

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Office of Service-Learning & Volunteer Programs

West Chester University of Pennsylvania



What's New in OSLVP?

This year, several significant events reshaped the programming and services of the Office of Service-Learning & Volunteer Programs (OSLVP). The office welcomed new leadership while bidding farewell to an icon. And of course, the Covid-19 pandemic introduced myriad challenges as well as some innovative adaptations.

After national search, Dr. Seth Jacobson was hired in February of 2020 as the new Senior Director. Dr. Jacobson brings more than ten years of progressively responsible experience to his role as Senior Director, working at the intersections of education and public service. He joined West Chester following appointments with Governor Tom Wolf's administration as Special Advisor for Postsecondary and Higher Education and Deputy Policy Director for the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Prior to his tenure in state government, Dr. Jacobson served as the Assistant Director for the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement at Drexel University, where he also earned a Master's degree in Comparative and International Education and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy. Dr. Jacobson is deeply committed to advancing the public good outcomes of higher education, and in particular, West Chester University's mission to graduate students that contribute to the common good.

Where Are This Year's Service Hours?

While OSLVP continued its collection of service hours from a variety of sources, we decided not to include aggregated tallies in this year's report. This decision was primarily influenced by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, OSLVP is taking this time to re-evaluate its measures of service-learning and volunteerism at WCU.

Since 2013, Joellen Reindl served as an invaluable team member – and often a public face – for OSLVP. Indeed, Joellen was not only critical to the office's administrative functions, but she was a main point-of-contact for its many community partner organizations. As of February 17th, Joellen transitioned into a new role at WCU providing support to Student Affairs construction and renovation projects in the areas of Housing, Dining, Campus Recreation, Sykes Union, Athletics, Identity, Health and Wellness, as well as Educational and General (E&G) funded departments. She is also part of the daily oversight of the university's partnership with Aramark.

While the Covid-19 pandemic introduced a range of challenges to our continuity of operations this year, OSLVP quickly adapted to ensure that our core programs and services remained accessible to students, faculty, staff, and our community partners. Some actions that were immediately taken in response to the pandemic included:

- Virtual meetings with our community partners to assess the pandemic's impact on their services, and to identify how WCU could support them.
- Virtual meetings with students and student organizations to help them adapt to virtual service, and to connect them with community partners in need of remote volunteers.

- Virtual meetings with faculty to help them adapt their service-learning courses to remote modalities, and to connect them with community partners in need of remote volunteers.
- Development and maintenance of a temporary online directory of remote service opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.
- Increased attention to voter education and engagement in the months leading up to Pennsylvania’s presidential primary election.
- Convened an ad hoc workgroup called the Covid-19 Basic Needs Workgroup – consisting of faculty, staff, and students – to help ensure that WCU and OSLVP were proactively addressing the basic needs of our students and community members.

Other adaptive actions are reflected in the sections below. And of course, behind these adaptations was a team of stellar professionals and para-professionals committed to student access and sustained community engagement despite the unprecedented challenges of Covid-19. As our students found themselves disconnected from their communities – and as our non-profit and government partners experienced spikes in demand for essential services and resources, our team continued to provide opportunities through which students could maintain impactful connections through service, leadership, and civic learning in our local, national, and global communities.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



WCU Earns 2020 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification

WCU was one of only 11 Pennsylvania universities and 359 institutions nationwide that received the [2020 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification](#). The classification has been the leading framework for institutional assessment and recognition of community engagement in U.S. higher education for the past 14 years.

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Academic Service-Learning

The annually rotating **Faculty Associate** position was filled in 2019-2020 by **Dr. Ashlie Delshad** of the Political Science department. Dr. Delshad is no stranger to SLVP and regularly contributes to many of the office's ongoing programs as an advisor to an Alternative Break trip focused on food security, as well as the South Campus Garden and the Food Recovery Network (both of which donate food to the Resource Pantry on a regular basis). Additionally, Dr. Delshad served as the SLVP Faculty Associate for the 2018-2019 academic year, thus bringing helpful knowledge and experience to the office. Dr. Delshad supported the Associate Director to collaborate with Academic Affairs and promote service-learning courses, while providing training to faculty to enhance service-learning pedagogy.

A major achievement for service-learning and community engagement at WCU was the creation of the **Pathways Certificate in Community Engagement**, finalized in the spring of 2019 by the university's Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC) and the General Education Committee. This effort was a continuation on progress from 2018-2019 and supported largely in 2019-2020 by Dr. Ashlie Delshad through her role as the Faculty Associate. The 12-credit Pathway Certificate in Community Engagement includes General Education courses containing elements of community engagement and that are designed to foster civic engagement and a commitment to the public good. Through Pathway courses, students participate in community projects intended to meet authentic public needs. Teaching goals of the CE Pathways include communication, critical and analytical thinking, diversity, and ethical choices.

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, six Community Engagement Scholars partnered with six faculty members and 24 community organizations. The following faculty members were supported by the CE Scholar program:

2019-2020 Faculty CE Scholar recipients:

- Julia Crouse Waddell, Communications Studies
- Margaret Ottley, Kinseology
- Angela Lavery, Graduate Social Work
- Stevie Grassetti, Psychology
- Sarah Lightner, Literacy
- Megan Schraedley, Communications Studies

2019-2020 CE Scholars (students):

- Carly D'Angelo
- Laura Slavich
- Melanie Snyder
- Cassidy Tenuity
- McKenzie Wrightstone
- Rachael Urick

2019-2020 CE partner organizations:

- Department of Communications & Media (WCU)
- Publicity & Events Subcommittee (WCU)
- Black Women in Sport Foundation
- Global Leadership Academy
- Charles A. Melton Arts and Education Center
- West Chester YMCA
- Center for Contemplative Studies (WCU)
- Downingtown Senior Center
- Springton Manor Farm
- Garrett Williamson
- West Chester Senior Center
- Red Clay Consolidated School District- Richardson Park Elementary School
- New Castle County Detention Center
- La Academia de Antonio Alonso Charter School
- St. Agnes Parish Day Room
- Kennett Square Cooperative
- West Chester Seed Library
- West Chester Green Team & Don't Spray Me
- West Chester Cooperative, A Community Grocery
- WCU Resource Pantry
- Sustainable Food Systems & Green Spaces, Sustainable Food Purchasing Committee (WCU)
- New Castle County Detention Center
- The State Department of Delaware Department of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services
- Glen Mills School

SLVP continues to be involved with the [New Faculty Orientation](#) program, offering direct service-learning mentoring and assistance for new faculty interested in incorporating service and community engagement into their courses. The Associate Director and Faculty Associate presented information and resources to new faculty at a New Faculty Orientation event and resource fair.

SLVP partnered with the new **First Year Experience (FYE)** courses, required for all new, first year students, to pilot a service-learning-themed section of classes. The section consisted of 150 students from various academic major programs, such as education and social work. Students in the class were required to complete 8-10 hours of service with a community partner organization at some point throughout the semester. Students were required to obtain clearances to work with children. The Associate Director worked closely with the section lead, Dr. Emily Miller, to coordinate this project.

2019 FYE Community partner organizations included:

- The Charles A. Melton Arts and Education Center
- Chester County Intermediate Unit Early Head Start and Pre-K Counts
- The Friends Associate for the Care and Protection of Children
- Chester County Connections

Dr. Hannah Ashley was selected as the recipient of the **2019-2020 Excellence in Service-Learning Teaching Award**. Dr. Ashley has made countless contributions to the field of service-learning at and beyond West Chester University over the past two decades. In addition to incorporating high-impact service-learning projects into half a dozen of her own courses and partnering with a wide-range of organizations in our region, Dr. Ashley has also played a central role in creating and leading academic programs focused on community-engagement. These programs include the Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies (YES) minor at the undergraduate level, which is built around community engagement in urban areas alongside urban youth, and the Rustin Urban Community Change Axis (RUCCAS). Dr. Ashley has also served for many years on the board of Reflections, a community-based writing peer-reviewed journal, and she has been a mentor for many other faculty as a previous WCU Faculty Associate for Service-Learning and in her ongoing role as a member of the service-learning faculty work group.

America Reads Youth Mentoring

The America Reads Youth Mentoring (ARYM) Program engages WCU students to serve as mentors to local K-12 students participating in academic enrichment programs. Since its formation in 2012, ARYM has partnered with a number of organizations who each serve a diverse population of low-income, at-risk youth with a united goal of improving academic success through mentoring relationships and tutoring.

This year, 25 students dedicated 6-10 hours per week mentoring youth at their respective sites while also taking part in monthly professional development workshops. These workshops included

information on equitable access to education, cross-cultural communication, and behavioral strategies aimed at meeting students' learning style. These workshops provided mentors transferable skills to their service on site and allowed for opportunities to reflect on their experiences mentoring youth.

This year, we were able to add two new community partners to our America Reads team: Westside Community Center and Delco County Early Learning Center. Both partnerships promise to provide more opportunities for WCU students to build meaningful mentoring relationships with local youth.

ARYM Sites:

- Charles A Melton Center
- St. Agnes Day Room
- Coatesville Kids to College
- Oscar Lasko YMCA
- Henderson High School
- Westside Community Center
- Delco Early Learning Center

“Without the ARYM program I would have never imagined that Chester County, the richest county in Pennsylvania, also has a great amount of families who live below the poverty line. The educational needs of the children are often impacted by their home life and this is why programs such as the ARYM program are so vital.”

“Being a mentor is a chance to learn more about what it means to work with others of all ages. Despite not being an education major, I absolutely love what I do and I feel like I learn so much about myself and what it means to be a great teacher, as well as become more educated on the many issues that face the populations we are working with.”

“This program provides many opportunities for mentors to come to know and understand the community of students that they are working with. The workshops have opened my eyes to various social justice issues that students may be facing including access to housing and redlining, access to an equitable education, and resources at home. These workshops not only provided us with information, but helped us understand how these issues affect our community of students and how we can best support them as mentors.”

“My experience as a Site Leader through the America Reads Program at the Melton Center has honestly been the best experience of my time as a college student. This program has helped me grow as a leader, an educator, a colleague, and an advocate of social justice. I cannot be more thankful to have been a part of this program and have met the most amazing students, program coordinators, and OSLVP supervisors!”

2019-2020 Student Spotlight

Gabrielle Mason, '21

Outstanding Public Service Award Winner 2019-20

Each year, we engage students in our programs to provide opportunities to explore their role as active citizens on campus and in the surrounding community. Gabrielle Mason is an incredible example of a student who found a sense of belonging through her engagement in SLVP and truly embodies the characteristics of active citizenship.

Gabrielle, originally from New Jersey, began at WCU in 2017, bringing with her years of volunteering and service she performed in high school. During her freshman year, she participated in the Addressing Issues of Affordable Housing with Habitat for Humanity alternative break trip. She found a home in the Alternative Break Program, which engages students in meaningful service projects over university break periods. She appreciated the opportunities the program allowed for her and her peers to reflect intentionally on how their week of service addressed larger social issues. She went on to serve as the lead a trip the next year, where she recruited student participants, coordinated weekly educational material about her trip's social justice focus, and carried out meaningful reflection activities while leading her team to work with the Habitat for Humanity chapter in Alamance County, North Carolina. During their week of service, she led her team on various build sites and reflecting on the issue of affordable housing. She continued this commitment by serving as a Trip Leader once again in Spring 2020.

Aside from her experience in Alternative Breaks, Gabrielle is a Site Leader for the America Reads Youth Mentoring Program, which sends students to local after-school programs to assist with homework and form mentoring relationships. Due to Gabrielle's participation, the program has been able to revitalize a partnership with Coatesville Kids to College which previously struggled to gain enough mentors due to transportation concerns. Gabrielle has found creative ways to consistently serve twice a week with a team of dedicated mentors and enhance the academic achievement of over 40 K-8 students in the program.

Gabrielle's commitment to creating community spans outside of SLVP. She served first an Orientation Leader, and then a member of the Leadership Team for New Student Programs. By creating a welcoming and affirming atmosphere for incoming students, she has assisted and encouraged others to be involved and mindful of their impact through her example. She also serves as the President of Rotaract Club, a student organization aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills that will assist students in personal development, addressing the physical

and social needs of their communities, and to promoting better relations between all people worldwide through a framework of friendship and service.

Gabrielle's commitment to active citizenship will certainly continue as she is a Middle Grades Education major with a focus in Mathematics. The SLVP team is incredibly proud of the contributions Gabrielle has made to SLVP's programs and the wider Chester County community over the past 3 years. We celebrate her dedication to addressing critical community needs through her coursework and involvement, and can't wait to see what she does to bring positive change beyond her time at WCU!

MLK Day of Service

WCU celebrated its annual MLK Day of Service on Thursday, January 30th in Sykes Ballrooms with over 200 volunteers. Students, staff, and community members joined in making over 100 no-sew fleece blankets to benefit the Friends Association for the Care and Protection of Children and the NICU/Abramson Cancer Center at Chester County Hospital. The Friends



Association provided the blankets to children whose families are facing housing insecurity, while Chester County Hospital distributed the blankets to provide comfort to individuals undergoing treatment. During the event, volunteers watched an education video about Dr. King's legacy of service and representatives from each organization shared with volunteers the true impact their service has on the community.

Alternative Break

Like many University events and programs, OSLVP's Alternative Break program was upended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a significant amount of effort and progress was made leading up to the spring semester, particularly by the Alternative Break Graduate Assistant, Abigail Demcher '21, a first-year student in the Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs (HEPSA)

program. Issue-based programs and service were planned in five locations, to be led by student trip leaders. We hope to reboot our Alternative Break program in 2021!

2010-2020 Alternative Break Programs:

- Addressing Issues of Affordable Housing with Habitat for Humanity (trip leader Gabrielle Mason)
- Advocating for Women’s Rights through Political Engagement (trip leaders India Washington and Williams)
- Empowering Youth through Financial Literacy Education with Junior Achievement (trip leader Marissa Vernoia)
- Creating Sustainable Food Resources in Urban Communities with PHS (trip leader Mikayla Deiter)
- Guatemala Cross-Educational Experience (trip leader Lena Morella)

Voter Education & Engagement

West Chester University has a long history of campus involvement in various forms of civic engagement, including voter engagement. The University is deeply committed to developing graduates who contribute to the common good through participation in cultural and civic discourse, and through understanding the ethical implications of decisions and the world in which they live.

West Chester University ramped up its voter engagement and education programming starting in the fall of 2019, with accelerated efforts as we move closer to the general elections on November 3, 2020. These efforts are being led by the Office of Service-Learning & Volunteer Programs. A task force of representatives from various departments and divisions was created in the spring of 2020 to better organize efforts across the university.

Members of the Voter Education & Engagement Task Force:

Student Affairs

Office of Service-Learning & Volunteer Programs (OSLVP)

- Pam Frontino
- Seth Jacobson
- Shannon Gillespie

Student Leadership & Involvement (SLI)

- Patricia Riley

Dowdy Multicultural Center (DMC)

- Denice Velez
- Briana Green

Center for Trans & Queer Advocacy (CTQA)

- Tiffany Gray

Center for Women & Gender Equity (CWGE)

- Sedy Alcidonis
- Tess Benser

Communications & Marketing

- Sabrina Rightmer

Academic Affairs

Political Science

- Peter Loedel
- Ashlie Delshad
- Chris Stangl
- Linda Stevenson
- Frauke Schnell

English

- Hannah Ashley

University Affairs

External Relations

- Julie Dietrich

Student Representatives

- Nick Marcil (OSLVP GA, HEP SA graduate student)
- Ashley Pogash (CEEP Fellow, graduate student)
- Allyson Drames (undergraduate student)
- Taylor Gibson Campbell (undergraduate student)

Additional Campus Partners:

Office of Sustainability

WCU Sustainability Council

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs

Residence Life

Fraternity & Sorority Life

WCU continued its partnership with the **Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP)** during the 2019-2020 academic year and awarded a CEEP fellowship to Blake Emmanuel '20. Through this role, Blake assisted with student-facing voter engagement programs that encouraged voter registration, education, and turnout. CEEP will support WCU in 2020-2021 with two CEEP fellowships.

In addition to CEEP, WCU is grateful to receive support from many external partner organizations, including many entities within the West Chester Borough and Chester County. Those partners include:

<p>Off-Campus and Community Partners:</p>
<p><i>Campus voting organizations</i></p> <p>Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) Campus Vote Project All-In Campus Democracy Challenge Head Count National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)</p>
<p><i>Local and regional organizations</i></p> <p>Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND) Campus Compact of New York and Pennsylvania (CCNYPA) Pennsylvania Department of State League of Women Voters of Chester County and/or Pennsylvania Chester County Voter Services (Sandy Burke, Director)</p>
<p><i>Local government officials</i></p> <p>Carolyn Comitta (PA House of Representatives, 156th District, Democrat) Dianne Herrin (Mayor of West Chester, PA, Democrat)</p>

A Campus Action Plan was submitted to the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge, outlining three main **voter engagement goals** for the 2020-2021 year, as well as strategies for reaching those goals. They include:

1. Increase WCU student voter registration and turnout for the primary election
2. Increase WCU student voter registration and turnout for the general election
3. Engage WCU students in educational workshops, events, and activities designed to deepen understanding of the election process and candidates, with a particular emphasis on reaching historically underrepresented students.

Accessibility was highlighted in the Action Plan, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Students will be encouraged to participate in the general election in any way they are able, but especially through the use of mail-in and absentee ballots.

2019-2020 Student Organization Spotlight

At the height of the pandemic, various student organizations stepped up to contribute to coronavirus relief.

- Bosses Give Back raised \$600 through their Nickels for Nurses fundraiser benefiting Philadelphia nurses
- Sigma Phi Epsilon and Alpha Phi raised \$660 through their Coins for COVID fundraiser benefiting John Hopkins front-line medical staff
- Minorities in Medicine raised \$500 through their Venmo board activity to benefit the Friends Association
- Empower Communities Around Youth distributed over 50 meals and sanitation packages in Philadelphia to individuals in need
- WCU Golden Gamers raised \$3,400 through their Extra Life gaming marathon to benefit Children's Miracle Network Hospitals

Careers in Public Service Panel



In partnership with the Career Development Center and the Department of Social Work, SLVP hosted the Careers in Public Service Panel which invited 5 professionals working in the non-profit sector to answer questions and network with students interested in pursuing careers in public service. Representatives working in law, food security, youth programming, academic development, and social work. All attendees, most of which were

members of WCU's Social Work Club, indicated that the panel was useful in identifying future career paths in public service.

Resource Pantry

Basic needs insecurity on college campuses continues to be an issue faced by thousands of students across the United States, including up to 33% at WCU. Students whose basic needs are not met are less likely to succeed in the classroom and beyond. The WCU Resource Pantry recognizes this and strives to support student success by minimizing food and basic need security and preparing students for life after graduation. In addition to providing food, personal care items, school supplies, and career clothing to any WCU student in need, 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. Throughout the 2019-2020 academic year, the Pantry saw considerable growth in the number and frequency of students served. This was coupled with a continued growth in support from on and off-campus communities.

In the summer of 2019, the Resource Pantry said goodbye to **AmeriCorps VISTA Catherine Pilling**, who finished her service in July, having led the Resource Pantry from 2018-2019. Catherine's departure marked the completion of WCU's AmeriCorps VISTA project and grant through Campus Compact of New York and Pennsylvania (CCNYPA). This program was instrumental in growing the Resource Pantry between 2016-2019, establishing partnerships with many key stakeholders, and creating the WCU Resource Pantry Advisory Council. The Office of Service-Learning & Volunteer Programs is grateful for the support of CCNYPA, as well as dedicated AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers Gabriele Singh and Catherine Pilling, who played a large part in making the Resource Pantry successful.

The WCU Resource Pantry is extremely grateful for the continued support of many key **campus partners**, notably the WCU Foundation, the Office of the President, the Office of Financial Aid, Parent and Family Relations, the Division of Student Affairs, Aramark, the WCU South Campus Garden, the Office of Finance and Business Services, the Office of Sustainability, Residence Life and Housing, and the many WCU students, staff and faculty who contributed and supported the Resource Pantry.

The Resource Pantry is also supported by many **community partners**, such as Westminster Presbyterian Church, the West Chester Food Cupboard, Wings for Success, Moody's Analytics, the American Association for University Women, and many more.

We are very grateful for our ongoing partnership with the **Chester County Food Bank (CCFB)**. The Resource Pantry has been a Tier 2 Member Agency with the CCFB since 2018, allowing for deliveries of donated shelf stable and fresh food items as frequently as once a week. As a member agency, the Resource Pantry is part of a large network of organizations throughout the county, and attends quarterly food provider meetings for continuing education, best practices, and networking.

For the 2019-2020 academic year, the Resource Pantry hired a **graduate assistant** to help with various Pantry projects and logistics. Jack Horne '18, a second-year student from the Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs (HEPSA) program at WCU filled this role and was the primary supervisor for a student staff of 8-10 "**Pantry Ambassadors**". Pantry Ambassadors are hired through Federal Work Study and are responsible for maintaining the daily operations of the Pantry, including greeting and assisting student shoppers, processing donations, and keeping track of Pantry inventory. The Resource Pantry will welcome a new graduate assistant for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Other notable accomplishments from the Resource Pantry:

- Aligning with our commitment to sustainability, starting in the fall of 2019, the Resource Pantry has ended its use of plastic and single-use bags for student shoppers. Instead, students are encouraged to bring their own bags when they shop. Plastic and single-use bags are not provided to students, but first-time Pantry shoppers will be given a reusable bag to bring when they return.
- During the fall semester, the Resource Pantry organized two trips to Wings for Success and two to the West Chester Food Cupboard, two of our key partners in Chester County. Both locations provide students with a more extensive selection of resources than the Resource Pantry can provide.
- We've expanded our backstock area! We have separated our supplies of personal care and food items into different rooms, in order to keep things organized, allowing for an increased capacity of storing and replacing items on the Pantry's shelves. This will assist Pantry staff as our usage continues to grow.

The **Covid-19 pandemic** created challenges for the Resource Pantry, but we have remained committed to meeting student needs throughout. During the spring break week of March 9, 2020, administrators at WCU announced that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students would complete the spring semester virtually, and would not be returning to campus after the break. It was announced shortly after that for health and safety, staff would also not be permitted to work on campus. Pam Frontino worked with Joellen Reindl (Operations Specialist) and Tori Nuccio (Assoc. Director of Financial Aid) to pack all Pantry supplies and backstock into packages that would be available to students in need who remained in the area. Bags were distributed through assistance from Student Health Services and the Office of Residence Life. Students could request a bag

through an online form, which helped track need. In addition to providing this limited resource, we also encouraged students to visit the West Chester Food Cupboard, which expanded its services to any student requesting assistance, not just those living within the borough. A list of additional resources was provided to students with suggestions for obtaining assistance with food, housing, and other needs, and students were encouraged to reach out to Pantry staff directly for additional assistance or referrals.