

# **INTEGRATIVE ESSAY (SAMPLE)**

## **MY COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

Student Name

Integrative Service-Learning Final Essay

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Submission date

**Participating in the Citizen Scholars' Program has made me realize that even I, a young woman with physical disabilities, can make a small difference in my community through volunteerism or a career that involves serving others. My service-learning experience contributed to my decision to change my major from accounting to sociology so that I can eventually become a social worker or a social and human service assistant.**

I am very thankful that the Honors Community Involvement professor told my classmates and me about the fourth credit option and the Citizen Scholars' Program early in the fall semester of 2004. This motivated me to earn another credit for the aforementioned course by volunteering for 20 additional hours, reflecting on and writing about my experience in a journal, and attending a service-learning seminar. All of the above led me to sign up for the Citizen Scholars' Program. Consequently, I took advantage of service-learning opportunities for a few of my other classes.

I was able to relate my service learning experience to the readings, discussions, and activities in my Honors Community Involvement course. Because the class's community service project was about literacy, I decided to become a tutor for the Brevard County Public Libraries Literacy Program. After being accepted into the program and attending a tutor training workshop, I chose to help a high school dropout improve her reading and writing skills in preparation for the GED examination. We met twice a week for a few months at the Franklin T. DeGroot Memorial Library to discuss the reading selections in a workbook and complete exercises related to them. At one point during the semester, the Honors Community Involvement professor gave my classmates and me an assignment in which we had to read a newspaper article about a local illiterate man and write answers to her questions about it. My classmates and I periodically updated each other and our instructor on the progress of our individual efforts to promote and increase literacy in Brevard County. For our final exam we encouraged children to

read for education and pleasure by reading stories to them while being dressed up like storybook characters at the Melbourne Public Library in November 2004. I continued to be a literacy tutor in the semesters following this Honors Community Involvement class. My next student was a Spanish-speaking woman from Colombia. Applying my knowledge from three years of high school Spanish, I taught her how to speak, read, and write some English in several months. I wrote an essay and gave a presentation about my experience to conclude a service-learning option for my Honors Communication 2 course near the end of the spring semester of 2005.

Also in the fall of 2004, the Honors Statistics professor suggested to my classmates and me a service-learning option in which we could tutor students in mathematics. After volunteering as a mentor in the Math Lab at the Palm Bay campus of Brevard Community College for 20 hours over a period of a couple of months, I submitted to my instructor a statistical report that included tables and graphs about the math students whom I assisted. I continued to be a math mentor for my Human Service Experience I course while my classmates volunteered for different agencies. We met with our professor a few times during the spring semester of 2005 to discuss our progress. My classmates and I gave presentations about our service-learning experiences during our last class. I volunteered as a math mentor for the last time during the fall semester of 2005.

For my career exploration course this semester, each of my classmates and I were required to select a company or organization at which to volunteer for a career-shadowing project. I chose the Greater Palm Bay Area Chamber of Commerce. On a weekly basis for a couple of months, I answered the telephone, assisted visitors, and prepared mail that was to be sent. I ended my volunteering commitment to the Palm Bay Chamber by handing out juice samples at the Big Squeeze Juice Festival on the Palm Bay campus of BCC on April 1. My other

service sites included my alma mater Bayside High School, the Space Coast Writers' Guild, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. I also helped out at school events sponsored by Phi Theta Kappa.

There is not much that I would change to improve my service-learning experience. Perhaps I could have taken more time to investigate the agencies that need volunteers the most. Now that I know I want to become a social worker or a social and human service assistant, I wish that I could have volunteered for a social service organization. However, I consider my whole experience to be more than satisfactory, which is why I am unable to think of one situation that stands out.

After I was informed that one of the requirements of the Citizen Scholars' Program is the completion of 300 hours of community service, I thought to myself that this will not be an easy task to do in two years since it took me three years in high school to volunteer for 100 hours. I then calculated that I would have to complete at least 75 hours of volunteering per semester in order to fulfill this obligations. I was able to volunteer for 75 hours during my first semester at BCC with minimal difficulty since I had more free time, so I became confident about being able to finish the Citizen Scholars' Program. Another way that my perceptions have changed from my first impressions of the service-learning experience is that I became more comfortable interacting with people after having been an introvert for most of my life. The Citizen Scholars' Program helped me improve my human relations skills.

As stated in my headline, one of the benefits of the Citizen Scholars' Program for me was the realization of my potential to contribute to society despite being physically handicapped. A positive effect of this was a boost in my self-esteem. My service-learning experience also prevented me from continuing my education in accounting, a field that may be financially

rewarding but otherwise not very gratifying. Therefore, I decided to change my major from accounting to sociology in pursuit of a more fulfilling career. Volunteering at several service sites increased my network of people who may help me obtain a job by giving me advice., introducing me to potential employers, and being references. I was recognized at a few events at which people presented me with certificates for my volunteerism.

The amount of learning that I gained from participating in the Citizen Scholars' Program is quite valuable. I realized how much I truly enjoy performing community service. I became aware that the community is always in need of help from people who are willing to give of their time and talents. I learned that tens of people become literate annually because of the Brevard County Public Libraries Literacy Program, and endeavor of which I am proud to have been a part. As a result of volunteering at the Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce, I am more knowledgeable of the history of my hometown and all that it has to offer people.

I would definitely recommend the Citizen Scholars' Program to other students for several reasons. First of all, I believe that it would cause them to become less self-absorbed and feel more grateful for what they have and what they are able to do. This service-learning experience may also confirm a student's desired major and/or career goals or make him/her reconsider them. Finally, the community service experience gained from the Citizen Scholars' Program can be listed on one's resume, which may increase his/her likelihood of obtaining employment.

In conclusion, I feel so fortunate to have participated in the Citizen Scholars' Program. I strongly believe that this extracurricular activity or one similar to it should be offered and encouraged to student at all colleges and universities. I think that volunteerism makes our world a better place. I plan to perform community service voluntarily for as long as I am capable of doing so.