Guidelines

Guidelines for Partnering with our Office

Partnerships require a benefit for both contributors and partnerships require an understanding of each partner's needs, resources, assets, interests, and culture. We are committed to getting UIS students out into the community. Our students are excited and eager to make a difference during their time at UIS. We know you are interested in putting their abilities to work. However, it takes more than a common desire to create a mutually beneficial experience. In order to help you have the best experience with our volunteers and to ensure the vice versa we offer the following guidelines for partnering with us.

1. This must on some level be a partnership. Some partnerships may be brief or episodic others may persist over years, but there is a mutuality required. UIS should not blindly "do service to the community" and our community-partners should not see our volunteers as "free labor." We must work together to understand each other's goals and find opportunities to meet each of them.
2. College Students have different schedules and resources than other groups. In many cases we have to work around this together. Here are a few challenges we see most commonly.

    i) Our volunteers tend to have alternating schedules that vary from student to student from day to day and from semester to semester.
    ii) Students predominantly volunteer on an academic calendar.
    iii) Some of our volunteers have transportation, but many do not.
    iv) Our volunteers are energetic, smart, creative, young people. They may require guidance in order to complete unfamiliar tasks, but they will often surprise you with their abilities and capacity to pick things up quickly.

3. Student volunteers often participate for different reasons than other volunteers you may work with. We must work in partnership to make sure that our efforts impact our students as the students' efforts impact the community. Here are some ways we have found to satisfy this goal.

i) Connect the project to the larger issues. Think about how what you want our volunteers to do serves a real need in the community, and can you articulate that to our students, how does their work serve the mission of your organization, how does it help the community, how does it address a social need?

ii) Create learning opportunities. How can this opportunity be something that the volunteer can learn (in its largest sense) from and what types of skills can they gain?

iii) Create networking opportunities. How can a volunteer use this opportunity to meet and connect with people that they would not see in their daily lives; can they meet role models and leaders in the community?

iv) Create leadership opportunities. How can this volunteer assignment give the volunteers an opportunity to take ownership of a project, to exercise creative problem solving, to manage peers, and to see ideas implemented in actuality?

4. Give us advanced notice. It is difficult to establish even a brief partnership on a tight time table, and we are not generally successfully at trying to "round up" students for volunteer projects at the last minute. We ask that you give us no less than two weeks-notice when seeking to recruit our volunteers to a project.