

# CUNY Service Corps

Learn to Serve. Serve to Learn.

## Utilizing Experiential Learning Strategies to Create Program Culture

43<sup>rd</sup> NSEE Conference

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# Reflection Exercise

- ✎ What are 3 words you would use to describe the culture of your program or school?
- ✎ Is the culture you described what you want it to be?
- ✎ If yes, then what do you like about it?
- ✎ If no, in what way would you want it to be different?



# CUNY Service Corps

*Utilizing Experiential Learning Strategies to  
Create Program Culture*



Today we will:

- Explore experiential learning strategies utilized in the Service Corps program model
- Discuss how we created an authentic program culture of civic engagement with opportunities for students to develop their professional identities
- Share recommendations for community-building activities

# WE ARE SERVICE CORPS



[University Kick-off Sizzle Reel](#)



# CUNY Service Corps

The Service Corps is a hybrid program that provides 850 students per academic year with both a service opportunity and a pre-professional experience working with 15 faculty-led projects and 113 community partner sites in NYC.



Corps members commit to working 12 hours per week for 24 weeks and earn \$12 per hour.

## OUR STORY...

### ■ 2012

- ✓ In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, Chancellor Emeritus Matthew Goldstein announces plan to form the CUNY Service Corps

### ■ 2013

- ✓ Seven colleges are designated to launch the Corps at their campuses
- ✓ 719 students trained as the inaugural cohort
- ✓ 96 community partners are chosen representing not for profit organizations, cultural institutions and government agencies

### ■ 2014

- ✓ Culminated our inaugural year with First Annual Service Conference
- ✓ Launched a summer extension cohort funded by JFEW
- ✓ Recruited 1000 new students and increased to 113 community partners
- ✓ Added 15 faculty-led projects for 2014-2015 academic year
- ✓ Expansion to include an additional college within the University

## 8 PARTICIPATING COLLEGES





# OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS INCLUDE...

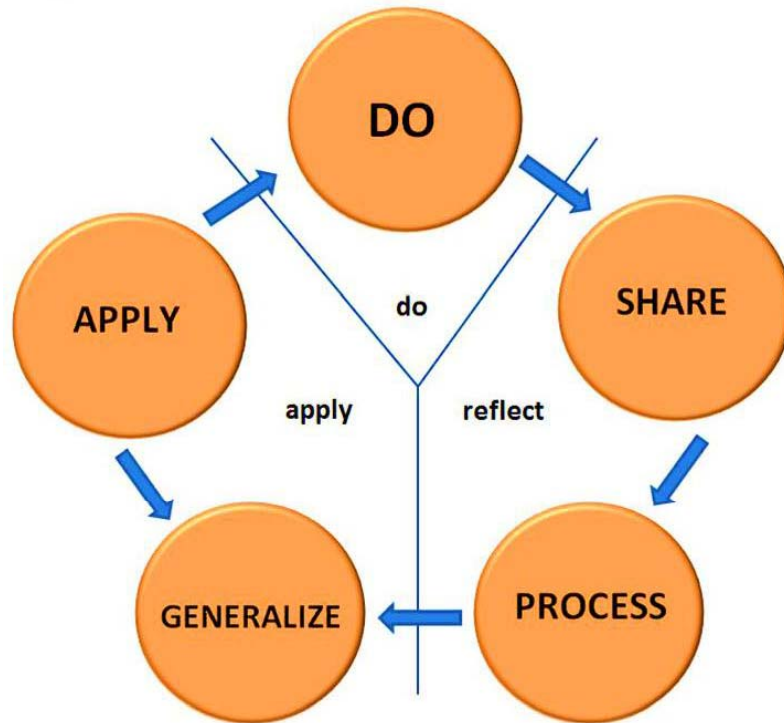




# More than an internship



**Experiential learning opportunities are embedded in all program elements in addition to the actual experience of service and work**



## WHY THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH?

### Student Benefit

Students learn new information about the world around them and apply understanding through hands-on experience



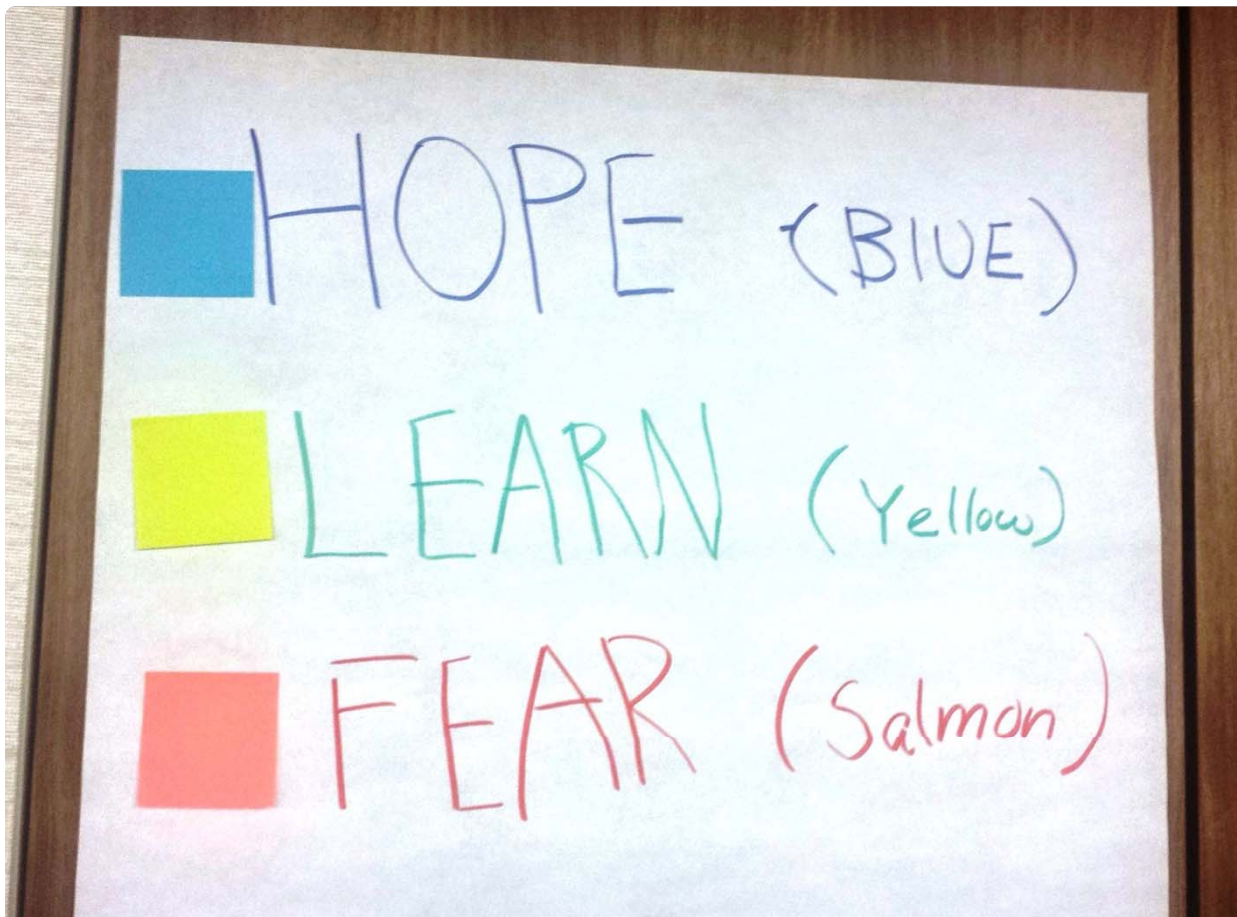
### Program Benefit

By seeing students in action we are able to assess students' skills and provide support and opportunities for growth through a tailored, emerging curriculum



**CUNY** Service Corps





## Round Robin

Describe the neighborhood where you grew up.

What is something your best friend would say you're really good at?

What is the best advice you've ever been given?

Experience First

Information Second



In groups, students share experiences and explore community needs assessment

Interactive small-group, project-based work

Group Interviews

Allows us to observe teamwork, problem-solving and communication

Results in early community-building for students



**Experiential processes**

Students are able to meet partners, interview and deliver 30-second pitch

Practice communication skills and build confidence

Matching Fair

Allows us to coach and build relationships with students and program staff

Results in opportunities for students to network and experience success



**Experiential processes**

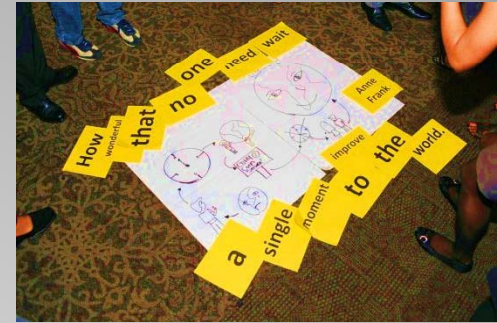
Various interactive opportunities for group work and reflection connected to service, the world of work and planning for the future

Students share/reflect on experience, lend support to each other, and build/practice workplace skills

Training:  
Pre-service &  
Ongoing Support

Allows us to set tone for the program and respond to real-life experiences of students at different stages of their development

Results in community-building, creative problem-solving, teamwork, and commitment to civic engagement



# Experiential processes

Student-led poster session and panel presentations

Students share their expertise, express themselves confidently, and celebrate their accomplishments

Annual Service Conference

Allows all stakeholders to see the results of investment

Results in student understanding of the magnitude of their cumulative investment and the power and talent in their network



**Experiential processes**



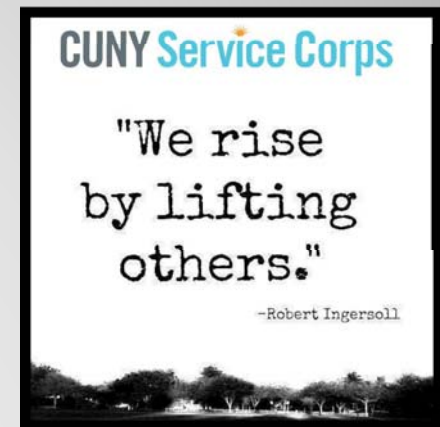
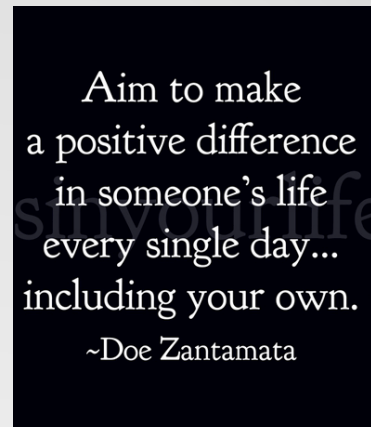
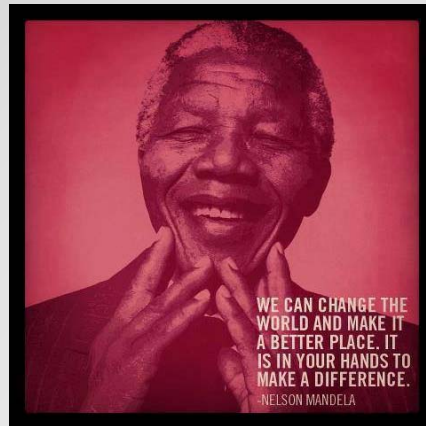


Encourage students to think critically and create safe spaces for students to experience moving out of their comfort zones.

Cultural Competency Activity – Four Corners

# Defining our program culture

- Students strongly identify with Service Corps community, internalizing what it means to be an ambassador of the University, their college, and this program
- Civic engagement is a responsibility we all share
- Students actively participate in their own learning and growth
- Students experience our collective power to create change by committing to excellence



# CUNY Service Corps



**in their own words**

[End of Year Reflection Video](#)

# Data Analysis of Cohort 1

- Students self-reported increases in the following areas:
  - Understanding what it means to be civically engaged (87%)
  - Understanding of social/political/economic issues in NYC (86%)
  - Understanding how organizations like their placement function (97%)
  - Self-confidence (89%)
  - Comfort with being in a professional environment (88%)
- Site supervisors rated students as very good/exceptional:
  - Teamwork (88%)
  - Attitude toward learning (88%)
  - Interactions with clientele (89%)
- Students' sense of community:
  - Felt as if they were part of a team of Corps members working toward a common goal (84.9% agree/strongly agree)





# Turn & Talk

- How would you describe the culture of your program or college?
- What is one experiential learning strategy that you use / have used in your program / at your college?
- What is something you've heard about the Service Corps that has provoked you in some interesting way?



# Recommendations

- Create opportunities for students to share their own stories and build trust and rapport with one another
- Challenge students to work in small groups and complete a project
- Run interactive activities on complex topics
- Engage external stakeholders in program delivery
- Model workplace communication techniques
- Use learning action plans and performance improvement plans to increase investment in pre-professional experiences



CUNY Service Corps

# Stay in touch...

[www.cuny.edu/site/servicecorps.html](http://www.cuny.edu/site/servicecorps.html)

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#cunyservicecorps #cunyserves

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