

Preventing Failure in SL Partnerships

Jenny Bay, Purdue University

Amy Wood, United Way of Greater Lafayette

Brief description: This presentation uses information gathered from community partners in the Greater Lafayette area to advise students on how to prevent failure in their engagement projects. We'll go over the top attitudes, behaviors, and actions that community partners say contribute to failure and analyze potential scenarios in small groups to develop strategies that ensure successful partnerships.

1. You don't show up
2. No follow through
3. Unusable product
4. "What we think you really need is..."
5. Expect the Community Partner to do everything for you
6. It's all about me
7. Lack of communication
8. Lack of planning
9. It takes time
10. Lack of research/not understanding the context

Responses from Community Partners:

Miscommunication: I am always specific about times/dates and how many volunteers I need.

The group and I had a miscommunication and had split up the group, so 2 people could sign up for 1 hour time slots in the 4 hours they were coming. I had new volunteers coming every 45 minutes to continue the project they were working on...

When a group commits to sending 12 people so we plan work for 12 and 5 people show up.

The failure that is most annoying to me is when I never hear back from the student(s) with the finished product. I put time and effort into meeting with them, proofing their work, etc. and then it gets turned in for a grade and I never see it....

We had a group of students that were supposed to work on a marketing piece for us. We gave them access to our online software so they could utilize our logos and some photos. We met once and from then on through email. Well, they eventually stopped contacting us and we were only able to get a response from one of the three group members. Needless to say, they never completed the project. Luckily, it wasn't too time consuming for us.

When we work with groups, the biggest issues are that sometimes the group already has an idea of what they want to do and try to get that to fit our needs instead of the other way around. We have also worked with groups that don't have a leader and/or only have a leader and the rest don't do much.

From Jenny Bay:

When students think that community partners are obliged to email/call back/work for them ("I emailed my community partner but it took him 2 days to email me back so I didn't get the information in time") or when students think the community partner should feel privileged to have them (not sure how to word this but you know what I mean about this attitude).

When the community partner suggests that students volunteer to better understand the agency before they start a project, and students don't volunteer so they don't have the background knowledge they need...and then wonder why the project isn't going well for them.

Scenarios to consider:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.