

Norwich University Service-Learning Program
Civic Reflections
Northfield, VT
2007-2008

Summary

The Norwich University Service-Learning (NUSL) Program has had many successes, including an almost 20% student participation rate, statewide honors for campus-community partnerships, and a diverse, intergenerational support staff. However, much as Adam Davis articulates, we often operated as if service is good and service is simple and that's that. We needed something that allowed us to explore and discuss and bring us together around our vision as a Program: *to be the common thread that connects academic, student, and community life.*

This program consisted of eight discussion sessions for NUSL participants, as well as other faculty, students, and community partners. Our waiting list led us to expand our program by one-third. The waiting list carried over into the 2008/2009 academic year.

Desired Impacts of the Conversation Program

Through reading and discussing *The Civically Engaged Reader*, our goals were to:

- deepen NUSL participants understanding of civic activity,
- examine their roles in and impacts on society,
- sharpen their listening and discussion skills,
- improve critical thinking or, at least, awareness of other ways of thinking
- support intergenerational dialogue,
- encourage camaraderie among and dialogue between students, faculty, community members, and staff

Readings

- "I Shall Not Beg for My Rights" by Henry MacNeal Turner
- "The Destructors" by Graham Greene
- "The Boy without a Flag" by Abraham Rodriguez Jr.
- "The Sweetness of Charity" by Maya Angelou
- "The Moral Equivalent of War" by William James

Signs of Success

Some concrete signs of success were:

- that participants, despite rank or educational level, were comfortable using first names without salutations or titles (Professor or Ms., for example)
- a flow of conversation that included all participants at the level of participation with which they were comfortable
- a fair distribution of membership between students, faculty, staff, and community members
- positive qualitative feedback in our one-on-one semester reflections
- consistent attendance levels