

Retention Case Study

Review the case study below and then think of ways to retain the student volunteer leaders by keeping them engaged throughout the service experience.

Your national service program is located in a large metropolitan area with many colleges, universities, and technical schools. Some of the schools have thousands of students, while others have only a few hundred. For the past three years, you have partnered with the student volunteerism office at one of the universities to organize projects for the school's service-learning courses, and you occasionally have collaborated with student groups from two other schools.

Now you and the national service members at your organization want to engage students on a larger scale. Your goal is to organize a day of service that will engage college students from at least five of the colleges, universities, and technical schools. You know that student volunteer leaders will be the key to achieving the goals set for the day of service. If the event is successful, you could potentially have a large corps of trained, engaged, and enthusiastic student volunteer leaders who will increase your program's capacity to meet needs in the community.

Think of the principles of engagement that can increase your volunteer retention rates. Then use the areas below to list specific ways you can engage college students throughout the service experience.

RECRUITING AND MARKETING

Your message should be inspirational and eye-catching. Show students the impact they can have and the benefits they can gain through serving. For a day of service, you will want to begin recruiting several weeks in advance, using a variety of recruitment methods.

BEFORE THE PROJECT

Ensure that everyone is excited about the upcoming work. Engage SVL's in each stage of planning the project and prepare them with the skills they need to succeed. Use committed SVL's to help recruit and help with the organizational aspects of the event. Send out reminder e-mails to all students with details and noteworthy pieces of information; you could even create teams headed by SVL's to participate in pre-event activities and meetings.

DURING THE PROJECT

Support the SVL's without "taking over." Additionally, keep SVL's and other volunteers motivated and active. Make sure that there are enough tasks to keep everyone busy throughout the entire project. An idle volunteer is one who is unengaged and less likely to want to participate in future projects.

AFTER THE PROJECT

Help SVL's and volunteers see the impact they've made and the work they have done. Be appreciative and thank them often and sincerely. After a large day of service, it will be important to have an official and recognizable closing event to officially review all of the accomplishments of the day, and to celebrate a job well done with food or drinks. This would be a good time to recognize those SVL's who were instrumental to the day.

LEADING INTO FUTURE PROJECTS

Reference the successes of previous projects to ensure participation and continued engagement. Encourage SVL's who were engaged and enthusiastic throughout previous projects to take on larger roles in planning and supporting future projects.
