



Quality Enhancement Plan Focuses on Service-Learning

What is a QEP? And what does it have to do with DBU? As a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, DBU's regional accrediting association, Dallas Baptist University is developing a required five-year Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which will enhance student learning. In 2006, after careful planning and feedback from faculty, staff, students, and alumni groups, DBU resoundingly identified service-learning as the University-wide initiative to enhance student learning.

Service is nothing new to DBU. It has remained a central theme of the University since Dr. Gary Cook's arrival as president in 1988. During his very first chapel address, Dr. Cook set the tone for the future of the school as he pointed students to Christ's model as a servant for not only his followers, but also for all the world. In 1993, the focus of service found its way into the mission statement of the school, as the University vowed to produce servant leaders whose faith in Christ impacted every aspect of their lives.

So what then is "service-learning"? Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates academic instruction, community service, and guided reflection from a Christ-centered, faith-based perspective in order to enhance student learning, foster civic responsibility, and develop servant leaders. In order to implement this strategy, DBU utilizes two essential avenues of learning through service in Student Affairs and in Academic Affairs.

Student Affairs. DBU places a special emphasis on service-learning, with 100 percent of incoming freshman and transfer students serving at least six hours a month at one of 35 available sites across the community. In addition, many other service projects are undertaken every year by the Student Affairs division. For example, in response to the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe, DBU students spent hours helping evacuees who had been transported to Dallas, as well as clearing debris and rebuilding houses along the Gulf Coast in Mississippi and in New Orleans. As a result of this special service, DBU was named to President George W. Bush's first Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction for Hurricane Katrina Relief Service.

Academic Affairs. DBU's five-year Quality Enhancement Plan to develop service-learning will incorporate some aspect of service-learning into every program's

degree plan. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." Applying this truth, DBU students take the competencies and skills introduced in the classroom to serve in a community-partner setting where these proficiencies are utilized to meet a need of others.

As an illustration, students enrolled in one upper-level reading education course receive direct experience in diagnosing and correcting reading problems for individual students who are identified by local schools as being in need of this assistance. DBU students work one-on-one with students, and in turn they help improve DBU's reading program and enhance learning opportunities for at-risk students in area schools.

These carefully planned service-learning opportunities offer rich benefits to students:

- Gaining valuable real-world experience in their fields as students apply concepts and theories to life situations.
- Involving students with important community needs.
- Exploring issues that impact others.
- Understanding what is necessary to become true servant leaders. Jesus said, "If you want to be great, you must be the servant of all."

DBU's QEP topic of service-learning enhances the educational experience and is an avenue of caring for and serving others, providing the types of experiences which prepare students to glorify Christ in any vocation or calling.



DBU student Jennifer Golightly celebrates a birthday with a girl in an orphanage in Guatemala during DBU's recent mission trip in connection with Buckner International.