



Tracking Student Participation in Community Service Programs

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I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & PARAMETERS

Project Challenge:

A member university approached the Council with the following questions:

How do institutions collect data on their students' participation in community service projects?

1. *What data management systems do other institutions use?*
2. *Who collects the information used in data management systems?*
3. *How often is information updated in systems?*
4. *How do institutions use the processed data management information?*

Sources:

During the course of research, the Council searched the following resources to study community service database management in higher education, including:

- Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) <http://www.eric.ed.gov>
- The Chronicle of Higher Education <http://chronicle.com>
- Salesforce CRM <http://www.salesforce.com/>
- VerticalResponse <http://www.verticalresponse.com/>
- VolunteerMatch Solutions <http://www.volunteermatch.org/corporations/engagestudents.jsp>

Research Parameters:

- ❖ Based on the member institution's request, the Council focused its research on institutions that currently utilize an online system to report community service efforts in medium sized cities.
- ❖ Over the course of research, the Council spoke with the director or technology chair of public service centers.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & PARAMETERS (CONT.)

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Degree of Urbanization	Classification	Enrollment (Total/ Undergraduate)
Institution A	Southwest	Large City	Research University: very high research activity	51,500/41,600
Institution B	Northeast	Midsized City	Research University: very high research activity	8,200/6,000
Institution C	Northeast	Midsized City	Research University: very high research activity	25,800/10,000
Institution D	Northeast	Midsized City	Research University: very high research activity	10,200/4,200
Institution E	Northeast	Midsized City	Baccalaureate College: Arts and Sciences	2,600/2,400
Institution F	West Coast	Midsized City	Research University: very high research activity	34,500/24,500

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics and U.S. News & World Report

II. EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Key Observations:

- **Institutions use student volunteering tracking software for a variety of purposes, including:**
 - Measuring the public service center’s impact on the local community;
 - Providing students with an opportunity to quantify their volunteering accomplishments;
 - Profiling student volunteer participants; and
 - Reporting overall involvement trends to university administration, alumni, and the public.

- **With the exception of Institution A and Institution F, all institutions contacted use internally-developed software to track student volunteer hours.** Internally-developed software allows for advanced customization and it is often less costly than outsourcing.

- **Contacted institutions use the following data management systems:**

Purchased Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Volunteer Match Campus Tools– Salesforce	Software Used for Internal Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– PHP and MySQL Databases– Drupal Software– FileMaker Pro
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- **Contacts recommend working with local vendors if the institution elects to outsource student volunteer tracking as local companies looking to expand often offer free platform services in exchange for marketing exposure.**

- **Many institutions believe that qualitative data measuring the impact of student volunteering efforts can be as effective as a quantitative assessment of volunteer hours.** Contacts at Institution C and Institution D believe that a quantitative assessment (i.e., tracking volunteer hours) is not in line with the altruistic mission of the public service center; instead, these institutions obtain a holistic view of volunteer impact by tracking qualitative data on volunteer performance.

- **Inducing students to report volunteer hours can be difficult because reporting processes are time-consuming and students are not invested in the long-term impact of the center.** To offset tracking lapses, institutions often employ four key tactics:
 1. Automating the process online so that students can more easily log on and enter information
 2. Honoring students with volunteering awards
 3. Collecting data manually via paper forms, ensuring that the public service center can approximate the number of student volunteer hours
 4. Assigning student program leaders or student center workers as point people for collecting volunteer information from program participants and entering the information into the community service database

III. OUTSOURCED DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Volunteer Match Campus Tools at Institution A	
Data Management System	Institution A purchases VolunteerMatch Campus Tools software from VolunteerMatch Solutions, and this system is available to all students in addition to anyone with a university email address.
General Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a searchable, internet-based database of community organizations and volunteering opportunities. • Collects and stores users' logged volunteer hours.
Collected Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student name, school, and class year. • The system does not gather information on the geographic areas or topical issues of completed community service.
Implementation Process	IT staff worked with VolunteerMatch to create a system congruent with the institutional Web site. To maximize use of the purchased software, contacts emphasize the importance of specifying objectives during the installation process.
Housed	Community Service Program housed in Student Affairs.
Staff Role and Responsibilities	Staff collect the information to create student engagement reports requested by the administration and recognize students for excellence in volunteering. The office has not yet utilized collected data for an annual report.

Overview of System Capabilities:

VolunteerMatch Solutions offers Campus Tools software, designed to engage student volunteers and publicize community service opportunities. Contacts note that the system's primary purpose is to connect agencies with students rather than offer tracking services to students. However, the software includes a customizable Web site where individuals can perform the following functions:

Users

- Create personal account
- Search for volunteering opportunities
- Research participating community organizations
- Record volunteering commitments
- View volunteering history and recorded hours on account information page

Community Organizations

- Register and propagate the system through the main VolunteerMatch Web site for free
- List volunteering needs in the searchable database

Administrators

- Gain unlimited access to the managerial information of the program
- Complete queries and pull data for reporting purposes

Information Collection Process:

To record community service hours, students search the database for the organization where they are volunteering, click on 'track hours,' and enter the information. If necessary, students can add the name of unlisted organizations. Because the internet interface has no memory limitations, user information is never removed from the system.

Incentivizing Students to Record Volunteer Hours

Each semester, the president at Institution A presents awards to individuals with a certain number of volunteering hours recorded through this system.

III. OUTSOURCED DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CONT.)

Institution A, cont.

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + User-friendly and internet-based system, which makes finding volunteering opportunities easy and handy + Accessible for students who can search for volunteer opportunities, track hours, and keep records of their past commitments from any internet-capable location + Requires little additional work from institutional staff because community organizations post their own information + Appearance and capabilities are customizable (to a certain extent), allowing easy integration into the university system + Extensive database of service opportunities due to VolunteerMatch's reputation and free enrollment for community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatively high cost in a time of budget constraints: the software costs \$13,500 per year - According to contacts, the software is not conducive to publicizing and registering students for community service events; these processes are not streamlined and require considerable effort - Does not record volunteering hours across the university, since individuals and student clubs external from the Community Service Program often neglect to sign up or log their volunteer hours - While the software is easy to use, students sometimes find tracking hours time-consuming, especially those students who are volunteering for a one-time event

VolunteerMatch at Institution F

The Public Service Center at **Institution F** uses VolunteerMatch Campus Tools software in conjunction with two other software products. Contacts explain that the main use of VolunteerMatch is to allow community members the opportunity to advertise volunteer requests to the student population. The program is not used for tracking because the process of reporting hours through this program is excessively time-consuming. Further, contacts note that the software does not effectively communicate with other university software.

III. OUTSOURCED DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CONT.)

SalesForce at Institution F					
Data Management System	To build online applications and organize student community service accomplishments, Institution F uses SalesForce, a customer relationship management system.				
General Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records student volunteer information and program participation in a database. • Maintains a database of community partners and accompanying contact information. • Allows data downloading for reporting purposes. 				
Collected Information	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Student Information: – Name – Class year – Student identification number (coded) </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Program information: – Hours of service – Population served – Compensation or academic credits awarded for volunteering </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> – Nationality – Gender – Race/Ethnicity </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> – Community partner – Volunteer site </td> </tr> </table>	Student Information: – Name – Class year – Student identification number (coded)	Program information: – Hours of service – Population served – Compensation or academic credits awarded for volunteering	– Nationality – Gender – Race/Ethnicity	– Community partner – Volunteer site
Student Information: – Name – Class year – Student identification number (coded)	Program information: – Hours of service – Population served – Compensation or academic credits awarded for volunteering				
– Nationality – Gender – Race/Ethnicity	– Community partner – Volunteer site				
Implementation Process	Institution F has used this technology for the past year. To populate the database initially, staff manually entered all community partner and student information.				
Housed	Public Service Center housed in Campus Life and Leadership.				
Staff Role and Responsibilities	The Assistant Director of the Public Service Center is responsible for downloading database information and compiling office reports. Additionally, an internal technology specialist writes codes for online applications and program features.				

Overview of System Capabilities:

The Public Service Center uses SalesForce to track students' volunteering involvements through the center, organize the contact and business information of community partners, and report on community impact and student involvement. The SalesForces system allows data to be easily downloaded from the internet into Excel files for generating reports on volunteer hours per student and center, student volunteer demographics, and geographic impact.

Student Users

- Apply for The Public Service Center program directly online
- Request reports on personal volunteer hours (if properly reported)

Public Service Center Staff

- Download database information for reports that gauge the local impact and level of student involvement
- Manually enter new community partners into the database

Information Collection Process:

When students complete the mandatory registration process for volunteering through the center, their personal information is automatically entered into the student database. Student leaders are responsible for overseeing the hour tracking process, requesting service hours from volunteers and manually entering reported hours into the system under each participant's database listing.

III. OUTSOURCED DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CONT.)

Institution F, cont.

Incorporation of VerticalResponse for Marketing and Outreach

In conjunction with SalesForce, Institution F uses the Web-based marketing tools of VerticalResponse to advertise volunteer opportunities and communicate with student volunteers.

Purpose: Accommodate and manage online application processes for office-sponsored programs.

Capabilities: Send automatic email updates to groups
Track who has opened or clicked on a link in an email.

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Low price point for non-profits + Highly customizable appearance and reporting + Relatively strong integration capabilities + Minimal data entry due to downloading capabilities from the online database + Multiple levels of access; administrators have access to all features, whereas student workers have limited access + Database can track and report student volunteer activity post graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private or sensitive information (e.g., student identification numbers) cannot be entered into the database because the information is stored at an off-campus site - Does not accommodate attachments (e.g., a volunteer activity that requires a filled out application cannot be sent through the system) - Students do not consistently report hours, especially for one-time service events

Leveraging Community Service Technology

As the second largest employer on campus, the Public Service Center at **Institution F** uses SalesForce to record students' federal work-study hours. Utilizing SalesForces streamlines the time sheet process and allows multiple offices to electronically track students' working hours.

IV. IN-HOUSE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Outreach Database at Institution D	
Data Management System	Five years ago, student interns at the Public Service Center developed the institution's Outreach Database to inform the surrounding community about available volunteering opportunities organized by institutional departments.
General Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an online portal through which people can easily learn about Institution D's outreach efforts in the surrounding community and the greater metropolitan area. • Allows community members looking for service opportunities to search for outreach programs pertaining to a variety of topics.
Collected Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Program description – Relevant photo – Restrictions – Posting updates – Program's searchable tag in the database – Timeframe of the program – Population served – Volunteer location, Group or individual activity – Costs (if any) • The system does not track volunteer hours because this practice does not align with the university's encouragement of quality (not quantity) experiences in the community.
Implementation Process	Six years ago, two students conducted background research and built the database using PHP and MySQL software.
Housed	Public Service Center housed in Student Affairs.
Staff Role and Responsibilities	One staff member serves as the database moderator, who collects submitted information and permits postings from the institutional community.

Overview of System Capabilities:

The Outreach Database connects the institution and surrounding community by promoting volunteering. The database also provides students and departments with a forum to advertise service programs that necessitate volunteers. Of note, many of the programs call for non-institutional volunteers (i.e., community members only).

Users from the Public

- Browse listed community service programs and volunteer requests
- Enroll in service programs

Institution D Community Members

- Populate the database by listing service opportunities and accompanying information

Staff Moderator

- Populate the database by listing service opportunities and accompanying information

The database's homepage lists all of the volunteer programs by category (i.e., geographic area, social issue., etc). Instead of linking users to separate Web sites for each program, the programs' informational pages are parallel in design and listed in the database. Each page has the contact information of the MIT organizer and a short program overview. Contacts note that this standardization allows users to compare programs side-by-side.

Information Collection Process:

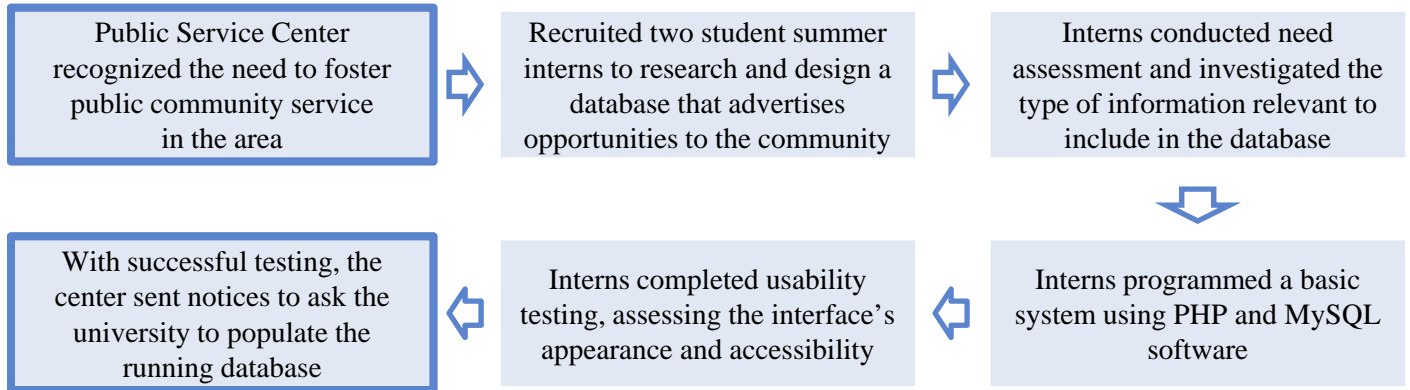
Anyone with an institutional email address can post programs in the database. Postings have a six-month reminder for updating, but this feature of the database is currently unavailable.

IV. IN-HOUSE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CONT.)

Institution D, cont.

Database Development Process Overview:

The following depicts the process Institution D followed to develop an in-house database system.



Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + In-house design permits high customization and low associated costs + Student interns gained valuable experience while creating the database + Parallel appearance allows users to easily compare programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current use is to spread outreach opportunities to the community not to monitor volunteer activity - Largely qualitative in nature; no tracking of hours

Community Service Tracking at Institution C

Like Institution D, the community relations office at **Institution C** uses a Web directory of volunteering commitments as a comprehensive guide to the institution's community service programs but does not advertise volunteering opportunities. It is characterized by the following:

- **Implementation:** Created one year ago by a consultancy, Studio Module, and internal IT staff
- **Software:** Drupal, a content management system
- **Information Collected:**
 - ✓ Leader contact information
 - ✓ Number of participants
 - ✓ Demographics of the population served
 - ✓ Web site (if available)
 - ✓ Hours of involvement
- **Database managers:** Faculty advisors and student program leaders (solicited by the office)
- **Search Criteria:** Program title, organizing school, and applicable topic (Education and Achievement, Economic Opportunity, Health and the Environment, Affordable Housing, or Civic Life and Culture)

IV. IN-HOUSE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CONT.)

FileMaker Pro Data Management System at Institution B

Data Management System	Several years ago, an in-house Web and Technology Specialist developed a community service database so that the center could monitor its impact on the community and students could record their volunteer activity.
General Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracks students volunteering hours and accomplishments. • Generates reports based on student's community service efforts.
Collected Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers information on the student participants' names, concentrations, and class years and on program information (e.g., population served, activities completed, and location of the event). The database also contains a list of community partners, involved in current and past programs.
Implementation Process	FileMaker Pro, a cross-platform relational database application that integrates a cataloging engine with a graphical user interface (GUI), was used to create the database.
Housed	Public Service Center housed in Student Affairs.
Staff Role and Responsibilities	The Web and Technology Specialist maintains the database and often assists other staff in generating community service reports.

System Capabilities:

Institution B's community service database is used primarily to report student activities and analyze the university's impact on the local community.

Student Center Workers

- Enter community service activity information after its collection on paper forms

Web and Technology Specialist

- Generate reports on involved students and program outcomes
- Compile lists of community partners with contact information

Contacts note that the database is rarely used because information is not easily extracted. Instead of using the database, individual program leaders usually keep track of student involvement via personal Excel spreadsheets. Additionally, the technology is not internet-based, which contacts note is important for increasing student use.

Currently, the Web and Technology Specialist is developing a new database management system that has high usability ratings and works in conjunction with the internet. These features will allow students to self-register and staff to independently compile reports.

Information Collection Process:

Student program leaders collect information from participants via paper forms and deliver this to student workers, who enter the information into system.

Benefits	Drawbacks
+ In-house design permits high customization; low associated costs	- Lacks user-friendly capabilities; staff cannot extract data without the help of the technology specialist
+ Generates reports based on student demographics	- Not easily integrated with the internet, limiting accessibility

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES NOTE

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