

Title: One College, One Village, One World: Moving People out of Poverty by Actively Engaging the Spirit and Intellect of Higher Education

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Abstract:

For several years, faculty, staff, and students from various disciplines at William Jewell College have been attempting to alleviate poverty in numerous locations. During this time, campus ministries has built houses in Mississippi and Honduras; the nursing department has had success in providing health care in different areas of Honduras; the business department has achieved positive results in Mexico and Africa through small business development and micro-lending programs; and the sciences have recently taken on water purification and sanitation initiatives aimed at helping those who live in poverty. A difficulty that has been faced is the isolation of these benefits. What can nursing do if their patients are healthier but without the economic means to eat? What can business do if their partners have some economic success but are plagued by parasites? Would there be synergistic results if each area contributed their expertise and energy to the same place, at the same time? Could an ongoing partnership between a single village and a group of college professors, staff, and students bring about positive benefits to all involved? If successful, could such a holistic model be duplicated?

The continuing energy produced by a rotation of new students combined with the breadth of expertise makes colleges and universities ideal organizations for efficiently addressing the problem of poverty. William Jewell College has been working on a model of holistic development where we can bring these positive factors together to create change. We believe this model of development will raise the standard and quality of living by assisting those living in a Honduran village identify, plan, and implement change at three levels: individual, family, and community. The goal of our work is to help a small community address their communal problems and through a partnership, assist villagers to improve their economic, education, sanitation, water purity, health, housing, spiritual, agricultural and veterinarian conditions.

The project has many phases. The first phase was an exploration trip to identify a village to work with and to gain an understanding of what aspects need to be included in a community assessment tool. Phase two is working on the development of a community assessment tool that integrates all of the aspects of development opportunities listed above. Phase three will include another trip to the village to administer the assessment tool and explore in greater depth the needs of the village. Phase four will be the evaluation of the results of the assessment and plans for development. Phase five will be implementation of the development strategy with an ongoing comparison to the original assessment. We believe this entire process will take three to five years before the process is started again in a new location.

This presentation will discuss the process our group went through to develop partnerships and to foster student involvement. We will illustrate project phases and share the lessons learned as well as the current status. Finally, we will share the philosophy and motivation for developing a holistic mission-based development model at an institution of higher education.