



## Best Practices in Developing Service-Learning

Miami Dade College (MDC) began our formal academic service-learning program in 1994 upon receiving a Learn and Serve grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service. Over the last 20 years we have continued to develop and expand service-learning and civic engagement at MDC. Below is a partial list of some of what we've learned and feel would be helpful to other institutions interested in building civic engagement programs at their college.

- Join [Florida Campus Compact](#) and participate in its conferences and meetings.
- Create a service-learning/civic engagement **advisory committee** with key faculty, administrators, student representatives, and community partner representatives.
- Have the Advisory Committee organize their work around **Dr. Andy Furco's ["Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education"](#)** as a tool to both assess where they currently are, and to develop their vision and plan of action for furthering service-learning. This rubric was designed to assist members of the higher education community in gauging the progress of their campus's service-learning institutionalization efforts.
- Send a team of faculty, student leaders, and administrators (especially academic administrators) to do a **site visit to a model community college** service-learning/civic engagement program.
- Send faculty and administrators and student leaders to [service-learning conferences](#).
- Bring in **national speakers** to address faculty about service-learning and civic engagement.
- **Create infrastructure** to support service-learning and civic engagement including a physical space and staff (e.g. an "Office of Civic Engagement"). Without some basic infrastructure, these programs will remain small and on the margins of the institution. Infrastructure includes an office space, at least a PT coordinator, one or more student assistants, ideally some faculty coordinator positions (see description below), a website, etc.
- Secure one or more [Federal Work Study positions](#) to help staff the department, including "community service" FWS slots.
- Create a **"Service-Learning Faculty Coordinator" position(s)**. These are faculty who are passionate about service-learning and put in a few hours a week working with their peers

advocating for service-learning by helping recruit, orient, and ensure academic rigor. MDC has a job description we can share.

- Host a **workshop for community partners** who will be hosting service-learning students. The purpose of this workshop is for the partners to understand the educational nature of the partnership and see themselves as co-educators as they interact with students. MDC has an annotated agenda and workshop materials we can share.
- Ensure that the service-learning program either is **part of Academic Affairs** (preferably) or if not, has strong ties to Academic Affairs. Many of the best programs report via Academic Affairs, but partner with Student Affairs.
- [Engage students](#) to advocate for program expansion.
- Offer regular **faculty professional development** for service-learning.
- Join [The Democracy Commitment](#).
- **Build support among college administrators**, academic dean, and department chairpersons.
- Recognize and **celebrate faculty** who are involved in service-learning and civic engagement.
- Offer students the [President's Volunteer Service Award](#). This award recognizes students who contribute at least 100 hours of service in a 12-month period (and student clubs and organizations too). MDC holds an annual ceremony and recognizes more than 400 students who have earned the award.

For more information, visit [www.mdc.edu/iced](http://www.mdc.edu/iced) and contact Josh Young, director of MDC's Institute for Civic Engagement and Democracy at [jyoung@mdc.edu](mailto:jyoung@mdc.edu) / 305-237-7477.