Best Practices in working with WVU Students

We can be successful if we…

- Make sure students know who to talk to if they have a question.

- Make sure students understand the project and the goals.

- Make students feel as though they are a part of your team.

- Make sure they get as much out of the project as they give to the project.

- Allow the students to have the opportunity to lead and explore.

- Involve students in our culture (have them attend department meetings, attend county-wide meetings, and participate in recruitment and organizational events).

- Interview the students and assess their strengths and interests, then develop projects around these.

- Provide as much background as possible prior to the firsts meeting via email.

- Be very clear when identifying what you expect of the students.

- Put expectations in writing and make sure each student has a copy. Hold the students accountable to these expectations.

- Don't blindly trust students when they say they are working on things or promise they will have you something after a deadline has passed.

- If it is a one-time volunteer, still set expectations ahead of time, remind them of the date and time of service, and review expectations when they start the project. Check in with them often. Ask them to bring any forms they need filled out or signed with them.

- Be accepting of limitations the students explain to you; i.e. if spreadsheets are not their strong suit; structure your projects to have spreadsheets done by someone else. The students can research and compile the data.

- Meet the students where they are… find out what they want to accomplish and allow this to be an experience that they can apply to their future jobs/experiences.

- Be honest with students in assessing their work and make them feel comfortable. Offer constructive criticism if warranted.

- Let them take ownership of the project and really consider their ideas even though you would have never thought of them. That's part of the learning experience for partners.

- Outline the desired project during initial discussion with the student, and break projects down into weekly assignments with specific expected outcomes. Allow students to work off-site on weekly assignments and then review results in a weekly meeting. Keep WVU breaks & holidays and class times.

- Get Contact information from your student.

- Have a check-in meeting with the student before the first item is due.

- After the groups are established (Nursing or Pharmacy), pop in and participate in their brainstorming session and again during the implementation planning. Be ready to advocate for the students if their outcomes do not match what your site or project can provide.

- Don't overbook and, unless you are just handing them a broom or paintbrush, be prepared to commit some time and effort to their course requirements as well. It is also good to get a copy of the course syllabus so your expectations can be coordinated with the instructors.

- Have open communication and encourage your students to be comfortable checking in with you.

- Keep up with iServe -- students are waiting for these hours to be approved for courses, so check often.

- Establish a practice of meeting at least 2-3 times with the students at a convenient location near WVU (since we are not local). We communicate a lot via email.

- Make sure to create a sign-in sheet. What time they came in and what time they leave.

- Tell them they will not receive their hours if they fail to sign in or out.

- Make sure to hand out name tags especially if you are dealing with multiple volunteers.

- Make sure to give all volunteers a phone number at which you can be reached before their first or subsequent visits, in case they need directions or to cancel.

- Prepare a timeline for work to be done, Stress commitment.

- Get student feedback on experiences.

- Treat them like they will be in the real world.

- Always give a deadline, and ask regularly about how the project is developing.

- Have a clear idea of what you want your site to get out of the projects. Don't be afraid to deviate but make sure you are focused on what you want, how you want it to look, is it feasible in the time the group or student has allotted for the service learning experience and remember these students are not volunteers; they need to get something concrete out of the process.

- **Contact CS&L staff when you have questions or need help!!**