Volunteer Tax Clinics
Winnebago Indian Reservation

The Situation –

- Low income taxpayers are entitled to an earned income credit (a refundable, negative income tax) of up to $5,666.
- Paid tax return preparers have provided short term loans and prepaid debit cards using the refunds as collateral.
- Some of these loans result in interest rates over 100%.
- The Winnebago, NE community was especially vulnerable to these exorbitant loans.

The Response –

- Creighton accounting and law students, and alumni from accounting and law, decided to sponsor a tax preparation clinic in Winnebago, NE.
- The IRS has a program called VITA – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance – that coordinates free tax return preparation for low income taxpayers.
- A partnership was created with the IRS, Ho-Chunk, Inc. (a for-profit corporation affiliated with the Winnebago Nation), and St. Augustine Indian Mission.
- Creighton partners included the Department of Accounting, Beta Alpha Psi, and the Business Law Society.
- Students in Accounting 343, Federal Income Tax, are required to participate in VITA as a course service learning component.
- Volunteers need to pass several examinations and undergo training.

Cultural Interaction and the Clinics –

- Clinics were held in 2010, 2011, and are scheduled for 2012.
- Students interacted with members of the Winnebago Nation in cultural exchanges the night before the clinics, sharing a traditional meal, hearing stories about the Winnebago People, and dancing together with the Kateri Drum and Dancers group.

Ignatian Elements –

- Low income clients receive a valuable service at no cost.
- Volunteers share their talents with low income people.
- Students are required to prepare a reflection paper.
- Participants learn more about another culture.

The Spirit of Creighton –

- Collaborating across academic units and with community groups.
- Reinforcing resilience in attitude in the low-income clients served.
- Generous sharing of professional knowledge for the betterment of society.
- Healing the wounds of economic challenges.

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