

October 6, 2011

Dr. Hull,

I was dismayed to learn of Paul Ryan's proposal to cut funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service. As a practitioner of Service-Learning and faculty member of a TN Campus Compact school, I want to encourage you to fight this political move on behalf of all Service-Learning practitioners across the state.

The Corporation for National and Community Service does so much more than encourage volunteerism; it provides the structure, leadership, marketing, and community essential to sustain the work of Service-Learning practitioners across the country. I am disappointed that the future of Service-Learning, an established pedagogical theory and a personal passion of mine, is in danger of falling prey to partisan politics and losing the support and credibility provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

As you know, Service-Learning is so much more than "volunteerism." Research shows that Service-Learning is a better way to teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills than a traditional classroom lecture style delivery. For instance, the Bledsoe Creek State Park Project, which was featured on the Corporation for National and Community Service's Serve.gov website, gave students a unique opportunity to meet a real community need while gaining a deeper understanding of the course content. Students worked with park officials and other volunteers to analyze the park's storm water drainage problem, to determine the best course of action, and to solve the problem in one semester. Not only did the park get the help that it needed in tough economic times, but students will continue to reap the civic and educational rewards in the future. Research shows these memorable learning experiences and newly constructed knowledge positively impact "student retention, academic skills and motivations to learn" for years to come (Indiana Campus Compact).

Service-Learning in particular has come so far, thanks to the support of the Corporation for National and Community Service. A cut in funding to the support structure will set the practice (and the benefits to students) back decades. Dr Hull, please pass this message along to those who have the power and the will to preserve funding for Corporation for National and Community Service.

Thank you for your leadership and continued support of Service-Learning at Volunteer State Community College.

Respectfully,
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