

**Kansas Corps Focus Group
Wichita Location, January 24, 2008**

Attending: Chantelle Arnold, Alan Stark, Allie Crouse, Rachel Schmidt, Connie Dietz, Mary Marston, Gina Lee Olukaya, Jason Kegler, Teresa Baumgartner, Christine Tippy, Janet Hamilton, Debbie Berdensen, Adrian Rodriguez, Kathy Pritchett, Jaclyn Hugg, and Curt Brungardt.

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.

Curt then opened the meeting for discussion.

He asked for the attendees general thoughts on the concept: would it work, was it a good idea?

Responses follow: From the view of students it is a wonderful idea that could provide an opportunity to teach new generations of students in the area of community service. The scope of the project is a concern. It was recommended that something be done to narrow the scope, possibly picking one issue to serve for the year across the state.

Questions were asked about the pilot project. It was stressed that the goal was not to harm programs with existing plans but to expand what was already being done. It was mentioned that some training could be provided at the pilot project.

Another concern that was raised was if the program would operate during the non-school year. The idea of how the concept will work on the ground and on campus was discussed. Representatives from the Wildlife & Parks talked about prior experiences they have had with on the ground issues. They mentioned that it is difficult but can be done with college students if care is given to coordination around school breaks. They stressed that volunteers should have training in incident command and Red Cross training. When considering disaster relief the volunteers need to be people who will roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty. Representatives from Butler Community College stated that their volunteer pool comes from their chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. Wildlife and Parks noted that they could assist with some volunteer training.

It was also noted that the on site coordination of volunteers can be quite a job. There have been incidents where unsupervised groups of volunteers have been asked to leave due to disrespect issues. There should be constant supervision of volunteers at events.

The question was asked, "Will students travel to other parts of the state?" Discussion indicated that it will be the same students that are currently volunteering on their

campuses but that they would travel. A suggestion to add some type of “fun” component to the trip as an enticement might increase participation and willingness to travel. An example might be to add some type of professional sporting event to the agenda.

The concepts of using volunteers at times of disaster or for planned events only were discussed. The idea of the Kansas Corps staff calling a contact at the schools and then the schools lining up the volunteers seems to be the easiest model in terms of communication. The variances within the schools may cause some challenges when trying to recruit participation at schools, for example who is the contact at the school when there is no established volunteer program. It was noted that even paid positions are hard to recruit and that this would need to be a focus of the Kansas Corps in getting schools to participate. In relation to disaster relief, it was suggested that having a list of students with their level of training and calling them directly might be a better approach than calling the school contact. The final consensus was that a hybrid of both scenarios may be necessary.

There was discussion on the potential of offering college credit for students who volunteer through Kansas Corps. From a student’s perspective they wouldn’t pay to take the course. They were more in favor of offering a book scholarship. It was suggested that it might be tied into the first year experience on campuses that have first year experience activities in place. It was also suggested that creating a model for a course offering be developed for schools who wish to offer a course.

The issue of funding was discussed. It was mentioned that two-year schools are really in a constraint when it comes to funding. They don’t have the same availability of student fees that four-year schools have. The idea of being reimbursed for a portion of the expense from the Kansas Corps seemed very plausible to all schools. It was mentioned that finding startup monies is a possibility.

A question was raised on how to make all types of institutions more level in the opportunity to find community service. It was suggested that Kansas Corps provide help to establish programs at schools that want one. The possibility of placing a VISTA at schools to develop a program was also mentioned as an option.

It was asked who should be involved in the planning of this concept that wasn’t represented. Suggestions were: the Department of Health, city and county government officials, the Mainstreet group or people with downtown renovation, and students. Allie Crouse with WSU Student Government Association noted that the feedback she has had from her student senators has been very positive.

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