Service-Learning Scenario

**What?**

“I served food at the homeless shelter.”

**So What?**

“I felt very uncomfortable. I wasn’t sure if I should ask people about themselves or just focus on the food I was serving. Was it appropriate to banter with them, or is that crossing a boundary? At times I also felt self-conscious of my privilege and wondered what they thought about me. I suppose we might each have had questions about each other that we’ll never know the answers to. It was weird.”

**Now What?**

“People serving food to individuals in poverty should be trained to know how to communicate with them, so they can avoid feeling uncomfortable.”
Service-Learning Scenario

GENERAL
“Talk/write about your service experience. How did it go?”

What?
“I served food at the homeless shelter.”

TOPICAL
“Explain how gentrification and housing policy has affected homelessness.”

What is the Ask Big Questions approach?

Establishing Mutual Responsibility
Framing with BQ
Shift from intellectualizing to exchange
Connecting BQ to Personal Experience
Deepen Understanding
Reveal and Build Connection
Shifting the Conversation

Theorizing
Assumptions
Stereotyping
Judgment
“Savior”
Attitudes
Positioning

Asking
Listening
Sharing
Exchange
Perspective
Getting

Individualized Learning

Relational Learning

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BOOKLET ACTIVITY

Divide into groups of 2-3

Choose a question that speaks to you

Share that question and your answer
Characteristics of BQ & HQ

**Big Questions**
- Use plain language
- Focus on experience and reflection
- Directed at us
- Open spaces & invite people as participants
- Emphasize both/and
- Lead to sharing stories for connection & understanding

**Hard Questions**
- Use technical language
- Focus on knowledge and skill
- Directed at topics
- Close spaces & make people spectators
- Emphasize either/or
- Lead to debates about truth & strategy

How do campuses use Big Questions?
- First Year Seminar
- Residential Education
- Civic Engagement
- RA Training
- Orientation
- Service Learning
- Small Group Conversations
- Tabling
- Weekly Dinners
- Staff Meetings
- Community Advisor Training
- Interdisciplinary General Education
- Interfaith Lunches
- Classroom Discussions
- Multi Campus Collaboration
- Student Organization Meetings
- Student Leader Training
- Inclusion Programs
Before performing service, I chose to ignore the emotional or human connection needs of individuals experiencing food insecurity.

[Rather than] “servers” and “recipients,” perhaps there’s a model wherein everyone ate together. Homeless patrons could leave with full bellies, dignity and a deepened sense of human connection.
Enhancing Community Engagement with Big Questions

Students
Faculty & Staff
Community Members

Thank you!

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