Higher Education for Volunteer Management: Final Report of the Research Findings

Merry Kay Shernock

PREFACE

In February of 1986, the Professional Development Committee of AVA undertook the latest of its important incremental steps toward improving the professionalism of the field of volunteer administration. Following the earlier development of AVA's Performance-Based Certification Program, which identifies the competencies of a fully capable practitioner, we determined to address the process by which excellence is attained.

Recognizing that there is no simple path to success as a volunteer manager, we nonetheless acknowledge the validity of academic education and university-sponsored training as options in helping meet the needs of career professionals in our increasingly sophisticated work and service world. Not only for the veteran seeking to refine skills or broaden horizons, but for novices looking to their future, such opportunities are well worth encouraging. Far from trying to limit formal learning in favor of "hands-on on-the-job training," AVA wants to advance maximum personal development for maximum benefit to the people and programs that volunteer managers seek to enable.

Critical to these goals is the identification of colleges and universities already committed to serving career professionals. Our AVA Educational Endorsement files provided a starting place to find these institutions, but were inadequate to the task of providing a valid survey base. So were our dollar resources, but thanks to a generous grant from a visionary foundation, the willingness of Norwich University to assign a researcher to the task, and the efficient volunteer efforts of an AVA task force, we now have a sound and valid data base upon which to build for the future. We commend the following report by Merry Kay Shernock to your serious attention.

Joanne H. Patton, Chair
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for Volunteer Managers

INTRODUCTION

The management of volunteers and programs of volunteer services is diverse work. Volunteer managers are drawn from all socio-economic and demographic groups in the United States, Canada and abroad and they serve all arenas of social life. Volunteer management is also a dynamic profession undergoing changes that, in some ways, parallel changes in other service professions. Paramount to these changes is that volunteer management is seeking to identify itself as a profession.

Several characteristics of "professions" have been brought to volunteer and volunteer program management in recent years by the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA). First, AVA has enhanced the profession's cultural identity by moving to independent national conferencing and structuring a national network of regional, state and local affiliates. Second, it has developed a code of ethics. Third, it has developed a credential, "Certified in Volunteer Administration" (CVA),[1] which identifies the competencies of the profession and presents the standards of performance for practitioners in the field. The CVA is earned through a rigorous process of self-assessment of individual professional development; college-level instruction is not a *sine qua non*.[2] This type of self-directed credentialing process is functional in a profession of such great diversity.

Nevertheless, AVA has not ignored the potential role for institutions of higher education in the professional develop-

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ment of volunteer managers. AVA is aware that formalized instruction in institutions of higher education complements on-the-job experiential learning to prepare the individual for a career in most professions. AVA is also aware that formal education offerings for professional development in volunteer management are emerging at colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada. At present, AVA has little formal communication with the academic community generally, and little involvement in these education efforts in particular.

In the belief that better communication and closer coordination between AVA and the academic community would be constructive, AVA created a Task Force on Higher Education for Volunteer Managers in February, 1986. With funds from foundation benefactors who prefer to remain anonymous, AVA commissioned a survey by Norwich University Studies and Analysis Institute.[3] The purpose of the survey was to identify and examine active programs of instruction or training for managers of volunteers and volunteer programs sponsored by colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. The methodology, findings, conclusions and implications of the research are presented below.

METHODOLOGY

A list of 182 institutions believed to have some type of educational offerings for volunteer management was compiled from materials and lists kept on file by Task Force members and from a search through the most recent editions of college and university catalogs. The list included community colleges, liberal arts colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada.

A survey instrument was then developed from prototypes submitted by the Task Force and by the AVA President. The instrument, which is appended below, covers four categories of information: 1) institutional identification; 2) program structure; 3) students' characteristics; and 4) program content. In early May 1987, the instrument was mailed to the offices of the presidents of the 182 institutions of higher education on the list, together with a cover letter drafted by the

AVA president and with a postage-paid preaddressed return envelope. The survey instrument was mailed again in July to nonresponding institutions, together with a cover letter and with another postage-paid, preaddressed envelope. Shortly after the second mailing, volunteers from AVA followed-up by telephone, a two-step process which ultimately yielded 118 responses for a total response rate of 64.8%.

Of the 118 institutions responding to the survey, exactly half (59) report offering some type of educational programming for volunteer management. About 20% (11) of the remaining respondents report no offerings at present but indicated interest by requesting additional information on volunteer administration from AVA. The data obtained on the 59 institutions reporting programs are summarized in detail below.

The author reminds the reader, however, that these programs are self-identified. The degree to which any individual program meets the requirements of the profession varies considerably and will be discussed.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS
AND CONCLUSIONS BY CATEGORY

Institutional Identification

Institutional identification is the first category of information obtained and by itself is a very important product of the project. With the completion of the survey, a single list of institutions providing educational services to volunteer administration has been established. It includes the names and telephone numbers of the individuals best informed about each institution's offerings. Though this first list is surely not comprehensive, its existence should draw additional institutions forward to identify themselves for inclusion in future compilations.

Of special interest in this section is the information about the type of institutions and the auspices within the institutions offering educational programming for volunteer management. Slightly more than half the institutions responding (30) report educational offerings under the auspices of either the institution's department of continuing education or the de-

partment responsible for extending university services to the community.

Conclusion 1:
Educational programs serving the educational needs of managers are most likely to be found outside traditional disciplines. There are several possible reasons, but the author notes that "service" is of greater importance in such divisions as continuing education and community services than in other divisions of four-year colleges and universities. Furthermore, the mission statements of many community college name "service" as a primary objective. Therefore, the values, definitions and assumptions of volunteer management are more likely to

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TABLE I
Identification Information on Institutions Reporting Educational Offerings for Volunteer Management (N = 59).

Institution Type	Number	Percent†
Community Colleges	23*	39
4-year degree granting institutions	36	61
Total	59	100 %
Institution Funding Status		
Public	33	55.9
Independent	11	18.6
No Answer	15	25.4
Total	59	99.9%
Institutional Auspices Housing the Program		
Dept. of services to the community	16	27.1
Dept. of Continuing Ed.	14	23.7
Dept. of traditional academic discipline	7	11.9
"American Humanics, Inc."[4] co-curricular program	7	11.9
Center for Study of Volunteerism	4	6.8
Other (Adult Education, Open Campus, Alternative Education, etc.)	7	11.9
Locus of programs sponsored by other institution/agency	4	6.8
Total	59	100.1%

†Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.
*The total number of community colleges identified in the survey was 40; 58% of them responded to the survey; nearly 40% of all institutions reporting offerings are community colleges.

be familiar to members of these newer academic divisions.

Structure of the Educational Programming
The second category of information requested on the survey instrument focuses on the structure of the educational programming offered for volunteer management (items #1-9 and #14).

The scheduling of instruction and the location of instruction vary. Fewer than 10% of the institutions offering educational programming restrict instruction to the traditional daytime school hours. Most offer instruction in the evening as well and many offer weekend scheduling. And although nearly one-third of the institutions offering relevant educational programming for volunteer managers do so only on the main campus, well over half utilize off-campus sites as well. Over 60% of the institutions reporting instruction for volunteer managers permit part-time enrollment.

Conclusion 2
Although not a conclusion of this study, one might observe that variety to this extent is often associated with community colleges and/or "alternative education" and is not always appreciated or respected by traditionally organized departments and divisions in four-year colleges and universities.

Such variety is required, however, to serve the diverse student population within the ranks of volunteer managers. Varied formats accommodate a variety of instructional content. Variation in scheduling, enrollment and multiple sites in addition to financial aid, improve access to educational services generally.

Finally, the survey data reveal a willingness on the part of institutions of higher learning to use part time and community-based faculty in addition to regular full time faculty. This could indicate an institutional recognition of two major characteristics of volunteer management: 1) the relative youth of the profession, and 2) the continued importance of experiential learning for the preparation of professional volunteer managers.

Conclusion 3
While the educational structure is excellent for accessibility, further examina-

TABLE II
Structural Characteristics of Educational Programming for Volunteer Management
(N-59).

Instructional Format	Number	Percent
Conferences	32	54.2
Workshops	50	84.7
Only Conferences/ Workshops Offered	18	30.5
Courses	35	59.3
Only Courses	7	11.9
Conferences, Workshops and Courses	33	55.9
Schedule of Instruction		
Evening	40	67.8
Weekend	27	45.8
Daytime	36	61
Only Daytime	5	8.5
Other	4	6.8
No answer	7	11.9
Location of Instruction		
Main Campus	50	84.7
Only on Main Campus	19	32.2
Adjunct Campus	12	20.3
Off-Campus Sites	34	57.6
Independent Study	11	18.6
Electronic Media	2	‹1%
Enrollment Options Available		
Full-time	30	50.8
Part-time	37	62.7
Workshop Enrollment Only	8	13.6
No answer	17	28.8
Financial Aid Available	37	62.7
Printed Information Available	47	79.7
Matriculation Level		
Non-Matriculation Program	25	42.4
Certification Awarded	21	35.6
Only Certification Awarded (Cetification *not* related to CVA)	3	5
Two-Year Degree Awarded	4	6.8

Matriculation Level	Number	Percent
Four-Year Degree Awarded	10	16.9
Graduate Degree Awarded	8	13.6
Types of Credit Available for Instruction		
Non-Credit Instruction	42	71.2
Continuing Education Units	16	27.1
Only Non-Credit Instruction or CEU's Available	21	35.6
Undergraduate Credit	33	55.9
Graduate Credit	16	27.1
Credit for Prior Learning	8	13.6
Credit by Exam	7	11.9
Program Size		
Courses (not necessarily designed exclusively for volunteer managers)		
2 or fewer		5
3 to 5		13
6 or more		18
No answer		23
Faculty Involved in Instruction		
Fulltime	39	66.1
Parttime	25	42.4
Adjunct	25	42.4
State University Extension	5	8.5
Community-Based	34	57.6
No answer	3	‹1

Variability characterizes the structure of the educational programming currently offered to volunteer managers. This variability allows programs to conform to the needs of individual students. Examination of the instructional format reveals a predominance of workshops, but over half of the responding institutions reporting relevant programming use conferences and courses in addition to workshops.

tion reveals much room for improving the scope of educational programming for volunteer managers. First, over 40% of the institutions reporting relevant instruction have not developed their offerings sufficiently to permit matriculation for a certificate, diploma or degree. Furthermore, the certificate programs available in over one-third of the institutions reporting relevant educational programming are not linked in any formal way with the CVA.

This situation poses potential for confusion for the student. Current or prospective volunteer managers may assume un-

wittingly that course work they have taken or are contemplating will relate directly or (worse!) automatically to their CVA self-assessment process. Agencies seeking qualified professionals to administer volunteer services may assume that certificates are of equal value or are interchangeable.

Second, a preponderance of the educational programming offered by college and universities is in the form of non-credit instruction. Although academic credit *per se* is of no relevance to the CVA, the institution's own internal evaluation of instruction for academic credit might be considered one type of quality control. Also, few institutions at present utilize self-assessment procedures (credit for prior learning, portfolio development or assessment of prior learning) through which professional volunteer managers could obtain academic credit for having earned the CVA.

Third, institutions reporting educational programming relevant to volunteer management often do not distinguish between offerings developed exclusively for volunteer management and other offerings having some content the respondents identify as relevant.

In summary, improving the scope of college and university education programming relevant to volunteer managers might best be accomplished by improving the relationship between AVA and the academic community. A strong relationship between the two would advance the profession by fostering even better accessibility, coordinating certification and other professional credentialing, and creating standards for professional development programs within academe as well as outside it.

Student's Characteristics

Student's characteristics (items#10-12) is the third category of information requested on the survey instrument. The data are summarized in Table III.

Conclusion 4

The profile of the typical student according to these data is not unexpected: a woman in her 30s or early 40s, older than the traditional college student, who

might already be engaged in the administration of volunteers.

TABLE III
Characteristics of Current Students Reported by Colleges and Universities Offering Educational Programming for Volunteer Managers (N-59).

	Number	Percent
Most Students Volunteer Managers	24	40.7
Most Students Prospective Volunteer Managers	9	15.3
Neither	26	44.0
Most Students Male	1	1.7
Most Students Female	40	67.8
No Answer or Evenly Divided	18	30.5
Age of Most Students:		
18-25 Years	7	11.9
26-35 Years	23	39
36-50 Years	16	27.1
50+ Years	0	0
No Answer	13	22.0

Educational Content

The fourth category of information sought on the survey instrument concerns the types of educational content offered by existing programs of instruction relevant to volunteer managers. Table IV below summarizes the responses.

Conclusion 5

Examination of these figures both confirms positive expectations and reveals some serious weaknesses. Communications skills are most frequently included in educational programming for volunteer managers, suggesting that the academic community recognizes the importance of communication to the success of professionals. Similarly, the behavior of individuals in organizations as well as the structures of formal organizations themselves must be understood if either are to be administered effectively. Hence, it is also not surprising that the principles and techniques of administering organizations and of managing personnel are commonly included in educational programming for volunteer management.

TABLE IV
Types of Instructional Content Offered for Volunteer Managers by Colleges And Universities (N-59).

	Number	Percent
Communication Skills	52	88.1
Management/ Administration	45	76.3
Social Organization/ Behavior	39	66.1
Social Psychology/ Human Relations	41	69.5
Personnel Management	39	66.1
Volunteerism	35	59.3
Accounting/Financial Management	35	59.3
Community Organizing	32	54.2
Grantsmanship	26	44.1
Cross-Cultural Studies	15	25.4
OTHER (Fundraising, practicum or internship, training, trainers, etc.)	10	16.9
No Answer	2	3.4

Note: Planning and marketing were included in responses to the survey by 46 of the 59 institutions. Of these, 32 (69.6%) offered planning and 28 (61.5%) offered marketing.

Conclusion 6

The comparative scarcity of content focusing on volunteerism (cited only as frequently as accounting/financial management is cited) is one of the serious weaknesses revealed by the data obtained in the survey. There are at least two possible explanations. One is that there is probably a failure in most institutions of higher education to recognize volunteer management as something separate and distinct either from other types of management, such as public or business administration, or from disciplines dependent on volunteer services, such as social work, nursing or human services.

A second explanation for the comparative scarcity of content focusing on volunteerism may be that there is so little literature available upon which to build an education in volunteerism. Authors of books on volunteerism find it difficult to locate recently developed pertinent theoretical material. George Florol (1985) observes that building an "intellectual center" (corpus of theory) for the study of volunteerism requires reaching back to the writings of de Tocqueville, Booker T. Washington, and Cotton Mather. This situation is almost a vicious cycle; academic study of volunteerism is hampered by a paucity of written theory which, in turn, is less likely to be produced without academic stimulation. For Brian O'Connell (1985) the mission is clear,

It will not do us much good to exhort, cajole and plead about the need to create interest, establish a field of study, or promote scholarship, if *we* cannot help create that solid body of all literature necessary to all of the above. (Emphasis added.)

Conclusion 7

The absence of cross-cultural studies is another serious weakness revealed by the survey of instructional content in educational offerings for volunteer management. Volunteer managers serve in a very heterogeneous environment in the United States, in Canada and abroad. Without awareness of and sensitivity to the differences among and between the various ethnic and class groups in various countries, programs of service will enjoy only limited success.

Conclusion 8

Finally, a comparison of the instructional content most frequently offered in educational programs for volunteer managers with the competencies required for the CVA shows little correlation between them. Competency areas required for the CVA, but infrequently or never mentioned by the institutions reporting educational programs for volunteer managers include assessing needs, assessing resources, developing a philosophy of volunteerism, group dynamics and processes, cross-cultural studies, conflict management and resolution and the quantitative and qualitative methods of program evaluation. Some of these topics, however, might be included in management or other courses.

Prospective students, then, are burdened with the responsibility of evaluating for themselves the relevance of every educational offering to their professional development. There will be instances, though it is unknown how few or how many, in which prospective students will

not be qualified to make such judgements.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

Question 1: How adequate are these self-identified college and university programs for the professional preparation of volunteer managers?

Conclusions 6, 7 and 8 suggest that there is a great deal of room for improvement. Without professional endorsement procedures, however, the exact answer remains uncertain.

Question 2: Should the burden of evaluating each educational offering remain with the individual volunteer manager seeking professional development?

AVA has an endorsement program, but it is not very active at present. Fifteen institutions responding to the survey were asked if AVA Endorsement had been sought. All answered negatively.

Question 3: Why hasn't the AVA Endorsement Program been more successful?

Structural reasons on the part of AVA such as lack of staffing and money to develop and market the Endorsement Program are assuredly a good part of the explanation. Another reason may be an implicit conflict between AVA professional endorsement of formal education and the self-directed, competency-based self-assessment procedure for earning the CVA. Strengthening professional development through formal education by endorsing such programs appears, at first glance, to render professional development through experiential learning less important. It need not be that way.

Another possible obstacle to more energetic promotion of AVA Endorsement of formal education programs for volunteer managers is the perceived link between formal education and exclusivity. Among volunteer managers thinking about the future development of their profession there is a definite, if not always conscious, awareness that for others professional status was acquired at a cost they themselves are reluctant to pay. Social workers, for example, lost their identification with a heritage of social action when they developed their work into a profession. Nurses, another example, are less involved in the "laying on of hands" as their field professionalizes. Perhaps these volunteer managers can invent a way to professionalize without losing much of what is important to their identity. Optimally, they would like to acquire the professional caché of specialization without losing respect for general practice; to build a concensus on a definition of professionalism without losing the current diversity within the ranks of practitioners.

Some of the findings of the research reviewed above suggest that it is possible to utilize formal education as a means of professionalizing without incurring some of the usual losses. Conclusion 1 indicates that the service-oriented components of academe are both well-adapted and receptive to the kind of nontraditional education program needed to professionalize a field as diverse as volunteer management.

Obviously, the competencies required for the CVA suggest objectives for formal educational programs. Conclusion 2 indicates that variety can characterize the ways these objectives are met. Thus, developing program guidelines need not be an exclusive process so long as the academic components maintain the openness and flexibility indicated by the findings of this research.

No matter what differences exist, however, it is reasonable to assume that the institutions, by responding to this survey, have shown at least an interest in volunteer administration as a profession. That interest is a foundation upon which practitioners, acting in concert, may build.

Advocates of new programs in the academic community for volunteer management should approach the continuing education divisions and the community service divisions of the four-year colleges and comprehensive universities in their localities. Also, they should build relationships with their local community colleges. In some cases, the community colleges will be more receptive to overtures from volunteer management than four-year colleges and universities. While the traditional academic divisions of colleges and universities are inclined to study volunteerism and perhaps add to its theoretical base, the service-oriented

components of academe are able and willing to prepare practitioners for a professional career in volunteer management.

FOOTNOTES

¹The CVA self-assessment package is available for purchase upon request to the Association for Volunteer Administration, P.O. Box 4584, Boulder, CO 80306.

²Volunteer administrators, however, have high levels of education. In the mid-1980s well over half the respondents to an extensive survey conducted by Harold W. Stubblefield and Leroy Miles (1986) had at least a bachelors degree. This figure is much higher than that for the police, another service occupation in the process of professionalization.

³The author wants to express her thanks to Ms. Joanne H. Patton, chairman of the AVA Task Force on Higher Education for Volunteer Managers, and to Dr. Ivan Scheier, a member of the Task Force, for their support and instrumental assistance in the research.

⁴American Humanics, Inc. runs co-curricular programs at colleges and universities to prepare administrators of youth services programs throughout the United States.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY ON HIGHER EDUCATION
FOR MANAGERS OF VOLUNTEERS

INSTRUCTIONS: Please **TYPE** or **PRINT** your response to each item as directed. Do **not** use abbreviations as this information will be used in a directory of programs, workshops and courses.

INSTITUTION: _____
NAME OF COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

_____
ADDRESS (INCL. P.O. NUMBER)   CITY   STATE   ZIP

This institution is: □ independent   □ publicly funded   □ community college

NAME OF DIVISION/DEPARTMENT_____

Administrator/Director: _____
NAME   TITLE

Contact person, if different from above:_____
NAME   TITLE

Telephone (   ) ___ - _____

1. Check **ALL** that apply to current educational opportunities for volunteer management/administration:

    1a. □ Conferences   1d. □ Certificate level program 1g. □ Graduate degree program
    1b. □ Workshops   1e. □ 2 year degree program   1h. □ Other
    1c. □ Courses   1f. □ 4 year degree program   1i. □ No offerings available.
                                                      (IF "no," please skip to #15.)

2. Check **ALL** that apply to the current scheduling of instruction: 2a.□ Classes   2b.□ Workshops

    2c. □ Full-time enrollment   2f. □ Weekend
    2d. □ Part-time enrollment   2g. □ Daytime
    2e. □ Evening   2h. □ Other (_____
                                                     _____)

3. Check **ALL** that apply to the location of instruction:

    3a. □ Main campus
    3b. □ Adjunct campus   3d. □ Radio, TV, Telephone network
    3c. □ Off-campus sites   3e. □ Off-campus independent study

4. Check **ALL** that apply to type(s) of credit awarded:

    4a. □ Non-credit instruction 4c. □ Graduate credit 4e. □ Credit by exam
    4b. □ Undergraduate credit 4d. □ CEU's   4f. □ Credit for prior learning

5. Is Financial Aid available?   5.a □ Yes   5b. No.

6. Is catalog, brochure, and/or pamphlet available upon request?

    6a. □ No pre-printed materials available.
    6b. □ Yes (if "yes," is there a fee?   6i. □ Yes   6ii. □ No)

7. Check **ALL** that apply to the number of offerings currently available.

    7a.□ 1-2 courses   7b.□ 3-5 courses   7c.□ 6 or more courses   7d.□ Workshops

8. Date of first offering(s): _____
                           MONTH   YEAR

9. Estimated number of students served to-date:_____

10. Are **MOST** students *currently* volunteer administrators?

    10a. ☐ Yes   10b. ☐ No
    (If "no," are MOST students *prospective* volunteer administrators?   10i. ☐ Yes
                                                       10ii. ☐ No)

11. Are **MOST** students: 11a. ☐ Female?   11b. ☐ Male?

12. The age of **MOST** students is (Check **ONE** only)

    12a. ☐ 18-25 years   12c. ☐ 36-50 years
    12b. ☐ 26-35 years   12d. ☐ over 50 years

13. Check **ALL** the types of *course content* currently available:

    13a. ☐ Communications Skills   13h. ☐ Accounting/Financial Management
    13b. ☐ Social Organization/Behavior   13i. ☐ Grantsmanship
    13c. ☐ Personnel Management   13j. ☐ Cross-Cultural Studies
    13d. ☐ Social Psychology/Human   13k. ☐ Planning
             Relations
    13e. ☐ Volunteerism   13l. ☐ Marketing
    13f. ☐ Community Organizing   13m. ☐ Other _____
    13g. ☐ Management/Administration

14. Check **ALL** that apply to the *faculty* involved in your volunteer management program:

    14a. ☐ Full-time Faculty   14e. ☐ State University Extension Faculty
    14b. ☐ Part-time Faculty   14f. ☐ Other _____
    14c. ☐ Adjunct Faculty   14f. _____
    14d. ☐ Community-based Faculty

15. Information on the topics listed below can be sent to you. Check **ALL** that are of interset.

    15a. ☐ AVA Program Endorsement
    15b. ☐ AVA Performance—Based Certification Overview
    15c. ☐ AVA Training Workshop and Conferences

APPENDIX B

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