

Education for Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

The authors propose a paper that will discuss models of service learning that foster sustainable development. The paper will discuss the pedagogical goals of service learning as well as the community goals. It will identify certain impediments that are endemic to this sort of learning, including funding, language and cultural barriers, and student transience.

The paper will discuss the importance of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in institutions of higher learning in order for them to be effective in the context of service learning. Exploring community-university linkages both in the U.S. and abroad, the paper will make recommendations for promoting sustainable development that includes environmental protection, education, social capital, and strong community-university partnerships.

The paper will highlight examples such as the relationship between Tufts University and Chinatown in Boston. Both Tufts and Boston University have been involved in a community-driven program in Chinatown that seeks to remanufacture used medical and dental equipment that would otherwise be discarded. The Asian Community Development Corporation works with local immigrant with the relevant skills to refurbish the equipment. The refurbished equipment is then exported to China. While this program has been a small-scale success, it has potential for much more. Tufts has played a fairly passive role, mainly donating equipment it would otherwise have discarded. Tufts and BU students have not been involved. Ideally, this scenario is an educational opportunity for Tufts and BU students from a broad range of disciplines. It has the potential to play a more significant role in the local economy and to provide jobs and to make the universities more formidable Chinatown residents.

This is one tiny example that can be tweaked to reach broader sustainable development and educational goals. The paper will identify good examples and make recommendations for better, more responsibly, and more ethically integrating universities into their host communities and promoting both education and sustainable development that respects local needs and cultural traditions.