


SERVICE PROGRAMS THAT CHANGE THE WORLD

 *The Center for Faith and Service* | McCormick Theological Seminary
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TO: College and University Career Service Offices

FR: Wayne Meisel, Executive Director of The Center for Faith and Service

RE: Service Programs that Change the World / Faith Based Young Adult Service Organizations

My name is Wayne Meisel and I am writing to introduce myself, the Center for Faith and Service, and Service Programs that Change the World.

Working with organizations like the Phillips Brooks House at Harvard, COOL (the Campus Outreach Opportunity League), Americorps, the Bonner Foundation, and Teach for America, I've spent my career working to launch and expand student movements around community service, service learning, civic engagement and social justice.

Six years ago, I left my position as president of the Bonner Foundation to launch the Center for Faith and Service – a think and action tank focused on expanding the reach of innovative programs available through service programs, seminaries, divinity schools, and other faith-based organizations.

One of the projects of The Center for Faith and Service is Service Programs that Change the World. Service Programs that Change the World (www.ServicePrograms.org) seeks to highlight the many opportunities available to recent college grads through faith-based service year programs.

Why a faith-based service organization?

While the organizations highlighted by Service Programs that Change the World provide more than 4,000 jobs to recent college graduates each year, many of the service programs are undersubscribed.

Many of the placements staffed by these organizations are focused in social justice issue areas that are not eligible for AmeriCorps positions. Most of the programs offer extensive leadership training and enrichment activities, as well as unparalleled experiences for individuals wishing to pursue justice-oriented work, grow their personal and professional network, and work through career discernment.

Almost all of these programs offer intentional living communities focused on building community, living simply, and working for social justice. And critically for many graduating

college seniors, most also provide a monthly or yearly stipend, and in most cases qualify for student loan deferment.

Getting the Word Out

One of the major challenges facing both prospective volunteers and program directors is a lack of visibility on college campuses. While students attending a small Lutheran college may hear about Lutheran Volunteer Corps, and those at a Jesuit college may learn of opportunities available through Jesuit Volunteer Corps, and students at large public schools will invariably hear about AmeriCorps, Teach for America, or the Peace Corps, the information often remains silently siloed away. As a result, many programs leave open positions unfilled, and many graduating students or recent alum don't find out about a program that may have been the perfect fit.

That's where we come in.

The Center for Faith and Service has developed two major resources for college and university career services offices: www.ServicePrograms.org (web based resource), and Profiles of Service and Justice (printable resource). Both allow students to compare a dozen plus programs at once.

Each program has been vetted by leading service learning advocates. Individual students can explore the different aspects of the program, including but not limited to locations, issue areas, compensation and other opportunities.

One distinct aspect of the Service Programs that Change the World platform is that it allows career services officers to present an extensive list of programs representing a wide range of social justice areas and faith traditions.

I know there are people out there who are suspect of any program that is faith based. I understand the concern and in many ways share it. But the programs listed here represent a group of programs that are competent, welcoming and have integrity. If a program has any specific religious leaning or expectation, it is clearly stated in the profile. But to be clear, most are open to all people who are committed to serving – including those who identify with no religious tradition at all.

We hope that you will find these resources helpful. If you have any suggestions or questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to The Center. We're here to help.

Sincerely,

Wayne Meisel
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