19 March 2019

To: WCSU University Senate

From: Walter Cramer, Ed.D, Dean of Students

Re: Proposed Cancellation of classes (1/2 day) for Annual WCSU Day of Service

Background

In late Fall I presented a proposal to the President’s Cabinet requesting that WCSU consider taking a half day on the third Friday in September from 8am to 1pm and cancel classes so that students, faculty and staff can participate in the 6th Annual WCSU Day of Service on September 20, 2019. With the change in class schedule last year, the Day of Service participants dropped from a high of around 600 in the Fall of 2016 to only 250 in the Fall of 2018. Many of those who did participate were only able to do so for an hour or so as they had to leave for a late morning class or had to try to join us late due to an early morning class. The Day of Service has become a major activity during the Fall semester connecting WCSU, our students, faculty and staff with the Danbury community. The President’s Cabinet was very supportive of the proposal but indicated that this really needed to be presented to the Senate for consideration. I respectfully request for this to be added to the Senate agenda at your April meeting. Below is the rationale for this request.

Proposal

Proposal to University Senate for a half day no classes for WCSU Day of Service on Friday, September 20, 2019

- Since its inception in the Fall of 2014, Day of Service has attracted hundreds of mostly WCSU students to volunteer community service in Danbury
- Although there are dozens of student organizations, athletic teams and individual WCSU students doing community service in the greater Danbury community every year, the WCSU Day of Service has become the most visible representation of WCSU students commitment to community service
- The initial year’s response sent 215 volunteers into Danbury on Saturday, September 20, 2014 to 22 sites. In the Fall of 2015, we moved the day to Friday since the Saturday date posed difficulties for some students but more importantly for many organizations as they are closed on Saturday. The number of participants continued to grow and maxed-out with 567 volunteers at 48 sites in the Fall of 2016. With the change in the academic calendar the number dropped considerably in the Fall of 2018 with only 250 volunteers able to participate at 38 sites.
- As mentioned above, the primary reason for doing the WCSU Day of Service is to provide greater visibility to WCSU and its students’ commitment to reaching out into the Danbury community to volunteer their service. However, the Day of Service also connects WCSU and its students to organizations and businesses that lead to further volunteer opportunities throughout the year, part-time jobs, internships, as well as jobs following graduation.
From its initial phase, WCSU Day of Service is working with the Alumni Office to encourage WCSU alumni to sign up to volunteer for community service in their own communities on the Day of Service, thereby expanding the reach of WCSU into a wider community, spreading the name WCSU as well as building stronger relationships between alumni and WCSU.

Feedback from students, faculty and staff who have participated has been very positive. A few of the comments are: “Thank you for assigning me to Family & Children’s Aid – it was an excellent experience”; “Western Day of Service is awesome, and I am a little sad this may be my last one.”; “It was amazing! We had a lot of fun cleaning up the place and meeting the staff and horses! They were amazed at how much we were able to get done!” “Western Day of Service helps our students become engaged, contributing members of our community.” Feedback from some of the organizations include: “It was really our pleasure to have you here! Every experience we have had with WCSU is always amazing. You all have a truly remarkable group of students and staff, and we are honored to have this partnership continue.”; “I just want to say a huge thank you to the event organizers and the crew of ladies that came and helped our school garden on Friday. It is so appreciated to have a boost of support from our local university through this day of service.”

Our hope had been to build the WCSU Day of Service to include around 1000 students, faculty and staff. However, with the realization that so many students (and faculty and staff) were unable to participate, the future of the WCSU Day of Service looks grim. Getting the 250 volunteers organized this past year was not only an issue with numbers but a real problem with organizations as many of the students could only come for the first hour or so and others could only come for the last hour. This led to frustrations among the organizers, the volunteers as well as the host sites.

To overcome this problem, get the WCSU Day of Service back on track, we would like to propose that the university cancel classes on the morning of WCSU Day of Service from 8am to 1pm. I first presented this to the President’s Cabinet and received strong support for the idea. However, I was encouraged to bring this proposal to the Senate for consideration. While no one likes to lose time from teaching, the reality is that students have a unique opportunity to engage in their community, represent WCSU to our community, apply aspects of things that they are exploring in their academic classrooms to their interactions within the Danbury community, make connections for other opportunities within the community including internships, and explore the positivity of networking for supporting their future efforts once they graduate from WCSU.

Respectfully submitted for the Senate’s consideration. Thank you.