Service-Learning Opportunities

A USC Well-being Collective Toolkit

January 2021

USC Well-being Collective

The USC Well-being Collective harnesses the power of Collective Impact for a variety of distinct and often siloed academic departments, administrative units, recognized student organizations and local non-profits to come together and work with the whole student community towards our common agenda: **strengthening a campus culture driven by student wellbeing.**

This goal is supported by four interrelated strategic goals:

Equity and Inclusion – enhancing the culture of equity and inclusion
Resilience and Thriving – creating a culture where individuals and communities thrive
Alcohol and Other Substance Use – disrupting the culture of at-risk substance use
Consent and Healthy Relationships — fostering a culture of consent and healthy relationships

Introduction

Today, mental health professionals have access to various levels of treatment that can effectively help people with mental health concerns. Many colleges are going beyond simply providing treatment services by expanding efforts to prevent mental health problems from arising and promote the mental well-being of all students. In other words, they are adopting a public health approach to address the social and environmental risk factors that influence student mental health (Davidson & Locke, 2010; SPRC, 2004). Factors affecting student mental health and ability to thrive can be shaped by individual attitudes and beliefs about mental illness, interpersonal group norms, institutional environments, community access to mental health resources, and public policies. With the practice of connecting young people early to practices which bolster and foster positive mental health, institutions can cultivate a culture where individuals and communities thrive.

Universities represent multicultural hubs where students exchange experiences, values and ideas. Each year students matriculate to their university campuses creating, collegiate communities. Students bring with them developing identities, life goals, and trust in their universities to provide space and resources for their growth. However, college students' abilities to thrive can be shaped by factors beyond their own individual attitudes and beliefs. Institutional environments, interpersonal group norms, and community access to supportive resources can all impact a student's mental health and ability to thrive. A potential opportunity to bolster a college student's success is the participation in a service-learning position. Service-learning positions promote social-emotional and academic development through active engagement in community-based activities. They challenge students to make personal commitments in serving others and in considering others beyond themselves. Service-learning opportunities can help strengthen connections within student learning communities, campus communities and local communities. These are all important in cultivating an institutional culture where individuals and communities thrive.

Service-Learning Opportunities

Toolkit Description:

Provide community-based service-learning opportunities

Strategic Goals:

Equity + Inclusion
Thrive + Mental Health
At-Risk Substance Abuse
Consent + Healthy Relationships

Action Areas:

Building healthy public policy
Creating supportive environments
Strengthening community action
Developing personal skills
Re-orienting all sectors towards prevention

A Toolkit For:

Faculty
Staff
Student
Parent/Guardian
Administrator

Goal

An important component of positive mental health is giving back to others. Participating in service-learning not only benefits the community, but has positive health benefits for volunteers. Research shows community service work strengthens social bonds and increases access to diverse viewpoints. There is greater potential for cognitive and interpersonal growth when service-learning programs are designed to work in tandem with the local community. It is the goal of this strategy to strengthen interpersonal relationships with positive learning opportunities.

Intended Outcomes

Key Performance Indicators:
- Increase positive mental health

Evidence of Effectiveness

Scientifically Supported - Strategies with this rating are most likely to make a difference. These strategies have been tested in many robust studies with consistently positive results.

Implementation Ideas

Faculty

Faculty can encourage and promote community-based work and skill building to students through the integration of service-learning opportunities into the academic unit. Examples include:

One-time group service projects
Faculty can design course objectives to be met when the entire class is involved in a one-time service project. Arrangements for service projects can be made prior to the semester and included in the syllabus. This model affords the opportunity for faculty and peer interaction because a common service experience is shared. One-time projects have different learning outcomes than ongoing service activities.

Option within a course
Faculty can begin service-learning with a pilot project. In this design, students have the option to become involved in the community-based project. A portion of the normal coursework is substituted by the community-based component. For example, a traditional research paper or group project can be replaced with an experiential research paper or personal journal that documents learning from the service experience.

Required within a course

Faculty can create requirements for all students to participate in service as an integrated aspect of the course. This expectation can be clearly stated and included in the syllabus. If all students are involved in service-learning, faculty can design coursework (i.e., class discussions, writing assignments, exam questions) that integrate the service experience with course objectives. Class sessions can involve agency personnel and site visits.

Action research projects

Faculty can encourage community research service-learning opportunities. Faculty can design course requirements to include placements in community-based agencies where the results of the research are shared with the agency and address their needs. Faculty can build relationships of trust in the community and identify common research agendas for student placement.

Disciplinary capstone projects

Faculty can embed in curriculum disciplinary-based capstone projects. Faculty can encourage advanced students to explore ways their disciplinary expertise and competencies translate into addressing community needs.

Students

Students may join a service organization or club. Registered Student Organizations with a focus in overall service include:

Alpha Phi Omega

Alpha Phi Omega is a co-ed community service organization with over 350 school branches across the country.

Circle K International

Circle K International is a global community service organization with more than 13,250 members in 17 countries.

Code the Change

Code the Change is a student organization that promotes social impact through technology by delivering software products to non-profit organizations in the Los Angeles area.

Helenes

USC Helenes is one of the oldest service organizations at USC serving various non-profit organizations in Los Angeles in hands-on community projects.

American Red Cross at USC
The American Red Cross at USC is a humanitarian organization dedicated to alleviating human suffering through emergency assistance, disaster relief, and disaster preparedness education.

Remedy Through Music
Remedy Through Music is a student-run volunteer and outreach club aiming to bring all forms of music to the surrounding community, including hospitals, retirement homes, and family centers.

Trojan Knights
USC Trojan Knights is one of the oldest service organizations on campus committed to making USC and the surrounding community a better place through passionate service.

United Students for Veterans' Health USC Chapter
USVH is a student-run, volunteering organization that assists the recreational therapy department in the Veterans' Hospital with a focus on veterans' mental health and well being.

Student leaders can participate in a service-learning mentorship program to practice civic engagement, grow community knowledge, increase communication skills, facilitate cultural understanding and increase sense of social responsibility. Example of this includes:

USC Joint Educational Project
A community-based organization committed to service-learning and personal development through hands-on service and reflective practice. JEP matches USC students with local organizations and youth in service-learning partnerships that develop character and strengthen civic engagement skills.

Staff & Students

Staff and students may participate in sponsored community service days. On-campus partnerships include:

USC Campus Activities Volunteer Center
Through USC's Campus Activities' Volunteer Center, volunteers participate in skill-building workshops in the community and in service projects. Highlights include Friends and Neighbors Day and Alternative Spring Breaks.

The Friends and Neighbors Day
The FND program organizes various service days for students to serve in the community as part of the Trojan Family. FND introduces students to local service organizations throughout Los Angeles.

The Alternative Break
The AB program offers service-learning opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to get involved with communities outside of USC during academic term breaks.

Implementation Resources

Transforming Words into Action: Service-Learning as a Teaching Strategy
by Cathryn Berger Kaye

Roots and Shoots
Roots and Shoots is a non-profit with over 8000 chapters worldwide involved in linking volunteers to service-learning opportunities across environmental, conservation and humanitarian issues.

Youth Service America
YSA is a global resource center that partners with thousands of organizations committed to increasing the quality and quantity of service-learning opportunities for young people.

Volunteer Match
Volunteer Match is a national organization that brings both hands-on and virtual service opportunities to a centralized location for volunteers to search and connect with great causes together.

VolunteerLA
Volunteer Los Angeles connects participants to meaningful service opportunities across the City of Los Angeles.

L.A. Works
LA Works is a non-profit, volunteer action center that creates and implements hands-on community service projects throughout the greater Los Angeles area.

AmeriCorps
AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs, in which members commit their time to address critical community needs like increasing academic achievement, mentoring youth, fighting poverty, sustaining national parks, preparing for disasters, and more.

References

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Piliavin, J. A., & Siegl, E. (2007). Health benefits of volunteering in the Wisconsin longitudinal study. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 48(4), 450–464.

Shreiner, Laurie. (2010.) Thriving in community. About Campus.

Thoits, P. A., & Hewitt, L.N. (2001). Volunteer work and well-being. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 42, 115–131.

Produced Examples

"A Baker's Dozen Guideposts to a Meaningful Service Learning Program" by Cathryn Berger Kaye
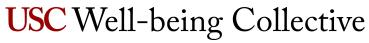10 Ways to safely help your community during COVID-19

USC Student Health
Office for Health Promotion Strategy
Backbone for the USC Well-being Collective

The Office for Health Promotion Strategy, backbone for the USC Well-being Collective, is embedded in USC Student Health and serves as the administrative core to support campus partners in aligning their strategic objectives with student wellbeing. The Office for Health Promotion Strategy works with participating partners, the Steering Committee, and most importantly, students to activate change at USC.

For additional questions, please contact: USC Student Health, Office for Health Promotion Strategy, Backbone for USC Well-being Collective at wellbeingcollective@usc.edu

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