

Events, Media and Promotion Common Ground Center

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**Provost's Sustainability Internship Program: Kresge Common Ground Center
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Abstract

The Common Ground Center serves UCSC's goals to educate and encourage student participation around the subjects of environmental and social justice. As the Provost's Sustainability Intern my role was to support Common Ground Center's goals mainly through my work in event planning, media and promotion. Through the use of templates and weekly meetings, promotional goals were met to serve the needs of the center for higher visibility and increased student/community participation. Alternative forms of education and communication practices permeated the interactions and environment at Common Ground. All of the skills acquired throughout the year culminated in our largest event, UCSC Bioneers, of which I was the lead student coordinator. The tasks and processes for my position have been documented, as to be passed on to future Common Ground Center interns.

Introduction

The Kresge Common Ground Center (CGC) is an organization on campus dedicated to environmental sustainability and social justice. The goal of the CGC is to provide education, and to create a space for dialogue, around current global and local issues having to do with social and environmental justice. Some of the main themes that CGC focuses on are: sustainable food systems, the climate change movement, indigenous rights, transformative activism, building local community, exploring consciousness in relation to building a sustainable future, inclusion of all race/class/genders, and intentional communities and ecovillages.

In bringing people together, stories can be shared, new ideas acquired and action plans created. The foundation of the work that CGC is doing is laid upon the relationships that have been built between students, staff, faculty, organizations and community members. What this looks like in practical terms is: multiple events throughout the year hosting speakers to activate students through story telling and dialogue; hosting weekly events, such as The World Café, where students can take the lead in discussing matters important to them; and service learning groups whereby students can participate in hands on ways to work towards a more sustainable and just future for all.

Common Ground Center is possibly best known for its use of alternative forms of education such as intergenerational learning, non-violent communication, peer-to-peer learning, interactive exercises and nature connection. Through these alternative pathways different stakeholders come together in search of solutions to common problems. According to Schiller and Cooper “Intergenerational conversations are a fundamental and crucial part of quality interactions that can lead to transformative action for a shared future” (2012, p. 28). Collaborative learning is a form of peer-to-peer learning whereby students work together teaching and learning from each other. Barkley, Cross and Major refer to this as exercises created specifically for groups or pairs that are intentional in the way that there is a purpose designed into the group work (2014). In this way the activities

are guided for a specific outcome, to create real solutions whereby students can immediately begin to take action in initiating change.

Description

My goals for this year were to aid in the expansion of CGC by way of: media/promotion to influence attendance for events; by increasing support through hiring and oversight of student paid positions; and by participating in a leadership role in the decision making and fund raising aspects. My most prominent role was a supportive role in event planning, media and hosting of events that supported campus wide goals towards sustainability and social justice. This was expressed through creating the bi-weekly newsletter, overseeing social media outlets, such as Facebook, as well as, promotion through media by way of public service announcements (PSA's), and press releases. The full spectrum event planning aspect of this position manifested with the Bioneers Conference, of which I was the main student coordinator.

Through hosting events CGC was able to reach out to hundreds of students on campus and hundreds of members of the local community; bringing awareness to myriad critical issues. In order to strengthen the support of CGC we hired four student staff interns for the positions of print/video media, events coordinator, community engagement and treasurer, of which I participated as a member of the hiring board and oversaw those positions throughout the year. Other opportunities within CGC came in the form of group facilitation of the service learning positions

offered through the Collaborative Learning class, also referred to as Community Action Teams (CAT's). I was also a member of the Student Board and Executive Committee. Through these two bodies I participated in grant writing and fund raising, as well as, to act as a liaison between the different stakeholders; this allowed for an integrated interaction and perspective as the yearlong intern for CGC.

CGC relies on grants for funding. The organization is in a phase of expansion, currently growing the number of events hosted, increasing the number of paid student positions, and cultivating on/off campus partnerships with other organizations. The grants that I co-authored for CGC were the Measure 43 grant and the Campus Sustainability Council Grant (CSC). CSC's mission statement is "to provide funding to registered UCSC student organizations for programs and events that create, implement, and monitor environmentally sound practices on campus" (CSC Mission Statement, 2014). The first grant that I co-authored was for Spring funding, particularly aimed at supporting the UCSC Bioneers event. This was an invaluable experience in understanding how to tailor grants so that they not only highlight the qualities for meeting the grant requirements but also in knowing how to be concise yet detailed in providing all of the necessary information.

Participating at CGC in such a broad yet detailed position enabled me to facilitate the long-range goals of CGC by acting as a centerpiece for all of the different happenings at the center. My goals of supporting CGC through media/promotion/event planning also came with my own personal goals of learning

how to manage the PR for an organization. As this was new to me there was much to be learned. For example, I became versed in how to write PSA's, press releases, verbiage for promoting events, and language used when communicating on behalf of an organization that has it's own brand. These are all very practical and applicable skills that were directed towards work that supported wider goals of bringing awareness to social and environmental issues and solutions. It is these skills that I will take with me beyond my academic career to continue to apply in the world of environmental sustainability and social justice. This experience has shown me the passion I have to connect people and create platforms by which trailblazers can share their work and inspire action in others.

The work that I participated in through CGC brought visionary leaders to campus whereby students and community members could be introduced to novel ideas and solutions to our local and global challenges. For example, at the UCSC Bioneers Conference we hosted speakers who covered themes such as deep nature connection, mentoring and culture repair; gender and sacred space; the climate justice movement; systems thinking; the power of leadership and social entrepreneurship to transform and heal our world; science of personal empowerment; the work that reconnects; ecovillages for global regenerative emergence; envisioning new humans and community; affordable student housing; racism in the contact zones; activism in the digital age; and wilderness rites of passage. I was also able to help facilitate and promote the yearlong speaker series which focused on themes such as Joanna Macy's work with "The Great Turning,"

highlighted leaders working on creating sustainable communities and that shared the philosophy of permaculture. Through this speaker series hundreds of students were exposed to the practical work being done in the world related to environmental and social regeneration.

Non-Traditional Education

Many alternative forms of education and communication were incorporated into my experience at CGC by way of classes, meetings and leadership positions. Intergenerational learning is a term to refer to learning across age boundaries. As the university setting can tend to be a very age specific place, the majority of students being between the ages of 18-22, there is not much opportunity to interact with people of different ages in classroom dialogue other than with professors. Yet it is a very different experience to hold discussions with people of many different ages, who converse more like peers, rather than in hierarchy. Being that the work of CGC revolves around social justice and environmental sustainability, the discussions happening are very important and are often related to the future of all life on the planet. Participating in intergeneration communication with CGC, through processes such as The World Café, I witnessed how the invigorated vision of youthfulness can meld with the wisdom and decisiveness of elders, making for a much more well-rounded vision when trying to solve for problems like how to move forward in this time of great change.

Collaborative learning is another form of sharing knowledge whereby student's work together teaching and learning from each other. According to Panitz, collaborative learning has been born out of a philosophy of honoring the individual's skills and contribution to a group (1999). The idea of collaborative learning is that there is an active engagement in the cultivation of information discovered by students; a sense of responsibility for incorporating knowledge into one's life within the greater experience of guided education. The open space forum is an example of peer-guided education. It is a process by which individuals in the class offer to lead small workshops on a topic of their choice. The idea of taking responsibility for transforming one's self through the vehicle of education inherently involves critical thinking and even scrutiny of what is being presented by the teacher; there is an element of the teacher and the student equally filling roles of learner and provider of information (Panitz, 1999). Essentially, collaborative learning seeks to shift away from the hierarchal structure of the current educational system by which teachers lecture at students, who rote memorize facts to be later regurgitated, with the effectiveness of incorporation of information measured through standardized testing.

Transformative education is an ongoing process by which new ideas are incorporated to shift previous beliefs or paradigms. This is facilitated through "critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs and habits of mind or points of view are based" (Mezirow, 1997, p.7). This is the type of learning that generally describes the life-long learning process, but can be applied to

academic education in the way that the status quo is called into question and students are encouraged to seek understanding beyond simply being told what is. According to Taylor, "It is the revision of a frame of reference in concert with reflection on experience that is addressed by the theory of perspective transformation—A paradigmatic shift" (2008, p. 5). This suggests that the process of transformative education is a highly personal one, as reflection on the personal experiences of self and others facilitates incorporation of new information that affects beliefs and understandings of the world. This is particularly important when working in the field of environmental and social justice where a large part of facilitating change comes with understanding complex relationships. Transformative learning theory also can play a part in igniting activism within individuals, as paradigm shifts can often be the catalyst for taking action.

Another element to transformative education is that it can take a more holistic approach to developing understanding in the way that interactions are not just measured on social and psychological merits, but also from a deeper spiritual perspective. It is the idea that understanding cultural relationships, which can help to promote positive social change, cannot be a secular experience. Taylor suggests that this depth of understanding is fostered through "storytelling on a personal and social level through group inquiry" (2008, p. 9). Through the process of storytelling and building connection the learner is able to "move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5).

Timeline

Example of Quarterly Schedule

Week 1	1 st Newsletter for Quarter out; Create Facebook Event Pages; Prepare and send PSA's for all speaker events; Student Board Meeting
Week 2	Prepare and send Press Releases; Executive Committee Meeting
Week 3	2 nd Newsletter; Student Board; Facebook Event Reminders
Week 4	Executive Committee
Week 5	3 rd Newsletter; Student Board
Week 6	Executive Committee; Facebook Event Reminders
Week 7	4 th Newsletter; Student Board
Week 8	Executive Committee; Facebook Event Reminders
Week 9	5 th Newsletter; Student Board
Week 10	6 th Looking Back Newsletter; Executive Committee

Fall:

- Event planning for Open Space event
- Interview and hire four student staff interns
- Participate/facilitate 5 student board meetings and 5 executive committee meetings
- Pre-schedule Facebook event reminders
- Send out 6 newsletters

Winter:

- Create and send all PSA's at beginning of the quarter

- Create most important press releases at beginning of the quarter
- Lead Fossil Free UC and Worldview Transformation community action teams
- Mid-quarter begin writing grant for CSC Spring round
- Start planning Bioneers
- Participate/facilitate 5 student board meetings and 5 executive committee meetings
- Create Facebook event pages and pre-schedule Facebook event reminders
- Send out 6 newsletters
- Oversee/coordinate student staff positions

Spring:

- Plan Bioneers: Fund raising, book speakers, press/promotion, space reservation, volunteers, merchandise, food vendors, evaluations
- Create and send all PSA's at beginning of the quarter
- Create most important press releases at beginning of the quarter
- Aid in the writing of CSC grant for academic year 2015-2016
- Lead Worldview Transformation community action team
- Participate/facilitate 5 student board meetings and 5 executive committee meetings
- Create Facebook event pages and pre-schedule Facebook event reminders
- Send out 6 newsletters

- Oversee/coordinate student staff positions
- Interview and hire for next year's PSI position

Project Stakeholders, Student & Mentor Roles

The stakeholders for this project included myself, my mentor David Shaw, the Student Board and Executive Committee, and Kresge staff such as Veronica Lopez-Duran and Pam Ackerman. David Shaw was the most involved in guiding my work, as he is one of the co-founders of CGC. Our relationship was based on mentorship, but as I became more independent in taking on tasks he was able to delegate more work to me. I believe this was very helpful for him as his work load at CGC is more than one person can handle so by delegating to me this allowed him the opportunity to focus where his energy was best fit and most needed.

As a member of the Student Board I was able to work in collaboration with my peers supporting the center through community outreach and generally filling in gaps where tasks needed attention. We were also able to act as a student leadership body, making decisions on how funding should be spent, collaborating on the grant writing process and how best to oversee student staff positions. The Executive Committee, which is the governing body made up of CGC founders and a few students, oversees the brand and interaction of CGC with the UCSC campus and beyond. In communicating on behalf of CGC it was very important to understand my role as a representative of the Executive Board.

I worked with Veronica Lopez-Duran on the financial aspects of what it takes to run an on-campus organization. She led me through understanding FOAPALS (different financial accounts), receiving funds from other departments, and parameters for grant funding. What was brought to my attention in my work with Veronica was how much time goes on behind the scenes to support CGC on the financial side of things. This was important to understand because ultimately the amount of funding CGC receives determines the number and size of events that can be hosted and the number of student staff possible for hiring. Pam Ackerman, who oversees student activities, helped to organize the renting of Town Hall for events; I worked closely with her on the Bioneers event. Other stakeholders were the students in my community action teams who relied on me to facilitate and direct the arc of the quarter as we explored the role of worldview on our interactions with others.

Much of what was done at CGC was funded by the previous years' CSC grant. There were also small amounts of funding provided by Kresge and the Measure 43 grant. When it came time to do Bioneers, the grant that I had co-authored to cover all of the expenses fell through on a technicality, so I raised funds from departments, colleges and student senates to cover our costs. This was a much more lengthy process than receiving funding from one source but nonetheless was a valuable exercise in finding funding sources and requesting funding.

Measurable Results

Results were measured by how many of the planned tasks were completed on time. For example, each quarter six newsletters were meant to go out bi-weekly. This goal was completed on time, with the number of newsletters exceeding six some quarters. I also set the measurable goal of increasing newsletter subscriptions by 100 people each quarter; this was done in collaboration with other CGC members, with a 200-person increase in Spring. PSA's were to be sent out for all speaker events at the beginning of the quarter. This was accomplished in Fall and Winter; in Spring only select PSA's were sent out with Bioneers and the Wiser Together World Café being of the highest priority. Press releases were meant to go out at the beginning of each quarter for every speaker event. This task did not happen in its entirety. The reasons for this were that for the first quarter I was not clear on the format of press releases and was not directed to the templates until Winter quarter. Also, press releases are a bit more time consuming and required feedback from my mentor, often going through 2-3 revisions. With up to ten events happening per quarter there wasn't the time to get press releases done for each event, but I did focus on the top 2-3 events each quarter to make press releases for. Email correspondence was a huge part of my job in PR; my goal was to provide responses within a 24-hour window. This was achieved the majority of the time, with a few exceptions during the really busy weeks.

From the beginning of the year and throughout I was to participate in the hiring and oversight of the student staff positions. This did happen, although due to

start of the year workload, hiring was pushed back a month from its intended schedule. We also saw some turn over for two of the positions so re-hiring was necessary mid-year. My role overseeing positions became more pronounced as the year went on, particularly during Spring quarter when I was able to delegate tasks involving Bioneers to the student staff. In relation to Bioneers we had set the goal of having 30 speakers, 200 attending guests, and raising \$3500. We were able to do all of these things with funding coming in at \$4500. Finally, I planned on attending 30 Student Board and Executive Committee meetings, all of which were achieved.

The work that I fulfilled in my role as events, media and promotion intern for CGC can be easily duplicated through use of the templates as well as looking over my yearlong work plan for planning out next years work and timeline. It is my intention that this position transition as smoothly as possible through meeting with the future PSI intern, in hopes that her learning curve can be much less than mine was. CGC events start right at the beginning of Fall quarter so meeting during the summer to pass the torch to the future intern will be integral in providing maximum support for CGC come the next academic school year.

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Thank You !!!