in a particular field allows them to

lead stimulating discussions, relate interesting experiences, and answer questions on the "real world" applications of an issue. Noted author and social critic Jonathan Kozol spoke before students from *Northwestern University* in Evanston, Illinois. The event led to the organization a student-run literacy project at NU.

Many service organizations have set up speakers bureaus to keep track of community members who are willing to come to campus and speak on a variety of issues. The bureau should include any number of people the community service organization has worked with over the years, including:

- people from community agencies such as drug rehabilitation centers, crisis prevention hotlines, and homes for the disabled or battered women;
- members of other community service groups like the United Way, YMCAs/YWCAs, and the local Urban League chapter;
- lobby or public interest groups like the local clean water campaign or environmental protection committee;
- city or town council persons, state senators, and members of Congress.

Starting a speakers bureau is a fairly simple process. Just keep a list of contacts your service organization has made while working in the

community. Ask agency directors or other potential speakers if they would be willing to discuss their work and related issues on campus. Remember that these people are busy, and an initial rejection may be only that. Assure them that their input is welcome whenever convenient. These folks may be able to recommend a replacement or someone to speak on another topic. The list of potential speakers will grow as your service organization makes more contacts in the community. Soon you will have a comprehensive list to make available to residence halls and other interested campus organizations.

After choosing from this list of speakers, it is wise to coordinate with other campus groups to plan these events. Student government, speakers committees, debaters and other special interest clubs all may have money available to co-sponsor an event. Having their co-sponsorship will not only help to cover honorariums, it can also serve to attract and interest people not previously involved in community service.

Some of the following suggestions may be useful in lobbying other organizations to co-sponsor an issues event:

- Identify members of the community service organization who are involved with the other organizations that are potential co-sponsors. Have these members lobby for speakers who are committed to community involvement.

- Keep track of these organizations' calendars to find when they plan their events each semester. Gather students from the service organization to attend these meetings and vote for preferred speakers.
- Challenge organizations with opposing viewpoints to co-sponsor a debate on an issue of interest to the service organization (i.e. have the Young Democrats and Young Republicans present their platforms for addressing homelessness, illiteracy, or environmental protection).
- Submit formal proposals to other organizations to co-sponsor speakers. Nearly all student organizations have budget constraints and will look favorably on programs to help provide additional speakers at reduced cost.

In addition to finding willing co-sponsors, there are several other ingredients which go into planning a successful speakers forum:

- First, invite as many people as possible to include a wide variety of interests and backgrounds.
- Include discussion!! Even the greatest speakers will eventually bore an audience if there is no time for questions. Try to balance the

time between the lecture and the question and answer period.

- Be sure to prepare a back-up list of questions to get the discussion rolling in case the audience is acting unusually shy or is too in awe to respond.
- Ask the school radio station to tape and broadcast speakers events.
- Include current student volunteers in a panel discussion following the featured speaker to emphasize and promote student involvement.
- End the event by highlighting ways students can get involved individually or as a group. Rather than letting enthusiasm dissipate, follow-up by channeling positive energy into creating a plan of action to address an issue.
- Videotape all speeches by experts on an issue.

AWARENESS WEEKS

Many campus-based service programs have drawn attention to issues relating to their projects by organizing awareness weeks. The weeks, which are often arranged in conjunction with national awareness campaigns, are designed to publicize issues through a

series of educational and fundraising events. Successful awareness weeks nearly flood students with opportunities to learn about an issue, and can frequently become the "talk of the campus."

- ***Villanova University Hunger Awareness Week*** – In November, 1987, VU students participated in the school's fifteenth Annual Hunger Awareness Week. The program is coordinated by the school's Peace and Justice Studies program and campus ministries. The week's main event was the Hunger Banquet, which gave students a chance to reflect upon the differing levels of nourishment that people all over the world are receiving. Participants were assigned to represent either the First, Second, or Third Worlds. The first world had enough for a feast, while the Third World group received next to nothing. The banquet, funded by the national hunger activist group Bread for the World, was followed by a film on the plight of Third World people. Students also organized a Run for Hunger and a Fast Day. Fasting students gave up lunch in lieu of a three dollar donation from university food services for each meal missed. Between the two events, Villanovans raised over \$8,000.00 for the benefit of a Bronx, New York parish and a mission in the mountains of Peru. Perhaps more importantly, many students developed a greater understanding of the problem and a firm commitment to fighting world hunger. [Contact Villanova Campus Ministries, (215) 645-4484.]

CONFERENCES

- ***Stanford University's Annual "You Can Make A Difference" Conference*** - Sponsored by the Stanford University Public Service Center and organized by students, *You Can Make a Difference* (YCMAD) publicizes one major issue of concern to the community. With speakers including academic experts, students, and involved community members, YCMAD has focused on such issues as "Families In Transition," "Institutional Racism," and most recently "Deciding Our Environmental Future." The environmental conference featured Stanford Alumnus and broadcaster Ted Koppel on a panel with Sierra Club founder David Brower, as well as discussions on the international waste trade and how students can live a more environmentally conscious life. [Contact Stanford University Public Service Center, (415) 725-2865.]

TEACH-INS

Teach-Ins serve essentially the same purpose as awareness weeks but may last only a few days. Their focus is also on educational programming, and are often tied into classroom learning. However, some teach-ins go beyond simple education to promote a plan of action such as increased

involvement in service projects, community organizing and advocacy, or political involvement.

- On October 28, 1987, The League, a community service organization at *Boston University*, held its first annual Sleep-Out/Teach-In on Homelessness. In the late afternoon, students gathered to listen to a series of presentations from hunger and homeless activists at the local, state and national levels. While some students stayed for only a few of the events, many others brought sleeping bags to remain through the night. At 8:30 there was a candlelight vigil commemorating those who had lost their lives while homeless. It was followed by a series of small group discussions about what steps students could take to address these issues. The event was well publicized on campus and by local TV and radio stations, which came to interview participating students. The Sleep-Out/Teach-In proved to be a huge success. The work of The League became increasingly well-known on campus, while many BU students began working in shelters and advocacy centers which address homelessness in Boston. [Contact *Boston University League*, (617) 353-3560.]

The profiles in this section offer a variety of methods for educating the campus about the community in which they live. The obvious benefits of these programs are that they lay the groundwork for improved town-gown relations and support the overall mission of higher education by helping students to act as informed members of their community. The practical benefit to the campus service organization is that these educational forums are a powerful recruitment tool. Given the appeal of films, seminars and speakers series to a variety of people, these educational programs can inform students attract numerous new members to the community service organization.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND THE CLASSROOM

"Think about the kind of world you want to live and work in. What do you need to build that world? Demand that your teachers teach you that."

Peter Kropotkin

With the ever increasing demand to find personnel to create solutions to many local, national, and worldwide crises, it is not surprising that the classroom is being used increasingly to address the major issues of our time. Indeed, the academic arena provides a wealth of human resources which can be used to help solve community problems. And the classroom has proven to be an excellent means for helping students to make valued contributions to their communities.

Many college education departments have a long record of promoting student involvement in community service, requiring majors to act as tutors and aides in local school systems. However, schools nationwide now feature service components to encourage students to become involved in the community through a variety of academic and non-academic programs. Social science departments such as sociology, government and urban studies have incorporated fieldwork for examining the criminal justice system, social service legislation, or the problems of the elderly. Students have also dedicated themselves to disease research, emergency hospital care and environmental protection. Service programs can be tailored to practically any academic discipline.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Whether your school already offers service learning opportunities and you want to add an individual course, or if you plan to coordinate an entirely new program requiring community involvement for students enrolled in certain classes, students have both the wherewithal and the power to make these desired changes. However, you will advance your cause by asking your community organizations staff, faculty and key university officials who support the organization to back your efforts to link service to classroom offerings.

Initiating a class with a contemporary issues and/or community service component will require a great deal of organizational planning. Although academic requirements vary among the campuses, there are a few essentials that should be included in initiating any service learning coursework:

- 1) Gather a group of interested students from your organization who are willing to share ideas on development of the course. Decide what issues must be covered in order to ensure a thorough analysis of the topic.
- 2) Identify interested members of the local community who are working in the field and solicit their suggestions. Ask them if they have any topics they would like researched. Ask them for a list of potential speakers and of well written books and essays expressing varying opinions on the subject.

- 3) Identify interested and knowledgeable faculty members. Do not limit yourself to professors in departments that are the most likely to be interested in your topic. A history professor may be able to speak about the historical scope of homelessness, while a psychology professor may know the most about the homeless mentally ill. Ask many knowledgeable parties to contribute.
 - 4) After identifying the students, community and faculty members who are willing to help, form a committee to help:
 - write and submit a proposal for the class to the appropriate dean or academic standards board;
 - organize a petition to demonstrate student support for the course;
 - draw up a specific list of readings and course requirements, as well as reasons why the class is necessary. Insist that these requirements are demanding as faculty and administrators are often leery of adding blow-off courses.
 - 5) If at registration the course requires limited and/or professors approval for enrollment, make an effort to enlist a broad array of students from the full range of ideological perspectives. Do not shy away from interested people with little prior knowledge of the subject matter.
 - 6) Having diverse participants and using an objective approach to presenting course content does not mean that the course must be entirely value neutral. Rather, encourage students to argue their views on the issues. For example, if the students who organized the campus environmental project and helped to teach the course positively believe from their work experience that stricter bans on toxins must be implemented, teaching this is acceptable as long as their views are supported with facts.
 - 7) Make an effort as a class to understand the problem experientially as well as academically by sponsoring service projects or related events with the campus volunteer organization or local community agencies.
 - 8) Share knowledge gained in class with the entire campus by opening selected speakers to the general public, organizing debates, etc..
 - 9) Include an evaluation component upon completion of the course to discuss successes and failures in order to find specific ways to improve the course in the future.
- By following these guidelines you should have the blueprint for planning an intellectually stimulating, unique and educational classroom experience.

COURSES WITH SERVICE COMPONENTS

Profiled below are some initiatives which have successfully combined coursework and community service.

The PULSE program offers more than 200 *Boston College* undergraduates the opportunity to social service or social advocacy field work with the study of Philosophy, Theology and other disciplines. The words Inquiry and reflection, action and community are the self-proclaimed hallmarks of PULSE. Students put these words and themselves to the test by volunteering in hospitals, correctional facilities, shelters, refugee programs, homes for the retarded, youth centers, and a number of other environmental and legal projects. Volunteer placement is coordinated through a variety of academic courses, such as Person and Social Responsibility, Housing: A Guide for the Perplexed, Values in Social Service and Health Care, and Boston: An Urban Analysis. By examining contemporary problems, PULSE courses are designed to help students learn about themselves while considering age-old questions: what does it mean to be human? to enjoy freedom? to fall in love or become a friend? to participate in a political community? PULSE also sponsors the PULSE Institute, a week-long, summer training seminar for campuses interested in establishing academic and reflection oriented service programs. [Contact PULSE, (617) 552-3495.]

The Leadership Program at *Duke University* challenges students...to learn the skills of working productively and compassionately with others through an integrated program which combines community service activities in the Durham community with academic coursework. Through the use of dramas, psychological, political, and philosophical works, as well as a variety of guest speakers, the programs two main courses, Leadership, Policy, and Change and Leadership and Judgment, focus on power and community, empathy and failure, and other dilemmas of leadership.

Through the program, students have planned a symposium on South Africa, done famine relief work in Africa, and re-established the North Carolina Public Interest Group (PIRG). Another offshoot of the program is the Interns in Conscience program, through which over fifty Duke undergrads have worked with homeless families, disadvantaged and troubled teenagers, and Guatemalan and Haitian migrant workers and refugees in Southern Florida. Participating students kept a journal and met regularly throughout the summer with journalists, public officials and other who helped them understand the broader context of their work. [Contact The Leadership Program at Duke University, (919) 684-5475.]

"Goodness must be joined with knowledge. Mere goodness is not of much use, as I have found in life."

Mahatma Gandhi

Through the Community Action Volunteers in Education (CAVE) program, students at *California State University - Chico* campus can receive university credit for their work in hospitals, with local youth, and in elderly assistance projects. Credits are most often available through the sociology, education, and recreation departments. In addition to their weekly volunteering commitments, students are required to write reflection papers and/or keep a journal of their involvement in the program. It has been so successful that 99% of CAVEs two thousand volunteers have received some university credit for their work. [Contact Janet Richmond, CAVE Director, (916) 895-5817]

Princeton University Public Affairs Internship - Organized through Princetons Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy, this pass/fail internship allows juniors and seniors to work under the direction of a public official at the state or local level of government or in a wide variety of public and non-profit agencies, as well as in certain private placements where the work is oriented to public affairs. Students typically select assignments to gain insight into their field of concentration and/or test career goals.

While students usually find their own placements, faculty coordinators must approve all internships. The internship requires one day per week as students spend a minimum of 8 hours a day for at least 11 weeks at their position. Most interns work in

New Jersey, with occasional placements in New York and Pennsylvania. In addition to office time, students must write two papers; a one page paper at the beginning of the term describing the work and one five to eight pages long evaluating the assignment at semesters end. Four hours of seminars and one final discussion meeting are also required of intern participants. [Contact Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy.]

Oberlin Experimental College - The college offers four courses that encourage students to become involved in the Oberlin community. Courses include a Practicum at the Battered Womens Shelter, two courses on adult illiteracy, and one course on developing Oberlins community service. Students taking the courses volunteer an average of five hours a week in the community and are asked to write papers and participate in discussions reflecting on these issues. Three of the courses are taught by the schools community service coordinator. [Contact Oberlin Community Outreach Program, (216) 775-8055.]

The Literature of Social Reflection - This course, taught at *Harvard University* under the direction of renowned child psychologist Robert Coles, attempts to compare various modes of social observation; and at the same time explore the ethical issues that confront those men and women who want to change the world in one

way or another, those ordinary people caught in a particular historical crisis, and those who try to make sense of what others initiate politically, struggle with psychologically, endure socially. The course examines such authors as Alice Walker, Flannery O'Connor, James Agee, Walker Evans, George Orwell, Ralph Ellison, Walker Percy, Dorothy Day, and others who have struggled to reconcile scholarly, literary, artistic pursuits and interests with moral concerns... To promote further social reflection, participating students are strongly encouraged to become involved in community service and other projects which examine the lives of the less fortunate. [Contact Dr. Robert Coles, Harvard University Health Services, (617) 495-3736.]

COURSES WITH ACTION RESEARCH FOCUS

In 1983 the *University of Pennsylvania's* school of Arts and Sciences created the Office of Community Oriented Policy Studies (OCOPS) to strengthen links between theoretical and applied learning and between the university and its wider community. At the core of the program are interdisciplinary honors history seminars that are problem solving in orientation. In these seminars each student forms a research

affiliation with an organization or agency in the Philadelphia area. The student examines a societal problem of interest to the organization and seeks (through a seminar paper) to make a contribution to solving that problem. The research problems provide academically substantive avenues for undergraduates to engage in public service.

One of OCOPS programs is the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC), a school based neighborhood program focusing on youth in West Philadelphia. In the summer of 1987 WEPIC employed seventy local high school students in school landscape, maintenance, and beautification projects. [Contact University of Pennsylvania Program for Student Community Involvement, (215) 898-4831.]

Action Research at *Vanderbilt University* - Learning in Service to the Community - This program of Vanderbilt University works with Nashville community non-profit organizations in giving students the opportunity to apply and test classroom theory; to develop research, organization, communication and problem-solving skills in a public service setting; to heighten their awareness of community problems and the importance of becoming involved; and to explore their own interests among an array of project designs and issues while increasing their understanding of their role in society.

Staff of AR connect with faculty to identify courses in which students can work on an action project in lieu of a paper or mid-term examination. Students can organize an AR project through an existing course or an independent study. Students avoid the busy work hazards of some internships by working to implement projects that frequently overworked agency staffs might not otherwise be able to complete. They have worked for agencies such as the Tennessee Environmental Council, Legal Services of Middle Tennessee, the Rape and Sexual Abuse Center, the American Red Cross, local literacy providers, and nuclear weapons freeze advocacy groups. *[Contact Service Learning Coordinator, Vanderbilt University, (615) 322-4773.]*

STUDENT INITIATED ISSUE-RELATED COURSES

Several other campuses have programs where students can design courses on a topic of interest to them and the greater college community. In many cases students have developed course curriculums on topics relevant to their own particular area of volunteer work or community involvement. These courses may be taught by individual faculty members or in an interdisciplinary format by members of several different departments. In some cases, students or people from community agencies with particular expertise will teach these courses as well.

One of the important things to remember about colleges and universities, a point which is all too frequently forgotten on many campuses, is that the administration is essentially there to serve the student body. The student is given this treatment because many campuses are competing for qualified applicants who are free to choose among numerous schools. Like businesses in competition, colleges and universities must respond to students interests with up-to-date academic programs. In fact, the ability to design innovative programs to meet the changing needs of students has long been a criterion for how we judge the nations best schools.

This allows students to insist that their teachers teach them the skills to build the kind of world where they want to live. In fact, students have worked with faculties to achieve many successes in changing the curriculum to meet their needs. In the spring of 1988, students at Stanford University initiated a highly controversial, yet equally successful campaign to liberalize the Western Culture requirement to include more courses on the history and works of minorities and people from African and Asian cultures. Similar victories were gained in the 1970s when students organized to add the disciplines of both Womens studies and Ethnic cultures studies to the standard curriculums of most universities. The study of Afro-American history gained prominence with the advent of the civil rights and black power movements in the late 1960s.

This legacy of victories in curriculum reform should serve to empower students who advocate adding issue-related coursework and community involvement components to the typical classroom offerings. However, students did not gain all of these victories by themselves. Students achieved these goals through their own hard work and determination, and by finding committed allies among the faculty and administration. These allies will exist on any campus and can be extremely helpful in any effort to reform curriculum. Therefore, they must be sought out as people who can offer valuable advice and can help in a concrete way by endorsing students efforts to bring community service work into the academic arena as well.

PEACE AND JUSTICE STUDIES PROGRAMS

Rather than tailoring volunteer programs to fit specific academic coursework, several universities have created entirely new departments to examine issues directly related to the forces which necessitate volunteer relief. Whether these are called Social Justice or Peace and Justice Education departments, they predominantly focus on root causes of inequality and injustice. To this end they examine topics such as Third World development, urban strife, and societal stratification of wealth and power.

The roles of racism, sexism, and nationalism are scrutinized as causes of human rights violations. Finally, these programs encourage students to originate strategies for affecting social change.

While many of these departments exist on traditionally religious campuses, an effort is made to examine issues from a variety of perspectives. Special focus is often given to historical movements and figures which have used non-violence, civil disobedience, and other creatively peaceful means for societal reform. Finally, most of these programs are inter-disciplinary and feature offerings by faculty from an assortment of departments including economics, philosophy, history, political science, sociology, and religious studies.

Some of the more expansive social justice issues programs and their classroom offerings are highlighted below.

Fordham University in the Bronx, New York has a relatively new but comprehensive Peace and Justice studies program under the direction of political science professor Martin Fergus. Five key areas covered by the program are: war and the arms race, social and economic justice, causes and resolutions of conflicts, philosophies and strategies of non-violence, and world order.

All students wishing to receive a certificate in the program must take an overview course examining the rationale for peace and justice studies,

the arms race, the development of instruments for peaceful resolution of international conflicts, the history of civil disobedience and non-violent direct action for bringing about social change, the ethical dilemmas posed by resistance to unjust authority, and non-violent movements in the contemporary world. Some elective options for completing the five course requirement include:

- The Sixties: Era of Protest, Era of Change
- The Individual in Search of Justice
- Theories of Justice in the Modern World
- Action Research in the Modern Community
- Rich and Poor Nations in the World System
- Social Justice and City Politics
- Political Economy of Poverty
- War and Peace in the Nuclear Age

[Contact Dr. Martin Feigus, Director, Peace and Justice Studies, Fordham University]

Villanova University's Center for Peace and Justice Education sponsors a program in Peace and Justice that allows students to study the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching as applied to the complex problems of our time. These courses approach the topics of world peace and social justice as essentially inter-disciplinary matters. In addition to their programs Introduction to Peace and Justice class, four other course groupings are offered:

- 1) Seminars that focus on global trouble spots (e.g., Middle East, Central America, Ireland, and Africa).
- 2) Seminars that focus on Pacifism and Militarism (e.g., Non-violence, conflict resolution, Gandhi).
- 3) Seminars that focus on social justice issues (e.g., Arms race, world hunger, human rights, sexism, racism).
- 4) Seminars that focus on Catholic social teaching (e.g., Papal encyclicals, Catholic Bishops pastorals).

The Center has created these courses so students can examine and critique the socio-economic structures of the world in order to recognize the need to change oppressive and de-humanizing structures and provide alternative life-giving models for community and corporate structures.

In addition to the regular course offerings, the Center has found a clever way to extend education on social justice beyond the classroom and into the dormitories. Through the mini-course, a three night, nine hour seminar held in a dorm common area, students look intensively at many contemporary issues. They study the crisis in Central America or the Middle East, theories of economic justice, or issues relating to community development. In addition to class time, participants in the one credit courses must write a paper.

Student Lifestaff member Ed Sullivan, a recent graduate of Villanova who helped originate the idea for the mini-course, is thrilled with its results. It has given students a chance to learn in another environment and to get to know their professors in a more informal atmosphere, he asserts. Since the courses are most often completed with a pitch from volunteers to get involved in related service work, many mini-course graduates have made personal commitments to fighting social injustice. *[Contact Fr. Ray Jackson, Director, Campus Ministries, (215) 645-4484.]*

The Center for Teaching Peace- This brainchild of Washington Post syndicated columnist Colman McCarthy is designed to teach students in area universities and high schools about one field where traditional education has failed to educate them the world of peacemakers. McCarthy teaches the writings of King, Tolstoy, Day, Gandhi, Rankin, Merton and others in his Alternatives to Violence course to compensate for the emphasis society places on studying war as central to grasping history. He encourages students to broaden their knowledge gained in the often isolated academic environment by engaging in specific works of peace, such as working in a homeless shelter or teaching an adult to read. The center was established in hopes of funding more people to teach peace courses in areas throughout the country. McCarthy encourages campuses to contact him to obtain reading lists, films, and any other useful information in setting up a peace studies course. *[Contact Colman McCarthy, Director, The Center for Teaching Peace, (202) 966-7682.]*

ISSUES EDUCATION IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

As students begin to examine important issues in depth, they can see how the interests of the university and the local community are intricately wed. Examples of this relationship abound. When the university pays its employees well, the surrounding neighborhoods are more likely to enjoy a higher standard of living and students will be better received off campus. Conversely, constant student demand on tight, inflationary rental markets can frustrate local people in search of affordable housing. The need to improve facilities may prompt urban universities to buy land in low-income areas, with displaced residents sometimes becoming homeless, which can increase tension in town-gown relations.

Despite these tensions, student service projects can provide a big portion of the goodwill diplomacy toward the community. In fact, student service may be the major factor area residents cite as a demonstration of campus commitment to the community and its concerns.

In addition to the raw energy demonstrated in their service work, students have used their first-hand experience to educate their neighbors about crucial national issues such as hunger, the environment, AIDS, and youth at-risk. They have accomplished

this through the efforts of groups such as Oxfam America, state-based Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs), The National Student Campaign Against Hunger, and the Overseas Development Network. On a smaller scale, many campuses have helped to inform local residents by opening discussion groups, lecture and film series, and campus-wide issues forums to the general public.

Young people have also gone beyond the campus walls to organize information campaigns on key issues.

OVERVIEW

Community agencies have begun to rely upon students for their energy and expertise in providing information in a number of ways.

- As *researchers* who provide answers to questions that agencies have about specific policies or programs.
- As *educators* who host community issue forums to discuss and debate public policy issues of local or national concern.
- As *facilitators* who directly assist a local agency in developing a strategic plan, writing a proposal, or identifying sources of funding.

Some examples of student efforts to assist local people in understanding and responding to issues in their communities are highlighted below:

EXAMPLES

- *Earlham College Justice for All Day* - Organized on November 17, 1988 as part of the nationwide "Justice for All Day," students from Earlham College and community leaders from the city of Richmond and Wayne County, Indiana joined together to increase public awareness of poverty issues. The day-long event gave students and community members a chance to learn more about the nature of poverty. After the Richmond Mayor proclaimed "Justice for All Day," students joined welfare recipients in a "Circle of Hands around the Courthouse," the site of the Richmond Welfare department. By asking questions, students were able to dispell some myths about people temporarily on welfare.

Later in the day there was a workshop on "The Community Response to Poverty." Students learned about tensions between human service agencies and advocates of the poor, who were brought together after not talking over their differences for years. Though tense at times, the session was healthy because it re-opened dialogue while giving students and local people a chance to learn about the issues. The day's final segment focused on "The Causes and Cures of Poverty."

The overall success of the school and community's collaborative effort can be measured in the action which followed. A community coalition was formed and communication has

become more regular. Information about where and how to get social services is more accessible to the poor, who feel more empowered and are more self-confident in seeking assistance and expressing their needs. Finally, churches, students and community members have become better informed and increasingly involved as volunteers. JFAD offers an excellent example of the dynamic interaction which can result when a campus and local community join together to address the area's problems. [Contact Director, The Volunteer Exchange, Earlham University, (317) 983-1519.]

- Southeast Asian Outreach Program (SEAOP) - Part of *Humboldt State University's Youth Educational Services* (YES) program in Arcada, California, SEAOP is designed to facilitate cross-cultural awareness among the Southeast Asian community, Central American refugees, other foreign-born individuals and the Eureka/Arcada community by providing a volunteer tutoring program in the home environment. The goals of the exchange are to help people learn more about living in Humboldt County and help volunteers learn about different cultural values. SEAOP hopes ultimately to:

- 1) assist in the resettlement and readjustment process without sacrificing culture and values;
- 2) break down cultural and

communication barriers which tend to restrict refugees to their home environment;

3) increase public awareness about the presence and cultures of Southeast Asian populations, and;

4) explore assistance possibilities and inform refugees about childcare, low cost housing and home owning options.

[Contact Youth Education Services (YES), Humboldt State University, (707) 826-4965.]

• *At Harvard the Phillip Brooks House Association's Project Literacy* has attempted to raise awareness of adult illiteracy both on campus and in Cambridge and Somerville. Sophomore Mary Ellen Ronayne was a literacy tutor who felt that many people in the surrounding areas could benefit from the services of local literacy providers. Believing that most people were unaware of the resources available to help, she organized fellow volunteers to go door-to-door in area neighborhoods and inform residents of accessible literacy programs.

• *Brown University* students have also been able to keep local residents informed by staffing local hotlines. Project AIDS in Providence uses students to answer the latest questions of residents concerned about the AIDS epidemic. *[Contact Brown Community Outreach, (401) 863-3676.]*

• *Columbia University Community Services* is a joint effort sponsored by Columbia's graduate programs in counseling and social work and the New York state department of social services. The group provides a number of services to the local community to facilitate effective work with the homeless. They provide training for volunteers and staff working with homeless single adults and offer seminars and workshops on building skills for work with the homeless. These three day seminars include an "Introduction to Homelessness" and discussion on special topics such as "Alcoholism and Substance Abuse" and "Medical Information for Work with the Homeless." These courses help volunteers recognize and address symptoms and heighten their sensitivities to the concerns of the city's neglected population. *[Contact Columbia University Community Services.]*

Efforts such as these have demonstrated how students can provide the extra impetus to enable a local community to address an important issue effectively. Perhaps because of their youthful enthusiasm or a general disregard for limitations about what they can change, students have organized educational programing that has moved large numbers to work to impact change in their communities. As students increase their knowledge of important community issues through their service work, the potential to initiate other educational projects becomes virtually unlimited.

AVENUES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

"Action is eloquence."

William Shakespeare

Has the time you have spent working in a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, or for an environmental action committee made you question whether things would be different if more sensible laws were enacted? You may have even thought out loud to yourself, "If I were running the show, I would not tolerate a homeless problem or water that is unsafe to drink!" Though you may not be 'running the show' just yet, your voice can and should still be heard. In fact, it is your obligation to try to make an impact on the issues of concern to you and society as a whole.

Direct service is an excellent vehicle for making your voice heard because it plays a major role in addressing numerous community needs. However, it is often not the best strategy for uprooting the causes of many problems which plague our society. For example, a volunteer working in a shelter is likely to do a great deal to relieve the pains of the homeless, yet this service work alone is not enough to change the factors that perpetuate the homeless crisis.

Given this knowledge, it is useful to consider the reasons why we volunteer. Do we volunteer in shelters as a giving response to an immediate need, or because we believe homelessness is unjust and want to work toward its end? Both are equally valid reasons for becoming involved. These approaches are actually complimentary. In meeting the

immediate need in shelters and soup kitchens, volunteers can prevent people from freezing or starving to death, while those who fight for long-term solutions see that such work is not in vain.

Most college and university service organizations have done a superior job in helping students to address immediate community needs. However, less emphasis is placed on encouraging young people to help find long-term solutions to community problems. This is not surprising as long-term social change can frequently be a frustrating process.

This is because long-term social change is better achieved by attempting to influence and reshape the opinions and policies of legislators, the general public, business people, and others in positions of power. This process may be more time consuming and harder to market than asking students to spend three hours a week volunteering. However, it ultimately supports the same cause as direct service — solving community problems.

Several avenues have proven remarkably effective in promoting long-term solutions to the problems students are facing in their communities. They include letter writing campaigns, petition signing

drives, editorials, boycotts, advocacy work, community organizing, and even peaceful sit-ins or demonstrations. All have a potential for attracting widespread attention to an issue and changing the mindset and actions of those exposed to new ideas.

LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS

Letter writing provides an excellent political response to issues which become of concern to us as a result of our work in the community. For legislators whose responsibilities in state or national capital offices make it difficult for them to maintain frequent contact with their constituents, letters may be the most viable way of influencing policy. Representative Morris Udall (D-AZ) says the following about the mail he receives:

"My mail is my best 'hot line' to the people back home. On several occasions a single thoughtful, factually persuasive letter did change my mind."

Yet despite the readily acknowledged effectiveness of writing letters, Bread for the World estimates that only one out of every ten U.S. citizens writes a letter to his/her congressional representative, senator, or to the President. This happens despite the fact that we live in an age when rapid communication has never been easier.

If you are upset about a particular policy that is having profoundly adverse affects on the community you

serve, you may want to take direct political action in the form of a letter writing campaign. If so, use the following guidelines offered below by the national grass roots organization, Bread for the World.²

Rules of Thumb

Obviously, not every letter will change public policy, but one that is well written is more apt to interest, encourage, and motivate your representatives. Use the guidelines that follow when applicable. No letter will necessarily contain all suggested elements.

- Be reasonably brief. Rarely should a letter exceed one full page.
- Write your own views in your own words. Little attention is given to a letter that looks like the product of a mail campaign.
- Use stationery with a letterhead, if possible. Be certain your address is on the letter as well as the envelope. Write legibly and spell names correctly.
- Ask for specific legislative action. Concentrate on one issue per letter. Do not make a shopping list.
- Be considerate. Keep in mind the constraints of the legislative process and the desires of other constituents. Do not threaten or demand; request your representatives consideration of your views.

Suggested Format

- Be constructive. If a bill addresses a legitimate problem but proposes the wrong solution, express this and go on to give your view as to the correct approach.

President _____
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20501

- Make your letter timely. Write soon after a bill is introduced to alert your representative of its existence. Write just prior to subcommittee hearings or full committee and floor votes to suggest appropriate action.

Representative _____
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator _____
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

- Target your letters. Find out what committees and subcommittees your representatives serve on. Letters to members of a committee considering a bill are often most important. An estimated 90 percent of the bills pass on the floor in the same form that they come from the committee.

State Senator or Assembly Representative _____
State Capital

Dear Senator... :
Dear Representative... :
Dear President... :

Begin with a commendation on a past vote or speech.

- Act as a resource person. On occasion, you will be writing on a subject about which you have greater knowledge or access to information than your representative. Share such information by sending background papers and newspaper articles.

Identify the legislation clearly. Give the bill number (and title and author if known) and the stage of the bill in the legislative process. Do not assume the legislator will know the bill you are writing about.

- Thank your representative and their legislative aides when you approve of their actions. Statements of disappointment and hopes for future support should also be expressed.

State your reason for writing. Personal experience is the best supporting evidence. Explain what effect the bill will have on you, your community, or your state. If available, offer documented evidence or statistics in support of your views.

Raise questions; they are more likely to encourage a response. The more challenging your letter, the better

chance of reaching someone of influence, thus avoiding a routine response or form letter.

Thank you for your sincere consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen

These suggestions provided by *Bread for the World* (BFW) offer an excellent starting place to begin your letter writing. However, if you are writing not as an individual, but wish to formulate a group response, some slightly different rules apply. First, consider BFW's reminder that little attention is paid to a letter which looks like the product of a mail campaign. Instead, you may want to have your hunger or environmental action committee draw up a letter that is representative of your organization's view on a particular piece of legislation. Once your draft is complete, allowing other members of the campus to read and sign their support for your organization's concerns in petition form can be an effective way of documenting widespread support for your view.

If your group prefers to write letters as individuals, there are ways to undertake the process effectively. First, provide the relevant information about bill number, title, and author. Write a brief description of your group's position on an issue. Offer suggestions that group members can give government officials on ways to

improve policy. Above all, avoid format letters or ditto-copies of letters which require only a signature as these are easily recognized as somewhat thoughtless and treated accordingly.

After writing the initial set of letters, appoint someone to follow the bill's course through key votes in the legislature. If the bill is passed thanks to a vote by your representative, thank him or her profusely. Feel equally compelled to address a voting failure by your public servants, but remain polite and considerate in this event.

Although effective, letter writing is just one of several ways of reaching government officials to affect policy. Profiled below are some other possible methods of response as outlined by Bread for the World.

ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Publicize the positions, favorable and unfavorable, that your legislators have taken. This can involve many forms of public discussion and education such as letters to your local newspapers, discussions in your church groups and community forums. You can order a Media Kit from Bread for the World that will help you in doing publicity.

Writing a letter is the first step in building an ongoing relationship with your representatives and fulfilling your responsibility as a citizen. The next steps are:

*"Footprints in the sands of time were
never made by sitting down."*

Unknown

Sending a Telegram. This is a good attention getter, especially right before a key vote. They are usually counted for and against, so make them brief, concise, and include the bill number. Western Union Personal Opinion Grams, which can only be sent to elected officials, have a 20-word limit, are delivered to Congress or the White House the day they are sent and cost \$4.45.

Mailgrams are delivered the next day and cost \$4.45 for the first 50 words, \$1.95 for each additional 50 words.

Making a Telephone Call. This is the most effective prior to key votes and also offers the possibility of engaging in a dialogue. Dial (202) 224-3121 or (202) 225-3121 to reach any representative or senator in his/her Washington office. If it is not possible to speak directly with your congressperson, ask to speak to the legislative assistant (L.A.) who handles the legislation you are concerned about.

Making a Personal Visit. This is the most effective means of contact. A visit can be arranged for the local or Washington office. Write or phone in advance requesting an appointment. Specify what you wish to discuss.³

Arrive prepared. State your views and the action you desire. Seek an expression for or against your position. If you expect to share the results of the meeting with others, including the press, make this clear.

Follow the visit with a letter of appreciation, briefly restating your position and any comments made at the time of your visit.

The above guidelines are an excellent approach to breaking through what often seems to be an unsolvable government maze. If you need more advice on how to research a policy or address a governmental issue, see the section on *Presenting an Issue*. Some other methods for taking action on issues of importance to your community are profiled below.

PETITION SIGNING DRIVES

Petitions are essentially a call for a specific action mandated by those who agree to sign the document. They may call on the local community to raise its standards for acceptable toxic levels in the drinking water, or may ask a university to provide classroom space for a local tutoring project. Students who sign their name to the proposal are endorsing the plan of action. Petition signing drives are not difficult to organize, and can be a powerful vehicle for drawing support to a worthwhile cause.

A few suggestions for organizing a petition signing drive may prove helpful:

- Clearly and concisely outline the objective of the petition. This will save both time and the hassle of answering questions due to lack of clarity.

- Attempt to word the petition in a positive manner. People generally would rather support something that sounds positive than something that is presented in a negative light.
- Be able to give valid reasons for supporting the initiative. Make sure all those who are seeking petitions are fully informed of its purpose and are able to field related questions.
- Place your table or clipboard-carrying rovers in a strategic position for maximum visibility (i.e. the campus dining hall or student center).
- Find a way for ensuring that each person only signs the petition once (i.e. checking off student identification after they have signed).
- Let the campus know if your petition produces the intended results. People will feel good about their success and will be more likely to take further action in the future.

your audience is strictly students, or a local or national target group, editorials provide a rare opportunity to advertise your service group's goals and views free of charge.

Though editorials can usually be submitted on any items covered in recent news stories or editorials, they are most effective when they are tied to an event already under significant public scrutiny. Essentially, it requires a knack for opportunism; sensing what news provides your community involvement group a chance to publicize your agenda. The suspension of a star college athlete reading on a sixth-grade level can give the campus-based literacy group an opportunity to discuss how such educational failures can be prevented in the future. Likewise, an expose' about a chemical company dumping toxic waste in a nearby river might move the student environmental group to propose stiffer penalties for businesses guilty of polluting our waters.

The rules for submitting editorials have many similarities to drawing up a petition for action or letter to a government official. As with the others, editorials require timeliness, an outline of the problem as the individual or group sees it, and a specific plan for action proposed by the author. Society has enough problems that simply moaning about them is likely to achieve little, so give legitimacy to your complaints by suggesting or endorsing specific solutions.

NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS

For sending a message to the general public, there are very few mediums with the potential for reaching as wide a variety of people as a newspaper or magazine editorial can. Whether

If you do not feel that you would be able to compose an editorial with the style and quality the issue deserves, contact a newspaper columnist who writes his/her editorials on a regular basis. Many of these writers' columns are syndicated and have national audiences. They may be quite receptive to your cause, and, after interviewing you for questions about the issue, may write an article.

If an article is to be written, you will need to prepare yourself. First, call or write for an appointment so you can discuss the issue of concern to your group. Try to be flexible about meeting times as these columnists are extremely busy and have the luxury of deciding when and what topics are newsworthy. Try to establish your credibility as someone worth listening to from the outset. Use your affiliation with the college service organization. Be able to answer possible questions about the issue with specific facts and statistics. Finally, try to have materials available to give to the writer to simplify the task. All this may take extra work, but it should prove worthwhile when an established name in the community endorses your cause.

While these suggestions have focused on the written word, television and radio stations, particularly campus-based stations with more available free air time, will occasionally allow concerned citizens to air their views on important issues as well. Oral

editorials should follow the same general guidelines for presentation, while remembering that the spoken word is better suited to a more relaxed and informal style.

Yet regardless of their format, editorials are an inexpensive and easy way to publicize the issues concerning your community service organization, which can only increase the likelihood of producing the desired social change.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is another approach that is frequently used to work for long-term social change. Advocacy is when one person acts as a spokesperson for a larger group such as disabled veterans or the homeless. Lobbyists and lawyers are advocates. Advocates are usually not members of the group they represent. The group represented, while offering input to their advocates, are not frequently involved in the specific process of promoting their cause.

One drawback to advocacy is that it does not serve to empower those who are represented. In his book, *Organizing: A Guide for Grassroots Leaders*, community activist Si Kahn writes:

"... Because people do not usually participate in the process of advocacy, it does not change the way they relate to each other or the power struggle. Advocacy may make real changes in people's lives. It may change the operating conditions of agencies or

institutions. But it does little to little to alter the relationship of power between these institutions and the people who deal with them.”

Despite this drawback, advocacy has proven to be an effective method for impacting our communities. It may also be the best method for representing the interests of groups which may have difficulty organizing themselves due to lack of economic or political power. For example, the Children’s Defense Fund is an extremely successful organization which lobbies Congress in support of the interests of our nation’s youth, particularly the poor. Countless other advocacy groups fight for the wellbeing of our country’s hungry, illiterate and disabled.

However, advocacy need not only be oriented to fighting for national causes. It can be used successfully to address local issues as well. Several college campuses have developed advocacy projects to supplement the community service work which addresses similar issues.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

While advocacy involves outsiders working for the rights of a specific group, community organizing is based on a vastly different principle — empowering people to struggle for their own issues. Although not often thought of in this manner, organizing

is something people do every day and is the basis of much of the change we see in our communities. When we notice a neighborhood that has recently installed speed bumps, built a new daycare center, or revised its zoning codes, these are frequently the fruits of the efforts of a well-organized community. These and other victories result from people organizing on the basis of proximity and a common concern.

While many college students have become involved in direct service, their talents can also be used to support local citizens organizing around their concerns. In fact, student volunteers are most often a welcome addition to any organizational effort, because they:

- can offer a fresh perspective;
- are often keenly aware of the needs of their community, experiencing them first-hand through the people with whom they work;
- have demonstrated a commitment to the community.

Yet while students can offer dedication and new insights, lifetime residents of a community are not likely to need someone to tell them what their problems are. In community organizing, students are more likely to be devoted role players than the sole instigators of a project. Thus,

while a community may ask students to set up and operate a Big Brothers service program on their own, organizing around complex issues often requires the leadership of more experienced community leaders. These experts can provide students with the direction and a know-how for organizing that cannot be detailed in a book of this size. (For a more complete listing of books on community organizing, see the *Resources* section.)

However, even the most nimble of community organizers will need artists, computer experts, writers, photographers, drivers, and countless other able bodies to carry out their projects. Students with these skills can assist in many of the following tasks which are all a part of community organizing:

- manning tables at community centers, soliciting signatures, or canvassing door to door;
- attending hearings on important developments in the community;
- taking pictures or designing flyers and posters;
- writing petitions, newsletters, editorials or press releases.

For students who are willing to share their talents and cultivate new abilities, the question then becomes choosing an issue. As most communities have many problems that need solving, students may want to focus on the issues that are most closely related to their direct service work. Though the issues troubling the citizens will vary greatly between communities, some potential organizing projects in which students can participate are profiled below.

- Students involved in homeless issues could work with low-income families to require that a certain percentage of low income units are included in all new housing developments .
- Those who work in overcrowded schools, prisons or battered women shelters can work to pressure local government to provide additional funding for facilities and staff where needed most.
- Members of the campus environmental action group can join local residents in proposing a referendum to implement ongoing and self-financed neighborhood paper and glass recycling programs.

Regardless of the project, organizing offers students an excellent chance learn a great deal about the politics and daily workings of their community. The work should also be valued as it supports the same purpose of direct service — helping to meet community needs.

