

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS & SERVICE LEARNING ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS & SERVICE LEARNING



OVERVIEW

The Office of Volunteer Programs & Service Learning is dedicated to fulfilling the University's core values and guiding principles. They define what the University stands for and are, therefore, of intrinsic value to the community.



Flowing from the long tradition of Catholic universities, the University's core values are the following:

- Preservation, transmission and development of the Catholic intellectual and liberal arts traditions.
- Commitment to excellence in all that we do.
- Pursuit of truth and knowledge as intrinsically valuable through teaching and scholarship.
- Promotion of the common good of society.
- Recognition of the dignity and worth of every human being.

Dear Friends,

It has been another extraordinary year for the Office of Volunteer Programs & Service Learning! Beyond welcoming a record-setting number of first-year students to campus, VP&SL collaborated with students, faculty and staff in all colleges across the university on advocacy, direct service and philanthropic initiatives. We are proud to share that Volunteer Programs & Service Learning has been selected for the 2020 Best of Fairfield Awards in the category of Colleges & Universities!

At our core, we remain dedicated to our communities, on both a local and global level. Our students engage with the greater Bridgeport community in various capacities, including serving at local soup kitchens, food pantries, K-8 schools, donation centers for retired veterans, and many assisted living facilities. All students have the opportunity to partner with our global community when they travel on a Global Service-Learning Program. Students and staff live in solidarity with residents and learn from our community partners while experiencing new cultures. Collectively, VP&SL supports the SHU community in accomplishing the goal of providing more than 100,000 hours of community engagement work.

In addition to our community partners, our focus is directed at the success of our students. The Office is dedicated to providing students with transportation to volunteer opportunities, as well as administering financial awards and work study positions, which promotes their involvement on and off-campus. As a staff, we also offer guidance and reflection to students who look to get involved and find their place in our local community.

Our role in living out and promoting the mission of the University begins with our students. It is our hope that you will enjoy reading the following report. When your schedule permits, please stop by our office on Main Campus to learn more!

Karreem Mebane
Director

Annie Wendel
Assistant Director

A. _____
Office and Program Manager



GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Community Scholars Grant:

These scholarship awards are based on substantial and substantive community service and demonstrated financial need. Student recipients are required to perform and document 100 hours of volunteer service in the greater Bridgeport community.

Community scholar students:
20

Financial Benefit to Community:
\$24,000



Community-Based Work Study:

Work study is a form of financial aid, funded by the federal government, which helps students meet educational expenses through part-time employment during the academic year. Students who are awarded community-based work study can fulfill their hours by working off-campus at any one of our 30 nonprofit and public school partners.

Community-based work study students:
69

Total number of hours:
8,292



TESTIMONIALS

"Being a grant recipient has encouraged me to contribute to the community around me! It has driven me towards community service programs that have opened my eyes to the world outside of my little town. I come from a small town where we don't have to worry about much but going out into Bridgeport and helping the less fortunate has opened my eyes to what the rest of the world is really like."

- Omar Tabanjeh

"First, I love doing community service and helping others, so being a part of a group that also wants the same things as I do is great and motivating. Next, I loved that I got in touch with organizations that I have never heard of before such as helping and inspiring young women through Project Strong. Also, working at the Discovery Museum has given me the opportunity to help children and families near the Bridgeport area explore creative exhibits, learn new facts about our planet. I feel as though the Pioneer Service Grant is more than just a grant, but a way to get closer to our community by serving others."

- TianaMarie Daddic

"The Pioneer Service Grant not only gave me the opportunity to make new friends but also gave me the experience to help others learn about the very diverse communities that are around SHU's campus. I enjoyed going to the James J. Curiale School the most, because I got to interact with every kid in the classroom and learn about each of their developing personalities. It was the best distraction from my hectic class and practice schedule."

- Allison Veerland

FALL PROGRAMS



Community Connections: VP&SL hosted a training week for sixteen (16) student facilitators, four (4) Graduate Assistants, and three (3) VP&SL staff members in preparation for Community Connections (CC). CC facilitators planned volunteer activities, outlined logistics, and participated in faculty led sessions on how to lead reflection exercises. CC Week was held the week prior to the fall semester's beginning (August 19-25, 2019). The program introduced thirty-nine (39) first-year students to twenty-three (23) service opportunities in the surrounding community. The weeklong program increased each student's understanding of societal issues, such as poverty, immigration, and racism. First-year students created a strong bond with each other and the University and made a purposeful connection with the city of Bridgeport.

Volunteer & Work Study Fair: Students, faculty and staff gathered to meet over 40 community partners from the Greater Bridgeport area on September 10, 2019. This annual event allows students to connect with local nonprofits, schools and organizations for volunteer, internship or work study sites.

FALL PROGRAMS



Turkey Drive: For the past nine (9) years, VP&SL students, along with members of Student Government, Greek life, lacrosse, basketball, and wrestling teams, participated in the success of the Thanksgiving Food Drive. With the help of both community members and generous donors, the University raised money to purchase Thanksgiving groceries for greater Bridgeport residents. VP&SL also participated in the interfaith Thanksgiving service, which led up to the distribution event at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Bridgeport.

Adopt-a-Family: During the month of December, VP&SL led the coordination effort for the University's Adopt-A-Family program. In total, 80 families in the city of Bridgeport received shelf-stable food and gifts for the Christmas holiday. On December 19, 2019, all contributions were delivered to Golden Hill United Methodist Church and Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church of Bridgeport.

WINTER PROGRAMS

C.U.R.T.I.S Week:

The VP&SL and Campus Ministry offices collaborated and led the 2020 Community Understanding and Reflection Through Inner-city Service Week ("C.U.R.T.I.S. Week") from January 8-13, 2020. This is an annual week of engagement and cultural immersion where students and staff volunteer with local community organizations. During the week, students were introduced to diverse faith traditions and houses of worship. Twenty-eight (28) undergraduate and graduate students took part in C.U.R.T.I.S. Week activities. SHU's two (2) University Chaplains, Imam Aga and Rabbi Kormis, hosted our students in their houses of worship for dinner and evening discussion.



The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration:

On January 29, 2020 VP&SL hosted a colloquium to celebrate the life, work, and legacy of Dr. King, Jr. The event featured performances by the SHU Gospel Choir and a variety of student speakers. The keynote address was presented by Capital Preparatory Schools founder Dr. Steve Perry, MSW, Ed.D. The event concluded with a remarkable recitation of "Dear America," which was written and performed by Capitol Preparatory Harbor Charter School students.



SPRING PROGRAMS

VP&SL sent forty-three (43) students and ten (10) staff and faculty advisors abroad to participate in five (5) Global Service-Learning Programs during the March 2020 spring recess.



Colombia: Led by Professor Kate O’Gara (Government) and Arlete Perez Paez (VP&SL), students partnered with the Fundación Vincentinitos mission to provide educational enrichment activities for the children in Zipaquirá, Colombia. Sacred Heart University and Uniminuto University started conversations about mutual cooperation in 2016; projects were finally developed and accomplished in the spring of 2019. In 2020, the delegation volunteered in the Community of Zipaquirá, working with Fundación Vicentinitos, Fundación Ladrilleros de Cogua y Fundación UNBOUND, Barrio Bolívar 83. Uniminuto, like SHU, has a strong commitment to community service and to engaging its students and faculty in important and wide-ranging volunteer activities. Additionally, both institutions understand their responsibility as Catholic colleges and universities to engage with the wider community in service of the principles of Catholic education and in betterment of the lives of people.

Costa Rica: Led by Professor Denise Griffin (Philosophy) and Ami Neville (Mission & Catholic Identity), students partnered with the Institute of Technology of Costa Rica (TEC) in Limón, Costa Rica. University students from Limón joined SHU volunteers for a week of volunteer activities in the community of Río Peje. The group spent part of the week working closely with youth who attend the local primary school. Additionally, environmental projects included partnering with the scientific team at the Foundation for Rainforest Research to learn about tropical wildlife and participate on various jungle hikes in the Veragua Rainforest.

SPRING PROGRAMS

Mexico: Led by Professor Liz Piliero (Catholic Studies) and Annie Wendel (VP&SL), students spent the week living and working at the Simply Smiles Home for Children in San Bartolo Coyotepec, a suburb of Oaxaca City. The group constructed new residential facilities for the children and staff who live in the home, as well as helped care for the children. This included SHU students and faculty helping with homework, preparing meals, and running enrichment activities.



Puerto Rico: Led by Professor Ron Hamel (Psychology) and Karreem Mebane (VP&SL), students partnered with NetWork Volunteers to bring disaster relief support and respond to the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. This year's project included a combination of environmental sustainability work in San Juan and community revitalization in the town of Yabucoa.



Guatemala: Led by Fr. Joe Farias (Campus Ministry) and Cathy Pavlowski (College of Health Professions), students traveled to the province of Chimaltenango, Guatemala, to support the Guatemalan non-profit CERNE, a local nutrition center and school. SHU volunteers supported the educational and community needs by providing local children with games and organized activities, as well as spent time getting to know the families that live nearby. The SHU delegation spent a day in the town of Antigua, where they explored and learned about various aspects of Guatemalan colonization by the Spanish, the sociological impact of natural disasters, and the rich and complex Guatemalan indigenous history.



MENTORING PROGRAMS

Academic Mentoring Program (AMP): The Academic Mentoring Program pairs SHU mentors with middle school students. The program provides academic support and enrichment activities for middle school students who attend John Winthrop School. Now in its 19th year, AMP mentors welcomed back returning 7th and 8th graders, as well as a new group of 6th graders, for a total of thirty-six (36) mentees. VP&SL remains grateful for the grant which is provided through the Jones-Zimmerman Academic Mentoring Program. The grant provides students with the opportunity to participate in the program. VP&SL continues to prioritize this program, because the staff encourages every middle school student to matriculate on towards high school.



"AMP has been really fun. I like how we go on trips and how everyone is so nice. My mentor has been a big impact in my life, she really has helped me with everything. But overall, I'm going to miss AMP and all the mentors when I graduate."

-J.H., 8th grade mentee

"AMP was a really great opportunity for me. As I enter my 5th year, and come closer to becoming a teacher, it's really important for me to gain experience within in the classroom. AMP allowed me to do this and so much more. AMP was one of the best programs I have ever been a part of. It is an extremely rewarding position that allows you to be part of a student's academic and personal growth over the course of that year. AMP was also an amazing environment to be a part of because I was always surrounded by people who share the same interests as me and are always willing to help. AMP provided me with experiences and friendships that I will always be able to take with me throughout my life and my career!"

-Ryan Hart, SHU mentor

MENTORING PROGRAMS

LEAD: Twenty (20) high school students from Hall Neighborhood House's afterschool program visit Sacred Heart's main campus once a week for college and career readiness sessions. SHU mentors develop and run activities focused on resume building, interviewing, campus tours, and career planning before joining their mentees at the University's cafeteria for dinner.

Project STRONG: Project STRONG is a mentoring program that brings together young women who attend Geraldine W. Johnson School in Bridgeport and female students from SHU. The program serves to empower middle school students to become leaders, true friends, and helps to bolster their confidence. Each Friday, SHU mentors facilitate a new enrichment activity related to girls' empowerment, including body image, communication, and career goals.



SERVICE-LEARNING COUNCIL (SLC)

2019-20 SLC Members:

Karreem Mebane (VP&SL)

Annie Wendel (VP&SL)

Molly Higbie (Global Health Programs)

Jerry Reid (College of Arts & Sciences)

Cima Sedigh (Farrington College of Education)

Steve Michels (Associate Provost for Teaching & Learning)

Victoria Rosa-Garcia (Welch College of Business & Technology)

Leslie Youngblood (St. Vincent's College)

Linda Strong (College of Nursing)

VP&SL WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR FACULTY MEMBERS FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED THIS YEAR.

Khawaja A. Mamun (Economics): Professor Mamun assisted in the Child Rights & Sight 7th International Conference at Yale University with SHU student volunteers. The conference was sponsored by Distressed Children & Infants International (DCI). DCI connects American youth to less fortunate children in other countries, educating them about the challenges facing children worldwide and inspiring them to take leadership in humanitarian causes.

Cara Erdheim-Kilgallen (Languages & Literature): Dr. Kilgallen's English senior capstone class partnered with Hall Neighborhood House during fall 2019 to work on independent research and creative writing projects in the after-school program with local students.

Daria Fitzgerald (Catholic Studies): CIT students planned partnerships with community members at the Maggie Daly Arts Cooperative (MDAC) in Bridgeport. MDAC is an initiative managed by The Kennedy Center, Inc. The initiative is designed to provide an innovative environment where individuals with disabilities can learn and create their own arts program. Together, students and community members will pair up for dialogue and work together to create art that celebrates our shared communities.

COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

- Caroline House, Inc.
- Curiale School
- Inter-district Discovery Magnet School
- Discovery Museum
- Thomas Merton Center
- Hall Neighborhood House

- John Winthrop School
- LifeBridge Community Services
- Maggie Daly Arts Cooperative at The Kennedy Center
- Summerfield United Methodist Church
- Urban Impact



STUDENT TESTIMONIES



Global Service-Learning Program: "Each spring break, I learn something new about myself, and I take a step back and reevaluate my life. This service-learning trip taught me not to take anything for granted and to appreciate the little things that life has to offer. The community of San Juan, Puerto Rico taught me that because their houses are still being repaired years after the storm, the residents had smiles on their faces each day we arrived at their homes. The two homeowners, Ada and Josè, were so appreciative and so grateful that we were there, but little did they know they were changing our lives in the process. I hope to bring what I learned in Puerto Rico and apply it to my community right here in Bridgeport."

- Nicole Magliulo '21

C.U.R.T.I.S Week: "C.U.R.T.I.S Week has really allowed me to step out of my comfort zone in many different aspects which is what makes me stronger as a person and more exposed to what others are going through in the greater Bridgeport community. Along with getting out of my comfort zone, I met so many new friends that I felt like I've known for years, even though I just recently met them through this program. I am forever grateful that Sacred Heart University has given me this opportunity to participate in a volunteer program like this."

- Dayna Pendino '22

Community Connections: "My week of participation in the Community Connections pre-fall program was undoubtedly one of the most impactful weeks of my life. I had grown so used to seeing all these amazing people every second of everyday and I loved every minute of the week. The friendships I formed with participants and facilitators alike are ones that will most certainly last and I cannot wait to see where the rest of my Freshman year and work with the VP&SL office takes me. I'm forever thankful for that week, the people I spent it with, and the friendship's I've made from it. CC will always have a special place in my heart."

- Sara Carr '23

CONTACT INFORMATION



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YouTube: [SHU Volunteer](#)

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