

## SERVICE-LEARNING AND VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS/ RESOURCE PANTRY 2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

### WHAT'S NEW IN ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING?

Throughout the 2018-2019 academic year, **SLVP Faculty Associate Dr. Katie Solic** worked closely with SLVP staff, as well as members of the Service-Learning Faculty Work Group, the university's Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC) and the General Education Reform Committee to continue expanding and enhancing academic service-learning opportunities at WCU. SLVP continued to support the 12-credit Pathway Certificate in Community Engagement, which was implemented this year to recognize students who obtain service-learning experiences across a range of general education courses.

#### Facts & Figures

|  | Last Academic Year<br>2017-2018 | This Academic Year<br>2018-2019 |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Hours of Service-Learning                    | 668,190                         | 678,854                         |
| Students enrolled in SL courses and projects | 6,824                           | 7,853                           |
| Faculty teaching SL courses                  | 169                             | 125                             |
| Unique Courses                               | 89                              | 125                             |
| Course Sections                              | 505                             | 530                             |

The **Community Engagement (CE) Scholars Program** plays an important role in assisting faculty with bringing community engagement projects to fruition. Faculty have the option of partnering with student leaders and community partners to create a new service-learning project, support a community-based research project or assist a department with creating new partnerships for field placements, internships or applied learning experiences. This year, 10 Community Engagement Scholars partnered with 10 faculty members and a wide range of community organizations. The following faculty members were supported by the CE Scholar program:

#### 2018-2019 CE Scholar Faculty

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Mike Markowski, <i>Health</i>                              | Janneken Smucker, <i>Graduate Social Work</i> |
| Dara Dirhan, <i>Nutrition</i>                              | Stevie Grasseti, <i>Psychology</i>            |
| Angela Lavery, <i>Graduate Social Work</i>                 | Sarah Lightner, <i>Literacy</i>               |
| Karen Schwartz, <i>Earth &amp; Space Sciences</i>          | Jordan Schugar, <i>English</i>                |
| Janet Bradley/Brie Radis, <i>Undergraduate Social Work</i> |   |

#### CE Community Partner Organizations

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Westside Community Center                            | Chester County Dept. of Emergency Services |
| Coatesville Area Senior Center                       | St. Agnes Day Room                         |
| Kennett Friends Home                                 | St. Agnes Nurses Center                    |
| Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History                | Crozer Keystone Hospice                    |
| Neighborhood Hospice: Philadelphia Veterans Hospital |  |

### ALSO HAPPENING IN THE OFFICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING AND VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

- In April 2019, Faculty Associate Katie Solic and Student Affairs Assistant Vice President Sara Hinkle submitted WCU's application to become recertified for the Carnegie Classification. The recent application was based on 2017-2018 data and if granted, will renew the classification granted to WCU in 2012. WCU will be notified of our status in December 2019.
- SLVP continues to be involved with the New Faculty Orientation program, and offers direct service-learning mentoring and assistance for new faculty interested in incorporating this into their courses.
- SLVP works closely with the First Year Experience Office to offer a pilot service-learning-themed section, which will connect approximately 175 students with community partners, as well as educate the group on the best practices and advantages of community-based learning.

SLVP saw several transitions over the 2018-2019 academic year. Director Jodi Roth-Saks, who had previously coordinated academic service-learning programs, left WCU in October 2018. The Director position has been vacant since that time but it is planned to be filled by Fall 2019. The reduction of academic service-learning programming can be contributed to these shifts and the reduction in professional capacity. In May 2019, SLVP welcomed Pam Frontino as the new Associate Director for Service-Learning & Volunteer Programs. Pam will work closely with faculty to coordinate and structure academic service-learning courses. Dr. Ashlie Delshad will revive her role as the Faculty Associate for the 2019-2020 academic year. Assistant Director Kate Colyer left the office in June 2019 to pursue a new opportunity and was replaced by Shannon Gillespie as Interim Assistant Director for the 2019-2020 academic year.

**RESOURCE PANTRY UPDATES:** According to a recent study conducted by the Hope Center and published in April 2019, 45% of student respondents reported experiencing food insecurity in the last 30 days (Goldrick-Rab et.al., 2019). This number increased from last year's report by the same institution which indicated 36% of student respondents experienced food insecurity in the same span of time. Basic needs insecurity on college campuses continues to be an issue faced by thousands of students across the United States. The WCU Resource Pantry aims to eliminate barriers, including basic needs insecurities, students may face while trying to complete their college degree by providing students access to free food, personal care products, school supplies, and professional and winter attire. In addition, the Resource Pantry aims to supplement these tangible resources with life-skills programming and access to local community resources to better equip students for life after college. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the pantry has continued to see growth in the number of students served and community partnerships established as well as a continuation of the life-skills programming begun in the previous academic year.



During the summer of 2018, the Resource Pantry underwent renovations thanks to a generous donation from the Pennsylvania State Employee Credit Union (PSECU) and Student Services Incorporated (SSI). As a result of this donation and renovation, the pantry operates in five rooms: one designated reception area; one area devoted to food products; one area holding personal care products and school supplies; one area, a designated Career Closet, holding professional and winter attire as well as another reception station; and a designated back stock room for extra inventory items and space for processing donations. To top off the newly renovated space, an Art 400 course: Design for Social Good, created mural designs as part of a service-learning course to be applied in the Resource Pantry. During the fall 2018 semester, students in the course broke up into teams, visited the pantry space and listened to a presentation about the pantry's history and goals, created a design using their interpretation of the pantry's core values, and presented their designs to Resource Pantry staff. After consulting among the staff, one winning design was chosen. The mural was installed in May 2019.

In addition to the physical changes seen at the Resource Pantry, this year also saw improvements in operations of the space through the use of a new computer software system known as Pantry Soft. Pantry Soft allows the Resource Pantry to operate out of one unified system: students can register and check in and out of the pantry; data is collected and stored in one location; and reports can be run quickly and can be converted into Excel and PDF documents.

During the 2018-2019 academic year, the Resource Pantry was able to serve 740 students for a total of 5,100 visits. In addition, the pantry distributed 17,377 pounds of food, 16,248 personal care products, 2,646 school supplies, and 661 articles of clothing. The total value of in-kind donations received during this academic year was \$58,468.23.



The Resource Pantry continued efforts to grow the team of student workers in our space. Our team this year included 11 Pantry Ambassadors and 1 Outreach Coordinator. The Outreach Coordinator is a new role this year and has made it possible for the pantry to expand its outreach efforts to both students and community members, alike. The Outreach Coordinator is responsible for creating social media posts, tabling at events on campus, providing presentations to student groups, classes and local community organizations looking to get involved in the pantry, and publishing our weekly newsletter. The strong presence of our student staff has allowed the pantry to continue its expanded hours of operation throughout the fall and spring semesters, operating Monday through Friday from 9am-4:30pm and on Thursdays from 9am-7pm.

This year also saw the continuation of life-skills and other programming offered by the pantry in collaboration with other campus departments and offices. The pantry was able to host two cooking demonstrations (one with the nutrition department, one with Aramark dining services), two trips to Wings for Success, one trip to the West Chester Food Cupboard, and one professional development workshop with the Career Development Center focusing on interviewing skills. The Resource Pantry looks forward to expanding these life-skills programming efforts and connections to other local nonprofits next academic year to increase student participation.

Continued growth of community partnerships has been a major point of focus for the Resource Pantry throughout the 2018-2019 academic year. Our existing partnership with the Chester County Food Bank (CCFB) deepened this year when the pantry became a Tier 2 Member Agency with the local nonprofit, thus expanding the food items made available to

us. In addition, the pantry was able to secure deliveries of donated food items from the CCFB, as frequently as once a week. The pantry also continued its efforts to engage student organizations via the student organization sponsorship program piloted in spring 2018. Through this program, five student organizations consistently supported the pantry via in-kind donation drives and fundraisers during the 2018-2019 academic year.



New partnerships were also developed this year, allowing the pantry to expand both its food and personal care item inventory. As a part of their new 7-year contract, Aramark committed to supporting the Resource Pantry in the following ways: allocating \$4,000 annually to pantry food inventory; hosting 2-4 cooking demonstrations throughout the year; organizing two food drives (one per semester); providing meals for two fundraisers each year at 100 guests each, enabling all proceeds to go directly to the pantry; and providing 50 meal vouchers for students in need of extra support in addition to the pantry. As a result of their generosity, 600 pounds of food was collected for the pantry during the fall semester and the pantry was able to host its first fundraiser dinner which yielded over \$2,000 for pantry funds. In addition, the pantry has been able to maintain a steadier supply of food products. In the spring 2019, the Resource Pantry began recovering food from Wingman's in Malvern, Pa. By engaging the student-led Food Recovery Network (FRN), the pantry has received hundreds of pounds of food on a weekly basis as a result of this partnership. Finally, Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) has been instrumental in assisting the pantry with supplying students with personal care products. Each month, WPC receives a list from the pantry outlining our personal care product needs. They then mobilize their congregation to collect these items and deliver them to the pantry at the end of the month.

Looking forward, the Resource Pantry is excited to welcome a pantry Graduate Assistant for the 2019-2020 academic year to continue its efforts to support students via provision of free resources to offset the costs of college as well as expand its life-skills programming. In addition, the Associate Director has joined the Resource Pantry leadership team and will help lead the pantry to future successes.

**ALTERNATIVE BREAK PROGRAM:** The Alternative Break Program engages students in meaningful service in communities across the globe during University break periods. Each trip addresses a prevalent social issue that impacts that specific community by engaging in direct service alongside members of the community to understand and meet the needs of the population. What makes this program unique is that it spans the entire academic year, engaging students in pre-trip and post-trip education and service opportunities within the local West Chester community. This year, the program engaged over 60 participants in 6 Alternative Break trips within the U.S. and across the globe.

**SPRING BREAK TRIPS:**



**Serving the LGBTQ+ Community Impacted by HIV/AIDS:** Eight students and two staff members engaged in creating educational materials and community advocacy for safer sex and housing security for the LGBTQ+ community impacted by HIV/AIDS in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The team volunteered with Pittsburgh's Allies for Health + Wellbeing and the Central Outreach Wellness Center serving the LGBTQ+ Community Impacted by HIV/AIDS.

**Advocating for Women's Rights through Political Engagement:** Eight students and one staff member volunteered with non-profit organizations such as Planned Parenthood, American Association of University Women (AAUW), NARAL: Pro-Choice Maryland, United for Reproductive Gender Equity (URGE), and others that advocate for women's rights in Washington, DC. They engaged with figureheads and advocates and discussed policy surrounding reproductive justice.



**Empowering Youth through Financial Literacy Education:** Eleven students and one staff member volunteered with Junior Achievement to teach children grades K-12 financial literacy in New York City, New York. Participants engaged youth with academic enrichment activities to develop financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills through interactive games and teamwork activities.

**Addressing Issues of Affordable Housing:** Eight students, one Graduate Intern, and one staff member volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in Alamance County, NC to help provide affordable housing for those affected by rural poverty. Students assisted with painting the walls and constructing the roof for a single mother and her family's home during their week of service.



#### **SUMMER BREAK TRIPS:**

**Creating Sustainable Food Resources in Urban Communities:** Eight students and one faculty member volunteered with Bartram's Gardens, EPRA Gardens, Awbury Arboretum, and Deaver Wellness Farms. They planted seedlings, weeded community gardens, and harvested fresh produce to be distributed throughout the city. Through these activities, participants learned how community gardens address food insecurity in urban settings.



**Guatemala: Cross-Educational Experience:** Nine students and two faculty members traveled to indigenous villages surrounding Lago de Atitlan in Guatemala to partner with local schools and agencies to actively engage with children and community members with varying cognitive, physical, and developmental disabilities.



#### **Qualitative Highlights**

*"I learned so much at our pre-trip meetings. They were super informative and made me feel completely prepared for the service trip. Reflection activities helped the members of our trip become closer through realizing we were feeling the same things and were able to help each other understand some of the emotions we were experiencing".*

*"The reflection really helped me feel connected to the other people that I went on the trip with, and gave me perspective and helped me to shape what we had done during the day".*

*"This trip was the best experience of my life and extremely humbling. As a future educator, being able to teach a diverse student population was incredible and enlightening".*

*"[Most meaningful experience] kids wrote notes to us saying how appreciative they were of our lessons we taught. It impacted me on a personal level, as it was that 'oh wow' moment of making an impact in someone's live. I hope I changed theirs as much as they changed mine".*

*"The most meaningful experience is learning about each other and about ourselves. We went as a group of unknown and met with people who didn't know us. The more we were doing and having conversation, we learned more about ourselves, each other and even from the community. We created a bond, and shared interest to make impact to help the community, that the community was very welcoming".*

*"..The things I learned from the AB trip to bring back are participating in my community and West Chester. I enjoy volunteering because I networked with others I didn't even know existed and was part of making greater impacts and learning about social issue I believe in".*

*"We went in and did the small labor that, while it did not change the entire structure of anything, it made little things easier for everyone. People have access to safe sex kits for free, thanks to the service we did for one day, and a building is a cleaned up and painted making it feel more like a home to others just from another day of service. It may just be a cleaner house or a few condoms; but that goes a long way in personal lives".*

**CO-CURRICULAR SERVICE-LEARNING:** To date, as reporting from clubs and organizations continues to trickle in, total number of service hours is at 30,328! Money was also raised by clubs and organizations to benefit various community partners totaling \$108,163.80



#### **MLK Day of Service**

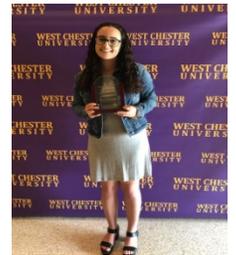
On Thursday, January 31, 2019, SLVP engaged 268 volunteers in meaningful service in honor of Dr. King by making 100 "no-sew" fleece blankets. Through partnerships with three non-profit organizations, children and families received a warm, comforting blanket during their most challenging life experiences. Fleece for Keeps provides the fleece blankets to children in foster care systems in PA, MD, and NJ. Children receiving medical care at Nemours A.I. DuPont Hospital for Children and

patients in the NICU at Chester County Hospital were given fleece blankets to provide comfort while undergoing treatment. During the event, volunteers watched an educational video about Dr. King's legacy of service and representatives from each non-profit organization shared with volunteers the true impact these blankets have on our community.

**The America Reads Youth Mentoring Program** engages WCU students to serve as mentors to youth across Chester County. Not only did these mentors dedicate 6-10 hours each week to mentoring youth at their respective sites, they also participated in monthly professional development workshops on campus, covering various topics including behavioral management, resume and interview preparation, emotional intelligence and more. When reflecting on this experience, one mentor shared:

*"I have become more of a leader than I've ever been this past year through the ARYMP. I feel confident and prepared as a leader from my role as site leader. I've also grown professionally, as I feel much more prepared as a future educator than I did before this year."* –WCU Site Leader

**OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD – BIANCA MAGGIO:** The Resource Pantry's very own Bianca Maggio was awarded the Outstanding Public Service Award for the 2018-2019 Annual Student Leadership Awards. Bianca demonstrates a consistent and fervent dedication to service, as evidenced by her academic, work, and volunteer experiences. In addition, Bianca upholds the defining characteristics of an individual called to serve, including humility, generosity, and selflessness, among other qualities.



Bianca is involved in several areas and wears many hats at West Chester University. As a student, Bianca is a dedicated nursing major and takes her academics very seriously. In addition to the academic role she occupies, Bianca also serves on the Executive Board of the Food Recovery Network (FRN). FRN is a student-led group which recovers food from areas on campus and in the surrounding community and allocates them to organizations in need of such items, including Safe Harbor and the WCU Resource Pantry. Bianca has been instrumental in facilitating FRN's recovery of bread from the Salvation Army for the purpose of increasing products available to WCU students utilizing the Resource Pantry. Additionally, Bianca has been invited to join the Abbe Society here on campus, a testament to the fact that her efforts to serve are noticed by all who meet her. Finally, Bianca works as a Pantry Ambassador for the Resource Pantry.

Bianca has demonstrated a strong work ethic and desire to help others through her role in the Pantry. She has played a large role in the flourishing of the Resource Pantry and its team of student workers. Bianca is always ready to go above and beyond to serve the students using the space and improve the overall operations. She is sensitive to the needs of our students and works to ensure their time spent with us is positive. In addition, she is a team player who works well with all students on the Pantry staff as well as all persons working in the Office of Service Learning and Volunteer Programs, including higher education professionals and graduate student staff.

It is no surprise that Bianca Maggio was awarded the Outstanding Public Service Award as she possesses all the qualities of an individual drawn to service. We look forward to hearing about all of Bianca's future accomplishments and what will, no doubt, be a bright future.

**FINAL THOUGHTS:** With the many transitions, obstacles, and challenges SLVP experienced this past year, we also experienced great accomplishments, strong teamwork, open discussions of ideas, appreciation of each other with the value each one brings to the table, and a true sense of ownership in the success of this department! As we move on to the next academic year, we look forward to being a part of each student's success in learning and experience here at WCU!