

**Kansas Corps Focus Group
Hays Location, January 15, 2008**

Attending: Chantelle Arnold, Diana Ohl, Kelsey Colglazier, Rindi Zimmerman, Bill Ring, Mitch Hall, Mary Marston, Gary Rogers, Steve Godecke, Curt Brungardt, and Chelsey Gillogly.

The focus group meeting began with a welcome from Dr. Curt Brungardt and introductions of the attendees. Following the introductions, Chantelle Arnold covered the agenda and began the general information presentation. She explained the concept, the focus of Kansas Corps and the goals. Chantelle then discussed the planning process for the concept: where it had been and where it was going. She also talked about the upcoming pilot project.

Questions were raised about agencies and training.

It was mentioned that on the job training happens a lot. There are disaster training courses online and other basic courses. The Red Cross is willing to bring in people certified to teach classes over “Shelters” or “Mass Care”

Everyone thinks this is a great idea in theory. But will it work? How can we mobilize college students? Who do they work with? If they just show up, are they in the way? Do we just do weekend things? How do we get them there? Do we house them? This needs to be well coordinated; we would be able to move mountains, especially with instances of Greensburg and Coffeyville.

There was a discussion on how this was needed. The ability to make one phone call and get the volunteers that you need cuts down on time agencies would spend calling different groups/organizations.

A discussion about Greensburg took place that addresses being able to go right away, or a couple days later to help. One person mentioned that you need a FEMA mission number to get in. That’s how Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement get in, and they also get reimbursed with that number.

One person mentioned that you need to be self-sufficient when going to sites. There are no hotels, restaurants, etc. in the town. There were a couple questions about Tigers in Service going to Greensburg and how they functioned. Tigers in Service mentioned that the weather has been nice, so they camped out in tents or the Volunteer Village and brought their own food.

There was another discussion about the types of disasters that could utilize Kansas Corps. Blizzards were brought up; however, with blizzards you are unable to get to the location to help. Windstorms, Tornados, Floods and Ice storms (because of all the damage to the tree limbs) were all thought of.

Another discussion was about creating teams at each school. The first team goes there right away, while the second team goes within a certain time frame. Another person expounded on this idea, thinking that you have 10 people on a team, but you have a pool of 20 people to go through to get your 10 required teammates. One person mentioned having the obstacle students' face with coursework and being unable to miss class.

The major focus is linking students at planned events, possibly having one every two weeks for a whole year. This is where geography becomes important- where we need people right away. Yet it is small enough to serve a purpose. A comment was made that there needs to be a flexible arm that allows students to go on unplanned events, but not a dominate one. One person mentioned how impressive Tigers In Service (FHSU volunteer clearinghouse) functions: they are low cost, yet lots of service. But some schools do not have that type of program.

The question was asked, how does it work at the collegiate level? There could be two different models. Jill Docking believes that this should be similar to joining AmeriCorps, where the volunteers become responsible for a certain number of hours, but what happens when there is only one student at Garden City Community College for example. The school is not participating in Kansas Corps. The second model is having the schools involved as the Kansas Corps mission states. Volunteer groups at every campus would work. If not schools must have to delegate a person or an organization that will be the Kansas Corps contact.

The concern about liability was brought up. Colleges and universities have been lucky so far by sending students on Alternate Winter Breaks and Alternate Spring Breaks, doing internships, etc. Our attorneys say that as long as we are "doing reasonable things" by sending these college students we are protected.

The question was asked, so if I go and I get hurt, its my responsibility, however, if a student gets hurt, then it's the University's responsibility? The response, Universities are likely to pick up the tab.

The flow should be easy. An agency should be able to call whoever and say that I need x number of volunteers in 2 hours or I need people trained in "disaster 101." The question was asked, "What happens when I can not get any volunteers because its spring break, do I hold out hope that some one is going to show and no one does, or do I go to the next agency?"

It was decided that in the instance of disaster relief, the best idea is to go there 2-3 days after the incident. But volunteers need to get with the Incident Commander and see what they need to do (like at an ice storm, where there are people with chainsaws, and they just need volunteers to move the limbs). An example would be the tornado in NW Kansas, the response is already there, but Kansas Corps comes in when those volunteers are tired.

A need for both Immediate and Long Term response is present. The focus should be to get rid of the immediate response and work hard on long term up to multiple years later,

but there are some instances where that is not the case ('93 and last year). Last year, KSU students were needed to sandbag in Abilene, and in '93 KSU Students helped sandbag Tuttle Creek in Manhattan.

Discussion was held on Community Development in Rural Areas (building a Park, helping a Library, etc.) Congressman Moran's office gets calls all the time asking for money to help fund these types of things. There are 2 models for Community Development. One based on geography, and the other based on the issue. For instance, literacy- WSU works in Wichita, FHSU works here in Hays, etc. would be an example of issue while building a park in Topeka would be geography based.

Does Kansas Corps become a conflict between student organizations and the students'. Will students feel that they are joining another organization? If this is the case then the select number of students who are active are being divided even more. Each institution who wants to participate will have to name a contact. There needs to be some sort of intrafraternity for Kansas Corps. For example, the Red Cross Club and Tigers in Service will join together and work together to recruit volunteers and focus their effort. You need to have a coordinating agency, an able body, excited people ready to serve. But you need to avoid coming in as another student organization because then you need officers, have a certain number of meetings, advisors, etc.

We are not making Kansas Corps an organization, but does Kansas Corps establish a volunteer program at those schools without a volunteer office? Maybe we need to send multiple models to those schools with out a volunteer office and let them choose the one they like best. There may be just a faculty/staff member at a location with no established program.

The question was asked, what/how entices Universities to do this? The students.

A few other questions were asked. Is there a fee involved? Is there an incentive? Once you put money in the equation- they are going to need something more. Does Kansas Corps reimburse KU for going to Greensburg? There is nothing like this except Pennsylvania, but the program stopped when they ran out of funding. How are we going to fund this? Is there going to be a coordinating office, what about travel expenses? Currently plans are to have this program sponsored by the Kansas Board of Regents. This will increase the buy-in. Christine Downey-Schmidt, Chair of the Kansas Board of Regents and Aaron Otto in the Governor's Office are involved. Christine Downey-Schmidt wants a full proposal before the last meeting as chair.

Recruitment and training are going to be continuous concerns. Specialized training becomes continuous, what happens after they graduate and they still want to participate? Kansas Corps should direct them to opportunities in their area.

There are different types of disasters: Local, State, and National disasters that have different type of responses. On these types of responses, do you self-deploy without a request? There should be a request for volunteers to come.

Who should be involved in the planning process of this program? The KS Emergency Management Association has meetings. Information will be passed on as soon as more details are in place.

The meeting concluded with Curt inviting everyone to the planning committee meeting on February 20 in Topeka, Kansas.