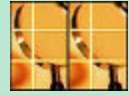


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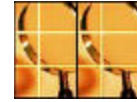
Special Report 00/03



A PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT A COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM AT UMKC

BY
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A PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT A COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM AT UMKC

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In the United States, there is a growing movement on college campuses to increase student involvement in their communities, particularly through what is known as “service-learning” in which students participate in community service activities organized by local community groups. This note will examine a novel proposal that is being created by UMKC’s Center for Full Employment and Price Stability that would add a community service component to our undergraduate and graduate programs.

We propose that UMKC adopt a simple and flexible approach to a service learning requirement. One option would be to simply require a fixed quantity of hours per semester for each student as a condition for graduation. A record-keeping system would be created so that the university could determine that each student had met her requirement. This would entail some coordination between local service providers who would keep track of each student’s hours and the university office designated to keep records of community service hours. Complications might arise as students migrated from one service provider to another, as service providers change personnel, and so on.

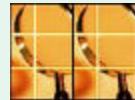
We have chosen, instead, to design a system that is essentially a “monetary” system. We have created paper notes, dubbed “buckaroos” (after the UMKC mascot, a kangaroo), with the inscription “this note represents one hour of community service by a UMKC student”, and denominated as “one roo hour”. Each student would have a community service “tax” of, say, 25 buckaroos (B25) per semester, payable in buckaroo notes. The record keeping would be quite simple. Each student would be required to pay B25 to the UMKC “Treasury” each semester. Approved community service providers (state and local government offices, university offices, public school districts, and not-for-profit agencies) would be provided with buckaroos to “hire” student workers, so long as basic health, safety, and liability standards were met. The providers could then use their buckaroos to pay students for hours of service. The Treasury would only need to ensure that the providers were, indeed, paying one buckaroo per hour of student labor—there would be no need to keep track of the names of students who worked for each provider. There would be no necessary limit to the number of buckaroos paid out during any semester. The number supplied to any provider would be limited only by the provider’s needs for labor and by its ability to attract student workers, unless the university found it desirable to place quantitative limits on some providers in order to promote diversity of

efforts. When students pay their B25 tax, they return these buckaroos to the UMKC Treasury.

There are many advantages to this system. Students are free to choose from among a wide-array of providers, and are free to switch “jobs” as frequently as desired. Record-keeping by both providers and UMKC is made very simple—providers simply pay a buckaroo for each hour of labor provided, and UMKC collects B25 per student per semester. Students are able to “hoard” buckaroos for future use, thus, can work extra hours in one semester in anticipation of a heavy course load in a following semester. Note also that students might be allowed to lend, borrow, buy, or sell buckaroos as desired. We expect that “buckaroos” may become something like a “local currency” used on- and off-campus. At some point in the future, UMKC might allow a portion of tuition to be “paid” with buckaroos (just as some US universities are now allowing waivers for a portion of tuition if students participate in specified community activities). We believe that this would promote student involvement in our local communities, to the benefit of UMKC-community relations while also benefiting the communities and the students. In addition, our unique approach will provide useful information to national (and international) researchers concerning the operation of a monetary system—in particular, for our understanding of the causes of unemployment and inflation. Further information on the importance of this program for developing an understanding of monetary systems is available from the Center for Full Employment and Price Stability.

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