

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: DEVELOPING A STUDENT RECOGNITION PROGRAM

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Issue(s) Being Addressed:

Keeping students engaged in service can be difficult if they feel unappreciated or unrecognized for their efforts.

Actions to Consider:

Student recognition programs are a great way for an institution to thank its students for going above and beyond in many areas of the campus and surrounding community. These programs provide examples to other students and organizations because they see their peers being recognized for their involvement on campus and in the community. These programs are positive ways to highlight student service in volunteer, civic, and academic roles. They can be viewed as an opportunity to show the community, campus administration, and alumni how important this work is in developing a habit of lifelong service and leadership for students.

Overview:

Ferris State University (FSU) has held the Torchbearer Leadership Awards Luncheon for the last five years. One of the most remarkable parts of this ceremony is that winners of the awards are selected by FSU alumni who are members of the Torchbearer Society. These are a select group of alumni who held leadership roles on campus as students and remain committed to the development of current campus student leadership. There are different categories of awards presented. The Rising Star award is given to individuals whose class standing is between freshman and junior. Torchbearer award winners are graduating seniors. Students are nominated for the awards by students, faculty, staff, and community members. Once nominated, they are contacted and may apply for an award. Both groups represent students who have shown leadership in social, civic, and philanthropic activities. The ceremony is a chance to honor campus leaders and highlight the projects they have worked on.

Awards are also presented by the campus volunteer center. Individual students who have logged the most volunteer hours on the volunteer center database are honored. There are also student organization awards. These are given to both the Greek and non-Greek organizations with the most volunteer hours, the most creative service project, and the largest donation to a philanthropic project.

Finally there are student organization recognition awards given in 3 star, 4 star, and 5 star categories. All student organizations that turned in their mandatory update forms for the year and have attended the presidents' meetings both semesters are eligible to apply for this recognition. The organizations complete an application that describes the work they have done in the community and on campus. There are also events sponsored throughout the year for which attendance is tracked. The number of volunteer hours reported by an organization is also a factor. Every organization that applies is eligible for at least 3 star status. These organizations receive a \$20.00 university catering credit. 4-star organizations receive a \$40.00 catering credit, and 5 star organizations receive a check for \$150.00 to be used to help the organization with future events. There are only five organizations awarded 5-star statuses each school year. Each organization also receives public recognition in the FSU student newspaper.

The Event:

The Torchbearer Awards ceremony takes place each year on the third Tuesday of April. It takes place in the Student Center and is held at 11:00 a.m. when there are no classes. The event is hosted by Student Leadership and Activities (SLA) which also houses the FSU Volunteer Center. Student Leadership & Activities, as well as donations from the Torchbearer Society, funds the luncheon and awards. The various awards are presented by the Director of Student Leadership and the event typically lasts no longer than an hour.

Key Questions to Consider:

- Who will you recognize (individual students, organizations, advisors)?
- Will those recognized receive a plaque, trophy, certificate etc.?
- When will you host the event?
- Who will pay for the event?
- Who will review the award applications?