

Service Learning: Albert Schweitzer's Institute at Quinnipiac University

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Abstract

The following is an overview of what four sophomore college students attending Quinnipiac University did in their Computer Information Systems class: Systems Analysis and Design (CIS 370) which revolves around the concept of Service Learning. Each group member brought unique skills from outside the class to help develop a plan to promote this organization, as well as fulfill it. This paper is a reflection of how the students were involved, how the service learning component complimented the course, how the project benefited the Albert Schweitzer Institute, and how the entire University benefited.

Keywords: service learning, systems analysis and design

1. INTRODUCTION

As a requirement of the Quinnipiac University CIS Undergraduate program, all students must take "CIS 370 – Systems Analysis & Design." This course focuses on the process of understanding how an information system can support business needs, designing the system, building it, and delivering it to users through the process of Service Learning.

The course was focused on a semester-long project of modifying a system in use. After selecting one, we thought of improvements and then determined the feasibility of implementing these changes. Based on the current system and the needs of the organization, we chose to create a PowerPoint presentation and website for the Albert Schweitzer Institute.

The Albert Schweitzer Institute is a non-profit organization, based at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT, that conducts US and inter-national programs that link education, ethics and voluntarism. Programs focus on health, humanitarian, and peace efforts; they support healthcare development in un-

der-served areas; motivate young people to serve the community and the environment as a way of life; and increase public awareness of Dr. Schweitzer's philosophy and its potential for a more peaceful and sustainable world. Dr. Schweitzer was also well known for his philosophical reasoning and quotes, which still hold true today, such as ". . . we live in a period that is marked by the absence of peace. . ." and "I believe that there is reason for hope."

Service Learning (SL) is a process of combining community service with classroom learning. By doing so, students are more inclined to connect their classroom activities with real world scenarios. This will help the students to remember the concepts and theories of the class. Elements of SL include the cooperation of the students, instructor, and community sponsor to develop an ongoing relationship where each party will benefit.

2. WHAT WE DID

The objective of CIS 370 is for students to understand the process of the System De-

velopment Life Cycle: Planning, Analysis, Design, and Implementation. The course was built around the idea of "find something wrong, and fix it." Our group chose to help promote and gain awareness of the Albert Schweitzer Institute ("ASI"), a non-profit organization located on campus, by creating a website and PowerPoint Presentation.

Throughout the semester, the course concepts required that the following be identified:

- Problems with the Current System
 - Due to an undeveloped and unappealing website and non-existent visual presentation
- Benefits and Objectives of Developing the New System (trade-offs)
 - Publicized organization's purpose
 - Acquire donation and grants
- Project Scope
 - Project Objective: Attainable or not; in this case it is
- Study Phase
 - Conduct Feasibility test
 - Technical Feasibility ("Can we build it?")
 - Economic Feasibility ("Should we build it?")
 - Tangible/Intangible Costs Benefits
- Analysis Phase
 - Who will use/access the system
 - Surrounding community, general public
 - Method of access
 - Internet, live presentations
 - Where it is used
- Functional Requirements
 - Context Diagram
 - Data Flow Diagrams
 - Level-0, Level-1
 - Data Dictionary
 - Process Descriptions
 - Environmental Requirements
 - Operating Constraints
 - Ex. No preexisting examples
 - External Constraints
 - Ex. Public relations department for approval of website
 - Hardware & Systems Software Constraints
 - Ex. Client web browser & plug-ins
 - Control Requirements
 - Ex. Maintenance & updates
 - Security Requirements
 - Ex. Permissions to update the website
 - Alternative Options
 - Gather Infeasible Alternatives

- Telemarketing System to promote awareness
- Gather Feasible Alternatives
- Questionnaire System to promote awareness
- Choose Recommended Alternative
- Website & Presentation due to influence of Project Sponsor
- Time, Staffing, & Cost
- Estimate how long each portion of the project would take to finish and cost

3. BENEFITS

Those that work with the Albert Schweitzer Institute directly benefited from our Service Learning project the most. Professor David Ives, Executive Director of this organization, frequently gives presentations on topics related to the institute's mission; such as health, humanitarian, and peace efforts. With a PowerPoint presentation, his audience's attention will be better kept. Their website is now more aesthetically appealing and easier to navigate, which is beneficial to web surfers and those that are not able to attend a live presentation. This presentation is available to be downloaded from the website.

The other prime category of those that benefited would be the students involved. The students that worked on this project applied each course topic to a real life situation, therefore reinforcing what was learned. By having a specific example in each area of the course, we were better able to understand what was being taught. The experience of doing something outside the limits of the classroom also gave the students a great learning environment. They had to meet needs of both the coordinator of the organization, David Ives as well as the requirements of the class in order to pass the class. They were able to see a different view on how things work in the "real world" which would give them a great example to learn from and remember when they complete their education and set out for the "real world" on their own.

The following benefits of Service Learning applied to the students in this project:

- Wider Career Options
- Personal Growth and Development
- Enhances Self Image
- Expands Resume

- Increased Resources/ Networking
- Volunteering Experience
- Involvement in Community
- Personal Values
- Culture

The following benefits of Service Learning applied to the professor of the course:

- Increased Knowledge from Research
- Increased Student Involvement
- Builds New Relationships

The following benefits of Service Learning applied to the Project Sponsor in this project:

- Opportunity to develop relationships with educational institutions
- Broadening the public's understanding

4. CONCLUSION

Overall this was a great experience not only for the students, but for everyone involved. The students and the ASI benefited the most. It was a great relationship builder for the students to form and learn about what this organization does. They also were able to use their skills, following the guidelines of the class, to build something useful for someone aside from the professor. The style of Service Learning is a great opportunity for students- it gives them the chance to make contacts and build relationships with organizations outside of the classroom. This was a hands-on project as where students learn in many forms. They learn how to work in a group and understand each others differences and needs to fulfill a goal. They learned what the professor taught them and can apply it to the real life situation. David Ives, the Executive Director of the Albert Schweitzer Institute, benefits because he receives a product from a different view point that he or his staff may not have seen, but more importantly may not have been able to build or afford. Service Learning is a win-win situation for all involved: it gives everyone a different view on learning and interacting with a variety of people. Also, it allows students participate in activities outside of the classroom and work and learn in varying environments.

References

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