Putting the Carnegie Community Engagement Designation to Work for the U

The Task Force for the Third Decade of Community Engagement was formed in Spring 2010 and helped craft the application that successfully obtained the “community engaged” designation for the university. Reinvented by the work of applying for the designation, the 30+ member task force continued meeting throughout the 2010-11 academic year to discuss how to continue to build opportunities for faculty and staff to engage with the community through research and learning. We were so fortunate to have the service of a diverse group of faculty – representing all faculty/administrative ranks and more than 20 different departments.

The task force divided into two working groups – one focused on engaged scholarship for students and faculty, and one focused on institutionalization issues.

These two working groups have each met monthly throughout the academic year to prepare a plan for the next decade of community engagement. The task force has been supported by the Bennion Center, which served as the body’s administrative arm. We also hired an intern, Nick Jarvis, a masters of public administration student, to conduct the academic, programmatic, and budgetary research requested by the task force and provide additional administrative support.

Although the task force’s final report will not be sent to Vice President Pershing until June, several key concepts have emerged already. First, the engaged scholarship group has written a definition for the sometimes nebulous concept of engaged scholarship and has illustrated the continuum of this definition through examples and case studies from across campus. The definition describes engaged scholarship as “investigation, analysis and dissemination of new knowledge, in collaboration or partnership with the community, shared with an academic (student/professional) and/or public audience.” Second, the task force will recommend that the designation of service-learning be expanded to include a variety of engaged teaching and learning forms and the designation be re-named to reflect the expanded definition. Last, the task force is recommending the U create a Faculty Fellows program and an Affiliated Faculty program to support the development of engaged faculty.

We are so thankful for the task force members’ dedication to this work. Its conclusion signifies the beginning of the work of community engagement in the next decade. We will be meeting after the semester ends to finalize recommendations. Then the group will re-convene at the Engaged Faculty Institute at Alta in August to begin the work of transitioning the task force working groups into the committees necessary to implement the final plans.

By Nancy Basinger, Assistant Director and Service-Learning Manager

Bennion Center Honors Outstanding Community Members

The Bennion Center’s two annual community service awards recognize outstanding members of our community who exemplify the qualities of leadership and compassion for which the Bennion Center stands. The awards honor and memorialize the students for whom they are named.

The Dan Wendelboe Continuous Community Service Award recognizes a student, faculty, staff, or alumnus for her or his service and continuous involvement with the Bennion Center. The recipient this year was Dr. Penny Brooke, Professor, College of Nursing, for her exceptional commitment to service-learning at the U of U since the center’s creation in 1987.

Dan Wendelboe was a nontraditional nursing student who, upon being introduced to the Bennion Center, wanted to participate in a service trip to Mexico over the holiday break. He and other students helped collect medical supplies to deliver to Project Projimo, where they planned to help build new medical care facilities. Dan was excited to be part of this project because it would combine his carpentry and developing Spanish skills with his love of the medical community. On the way to Project Projimo, Dan was killed in a car accident in Navajo, Mexico.

The Chelsea Hale Creative Community Leadership Award recognizes an individual with vision and understanding of the issues that affect our community. This year’s honorees were the Honorable Scott M. Matheson and the Honorable Andrew Valdez. The two created the Tennis ‘N Tutoring program - an after-school program that brings at-risk youth for tennis lessons and tutoring with U of U students. The program encourages elementary-aged students to become involved in tennis in order to develop life skills. Tutoring to help the children achieve academically is provided by Bennion Center students.

Chelsea Anne Hale was a U of U honors student with a passion for serving others. She had volunteered with the Edison School in Salt Lake City, in Kenya as part of a CHOICE expedition, and with the Bennion Center’s Special Olympics. Chelsea passed away in an accident that occurred in January 2001.

By Kim Paulding, Advisory Board Chair Elect
Congratulations to Graduating Seniors

On May 6, more than 40 of the Bennion Center’s student leaders graduated from the University of Utah. Though the center is sad to see them go, all are headed off to new and exciting adventures. Here are some highlights from this year’s graduates serving on the student board:

Michelle Doong, service-learning scholar and Bennion Service House resident advisor, is graduating with degrees in economics and political science. After graduation, she plans to travel before applying to graduate school. The Bennion Center provided her with many opportunities to serve and have fun.

Morgan Marietti, service-learning scholar and Merle Colton Bennion Fellow, will be studying abroad in Vienna, Austria, in a graduate program. Her undergraduate degree is in health promotion and education. Morgan says, “Through working with the Bennion Center, I’ve been able to learn about myself and become the person I am today. The center has taught me the importance of working in a timely and effective way with people, groups and community partners of all types.”

Mikeala Mokofisi, service-learning scholar and coordinator of education and advocacy programs, is earning her bachelor’s degree in mass communications. She is taking time off before applying to grad school next year. Mike says, “The Bennion Center has empowered me to hone my love and passion for social justice and inequity education. I have been able to see how much we, simply as students, can accomplish in our communities and truly make an impact in people’s lives, and impact the policies and practices of our various societal systems.”

Jon Ng, treasurer, will begin working after earning his undergraduate degree in mathematics. From his first Alternative Spring Break trip to his current position on the student board, Jon has had a lot of fun through the Bennion Center.

Xuan Phan, service-learning scholar and site team leader for the America Reads program at Mountain View Elementary, will serve at the Aids Project Los Angeles as an Alumni Bennion Summer Fellow after graduating with her undergraduate degree in human development & family studies. She says, “I enjoyed growing as a student leader over the years. I’ve met many amazing people along the way and have been blessed to have such great experiences and opportunities at the Bennion Center. It has helped me to become the person I am today.”

Ryan Price, service-learning scholar and student programs co-chair, is graduating with a bachelor’s of science in physics. He will be attending graduate school at Wayne State in Michigan. He says, “Most of my best college memories have to do with the Bennion Center…and the majority of my personal growth has come from my experiences within the center.”

Maia Taylor, coordinator of environmental stewardship programs, is looking for a compatible graduate program in apiary science after earning her bachelor’s degree in environmental studies. She intended to go to school, stay in the background, and earn a degree without becoming attached. After two years, Maia began to seriously consider dropping out of college. She found herself working as a service-learning TA. She says, “I wasn’t sure I’d have the time to devote to service, work, and my studies but quickly learned that not only was I able to, but once I’d started, it was even easier to find time to serve. I can say with some amount of confidence that I without the Bennion Center, I would not have made it through my undergraduate degree, or if I had, it would have been quietly, without friends, and without feeling like I’ve filled my time with worthwhile activities.”

Drew Thompson, development co-chair, is graduating with his bachelor’s of science in biophysics. Before starting medical school in the Bay Area, Drew is going on a bike tour through Utah, up to Idaho and on to California. He says, “The Bennion Center moves like a mountain down an assembly line, passing from one hand to the next one stone at a time. I’m glad to have lent my hand, and as Whitman writes, “I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.”

Bryce Williams, service-learning scholar and external outreach coordinator, will enter the U’s educational leadership and policy graduate program after graduating with his bachelor’s of social work. He says: “The Bennion Center has helped me become the person I am today. It has given me a greater sense of community and has shaped my future career goals. Not only has the Bennion Center been a place for leadership and growth, but those involved with the Bennion Center have become my second family.”

Kody Colvin
Michelle Doong
John Eversole
Kendall Fischer
Alejandrina Garcia
Jessica Gilmore
Alex Griffin
Melissa Gutierrez
June Hiatt
Katie Hobbs
Sara Hugentobler
Clint Hugie
Yasmeen Hussain
Caroline Jones
Suzanne King
Ian Ledford
Aline Longstaff
Morgan Marietti
Andrea Medina
Mikaela Mokofisi
Michelle Mueller
Jonathan Ng
Lupe Ochoa
Xuan Phan
Ryan Price
Kelsey Pudlock
Andy Ross
Rahz Saeed
Christina Smithers
Maia Taylor
Drew Thompson
Andrada Tomoaia-Cotisel
Miguel Trujillo
Tyler Utley
Cameron Vakilian
Nichole Valerio
Bryce Williams
Adam Wolfe
Eric Wood
Kshama Vaghela

Action Alert – AmeriCorps Needs Your Help!

The Corporation for National and Community Service’s budget has already been slashed and their Learn and Serve and SeniorCorps programs have been cut. Help us save AmeriCorps from the same fate!

www.saveservice.org

30,000 AmeriCorps members serving Utah communities

$300,000 in education awards for University of Utah students

www.saveservice.org
Alternative Spring Break Program Expands

On the morning of March 19, twenty-two white minivans, full of students eager to spend their spring break serving, departed the Union Building parking lot. Since 1997, Alternative Spring Break (ASB) at the University of Utah has helped students engage in service in new and exciting settings.

Much of our excitement centered on the expansion of the ASB program, as two new trips were added to eight established trips to satisfy student demand. The trips range from volunteering at agencies in Hollywood to discussing the logistics of healthcare coverage in Canada.

A record-breaking 130 participants (120 students and 10 staff support) served 10 communities in the Western United States and Canada. Trips filled quicker than ever, even with two new trips. As the student coordinator, I feel honored to have had the opportunity to be part of this wonderful program in a year of successful expansion.

By Abby Howell-Dinger, Alternative Spring Break Coordinator

Earth Day Event is a Huge Success

“Volunteer participation is invaluable. In just one day, community gardens, open spaces, and public spaces can become a little bit greener, cleaner, and more welcoming.” – Ashley Edgette, Social Justice Gardens Program Director

On April 16, 2011, Ashley and more than 200 volunteers helped to do just that. Volunteers convened at one of four sites across Salt Lake: Bend-in-the-River, First Step House, Mountain View Elementary, and Amelone Island. After registration and a light breakfast, volunteers picked up a shovel, grabbed a rake, or wielded a hammer and participated in a variety of projects ranging from ecological restoration along the banks of the Jordan River to building and planting a community garden.

After logging 2.5 hours of service, volunteers met at the Bend-in-the-River and enjoyed free Subway sandwiches while reflecting on the projects accomplished and improvements made to Salt Lake’s west side neighborhoods.

Since 2002, the Bennion Center has hosted this service event at Bend-in-the-River. The Bend is a student-directed program in which U of U students work with Salt Lake City and local community members. They maintain Bend-in-the-River year round as an outdoor classroom for local schools. Over the last few years the Earth Day service event has grown to more than 200 volunteers, allowing the Bennion Center to expand to four different service sites this year and deepen the project’s impact on the community.

By Nick Rothacher, Student Programs Coordinator

Arts for Youth Organizes Successful Fundraiser

As student directors of the Bennion Center’s volunteer program Arts for Youth (AfY), we have amazing opportunities to serve our community while developing valuable leadership skills and having fun! Our trained volunteers plan and teach art classes for elementary school children. The program’s goals are to guide artistic exploration, encourage creative expression, provide positive examples for young people, and promote respect for self, others, and the earth. This year we expanded the program from serving two after-school programs to three, Woodrow Wilson Elementary, Granite Park Middle School, and Lincoln Elementary.

With funding stretched among three schools, we were forced to turn down many of our volunteers’ lesson plan ideas, asking them to come up with activities involving cheap materials like paper and crayons. We felt terrible limiting our volunteers’ creativity and denying the children opportunities to try different art activities.

Our solution was to organize the program’s first fundraiser, the Arts for Youth Share the Love Showcase and Silent Auction. Students in the programs and the AfY volunteers created artistic pieces that were auctioned off at the showcase, which also featured live music, face-painting, and refreshments. The event was a huge success, raising more than $475. We plan to make this an annual event, so stay tuned for more details next school year!

By Carly Chapple & Kendall Fischer, Arts for Youth Program

Goldman Sachs volunteers serving at First Step House
Community Engagement Honored at Bennion Center Luncheon

Each year the Bennion Center sponsors a spring awards luncheon to recognize faculty who are significantly engaged in the community through their teaching and research. This year we also presented the two Bennion Center service awards at this event (see article on front page). Also, we recognized the U of U awardees of the Utah Campus Compact with one award in each group - students, community partners, departments or programs, and staff - whose community engagement has been exceptional. A special recognition for service in an administrative role went to Dr. John Francis, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, for his long-time support of the Bennion Center on the advisory board and various center committees.

The Distinguished Faculty Service award honors a faculty member who has demonstrated a commitment to the campus or community through a life of active, unpaid public and community service. The recipient receives $1,000 to donate to a charity through a generous gift by Mr. and Mrs. David Jabusch. This year’s recipient, the 12th since the award’s inception, was Dr. Marissa Diener, Associate Professor of Family and Consumer Studies, College of Social and Behavioral Science.

The Public Service Professorship is awarded annually to help a faculty member strengthen learning experiences and opportunities tied to civic engagement and to foster stronger partnerships with the local community. The 2011–2012 Public Service Professorship was awarded to Dr. Enrique Aleman, Associate Professor of Education, Leadership and Policy, College of Education. Dr. Aleman’s award will support the further development of a university-school-community partnership named Leapp, Learning and Policy Partnership, which is housed at the Sill Center on campus. Scholars shared great moments as well as ideas for their Integrative Service Projects (ISPs).

As we end this academic year and prepare for another, leadership in the Service-Learning Scholars program turns over. A special thanks to Morgan Marietti, Katie Hobbs, Alexi Nichols, and Lupe Ochoa for their hard work. The team did an amazing job coordinating retreats, activities, and socials that helped service-learning scholars become better acquainted and provided them ways to further engage in service.

For example, this semester’s retreat was a huge success! It included activities like Knitting for Newbies and gardening at the Sill Center on campus. Scholars shared great moments as well as ideas for their Integrative Service Projects (ISPs).

The semester ended with a wonderful banquet dedicated to the students who are graduating this spring. Nineteen graduated as service-learning scholars and two with a certificate of accomplishment. These 21 graduates completed over 9,000 hours of service while in the program. Thank you, seniors, for your dedication and hard work. Together we can change the world.

Among outstanding graduating seniors’ ISPs were these: Katie Hobbs created a Bennion Center student-directed program with two senior centers downtown in which students will lead senior-focused exercise programs; Mikaela Mokofisi and Alejandrina Garcia worked with the LIED and Capitol West Boys & Girls Club students about climate change while increasing their knowledge of the scientific process through interactive training modules for after-school science programs; Mikaela Mokofisi and Alejandrina Garcia worked with the LIED and Capitol West Boys & Girls Club students in various self-expression workshops to empower youth and encourage them to reconstruct and redefine their own identities, instead of relying on media or society labels.

We also congratulate the incoming 2011-2012 Service-Learning Scholars Leadership Team, which consists of Alexi Nichols, Becca Long, Sierra Trejos, and Kylee Gardner. A great year lies ahead!

By Lupe Ochoa, Scholars Leadership Team Member
Service House Wraps Up Service and Friendship-Filled Year

On April 28, the Bennion Center’s annual Project Youth event brought more than 600 sixth graders from Title I schools to the U of Utah campus to experience a bit of college life and inspire them to pursue higher education. More than 180 volunteer mentors helped that day; an additional 65 session volunteers included service-learning faculty, students, and staff. Forty-one educational sessions were held by programs such as environmental studies and modern dance, engineering and medicine, architecture, and creative writing. The day culminated with a power rally in the Union Ballroom where Utah football coach Kyle Whittingham and mascot Swoop, student athletes, student leaders, and other inspiring speakers talked to the children about overcoming challenges and achieving academic success.

Project Youth is the Bennion Center’s longest-running student-directed program. Students collaborate with the Salt Lake School District and university departments to plan activities designed to spark interest within children who may not consider college an option. It also provides meaningful mentoring experiences for college students while engaging faculty and programs in community outreach and highlighting what the U offers students and community.

Go to http://vimeo.com/23165031 to view a video of activities from this year’s event.

By Christy Tobolski, Public Relations Coordinator

Project Youth Exposes Title I Students to the U

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By Christy Tobolski, Public Relations Coordinator

Monteverde, Costa Rica: Travel as a Political Act

On March 17, twenty-one undergraduate and 7 graduate students boarded a plane bound for the Monteverde Region of Costa Rica as participants of a Bennion Center-Study Abroad-Political Science collaboration. When they arrived on Friday at dawn, the magic began! In its second year, this political science (undergrad)/public administration (grad) course fulfills 3 credits of international and service-learning requirements.

The course, Community Development in the Global South, culminated in Costa Rica over spring break and proved to be wildly successful. It was an impactful, educational, and fun adventure filled with double rainbows, walks in primary forest, and community service with village volunteers. Given the course’s international aid focus and foundation, students explored the topics of women in development, agro-ecology, conservation biology, fair trade agriculture, and eco-tourism -- both in the U's classroom and Costa Rica's outdoor one. Academic readings and discussions were followed by visits to Costa Rica communities, organizations, and cooperatives that specialize in these areas of development.

We compared readings to first-hand experiences and discussed possible solutions to traditional international aid challenges and failures.

After a week of zipping in the canopy, learning about Costa Rica's first female president, catching a glimpse of the elusive quetzal, and sweating with new friends while painting, hammering, and scrubbing, we returned home. Our adventure may be over, but not the magic. What we shared and learned as an amazing group continues. The way we travel will, hopefully, be forever changed.

Thank you to everyone who participated. I enjoyed sharing with you and learning from you. Those interested in next year's course, please contact the Bennion Center!

By Gina Russo, Assistant Director and Student Programs Manager

Guadalupe School Comes to the U

On March 3, 2011, ninety-six students from Guadalupe School’s first-fourth grades were brought to the University of Utah for the 1st annual Guadalupe to the U Day. This event was our Integrative Service Project, a requirement for the Bennion Center’s Service-Learning Scholars program.

In the morning students were separated by grade level before heading off to classes related to their current classroom curriculum in subjects like geology, biology, and math. In the afternoon the children were treated to a campus tour by the U of U orientation leaders and served lunch while various students from groups all over campus spoke. Following, the children had opportunities to attend other sessions led by the physics department and College of Physics Department and Urban Planning; to participate in activities like breakdancing with U students; to take a tour of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts; and, of course, to experience service with the Bennion Center. The ultimate goal was to have these children realize that college is an option for them and that what they are learning is applicable to their future. We also wanted them to know that college is fun.

Guadalupe to the U was recently awarded the honor of Community Service Program of the Month by the Intermountain Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls for March 2011. This group represents seven states and some areas of Canada. Guadalupe to the U will now be passed on to the National Association of College and University Residence Halls to be considered for national honors.

By Bryce Williams & June Hiatt, University Service Corps Co-Chairs

A Project Youth volunteer from the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine leading children through a hands-on activity

Guadalupe School student leader Michael Sayer with students from Guadalupe School

Service House Residents

BC student leader Michael Sayer with students from Guadalupe School

2010-2011 Service House Residents

2010-2011 Service House Residents
2010-2011 has been a hallmark year at the Bennion Center, highlighted by the Carnegie designation that identifies the University of Utah as a “community engaged” institution. We are grateful for the interdisciplinary task force comprised of faculty members and administrators from the Bennion Center and University Neighborhood Partners that secured the classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This group evidenced the U’s deep and broad commitment to service-learning, local outreach, and community partnerships.

With outstanding student leadership and an incredible staff and advisory board, we have the structure and support to launch us into our 25th year. Part of this structure is a comprehensive strategic plan that is poised to increase our student outreach and involvement, enlist more faculty members in engaged teaching and learning, deepen the institutionalization of community engagement across campus, and make real impacts and reciprocal partnerships throughout the community.

Looking forward, we will augment the great tradition that Lowell Bennion established for engaging students in the larger community. His legacy is alive and well. We so appreciate the donors and other supporters who sustain this legacy through the center. We are constantly mindful of the tremendous responsibility he has left us.

By Linda Dunn, Director