

EMPOWER

DESCRIPTION

An initiative of the Office of Service Learning and Civic Leadership, the Empower Program is intended to build socially responsible citizen-leaders through co-curricular service-learning. The program will provide student participants with an intensive service-learning experience in community-building coupled with critical personal investigation to encourage students to view themselves as powerful agents of social change. The program seeks to reinvigorate democracy through empowering our students and our communities to effect social change.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead



COMMUNITY

This service-learning experience will be based in Over-the-Rhine, Cincinnati. Over-the-Rhine is a predominantly low income neighborhood, adjacent to the city's central business district. It has historically been a home for poor migrants from Appalachia and the rural south. It suffers from the classic problems of poor inner city neighborhoods, including population decline, inadequate public education, homelessness, increased segregation, building abandonment, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and lack of access to political power. In April of 2001, the neighborhood was the origin of the city's largest racial unrest since 1968.

In 1950 approximately 30,000 people resided in Over-the-Rhine, with whites constituting 99% of that population. Recent data now show that out of 7,600, 80% are black. Currently, 95% live below the official poverty level. Of Over-the-Rhine's 7,500 apartment units, 3,000 are below housing code standards and approximately 300 buildings stand vacant.

Yet, despite impoverishment and disenfranchisement, the community is organizing for social change and community development.

PROJECTS

- **Community Gardens**
Work with the Civic Garden Center, neighborhood children and residents to create a mural in a community garden.
- **Homelessness**
Work with the Drop Inn Homeless Shelter to create a craft project with residents and research other homeless programs for use by the shelter.
- **Advocacy**
Work with the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless to research homeless trends and write articles for *Streetvibes*.
- **Low Income Housing**
Work with ReSTOC and the OTR Housing Network to rehab low income housing units and research housing issues to be presented to City Council.
- **Police-Community Relations**
Work with a grassroots community organization, Copwatch, to research police brutality issues and create informational materials for distribution.
- **Community Organizing**
Work with RESTOC and community residents to plan and organize a neighborhood event.

SCHEDULE

The rigorous schedule of the Empower program demands committed participants. The program consists of a group retreat for team building, two weekend experiential and service trips in Over-the-Rhine, three Saturday service-learning trips to Over-the-Rhine, a personal reflection retreat, and a final community forum. In addition, meetings with community residents, interaction with community agencies, lectures about community issues, and reflection will be built into the program.

CREDIT

Empower participants may earn **1 extra credit hour** added to their course. Assessment will be developed between the student and the participating faculty member, possibly including a weekly journal and a reflection paper.

APPLY NOW!

Applications are due by **Monday, January 20th at 5pm** in Hanna House (east of the CAB building on Spring Street). For more information:
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YOU MUST BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD. -Gandhi