

Outreach and Events Common Ground Center

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Abstract

The Kresge Common Ground Center is an on campus organization that hosts events, speaker series, and supports student-led organizations that promote social and environmental change. The ultimate goal of Common Ground Center is to educate students and provide an open space for dialogue centered around social and environmental justice issues. As the Provost Sustainability Intern, my role was to support Common Ground Center through sustainable event planning and outreach. The equity aspect of sustainability was what Common Ground Center focused on because the Center realized the necessity to create opportunities for all diverse groups of people and backgrounds. In order to do this, I worked together with the Executive Committee and Student Board to create equitable events that promoted the work of Common Ground Center. Two major events that I worked on throughout the year included the World Cafe, a weekly potluck of food and ideas, and the Bioneers Conference, a two day social and environmental justice conference. Moreover, I communicated with other organizations on campus that aligned with the goals of Common Ground in hopes to make the Center more inclusive by inviting them to co-collaborate / co-host our events. By collaborating with other on campus organizations, we came together in search of solutions to problems we faced in the common from a diverse set of perspectives.

Introduction

The goal of Common Ground Center is to “create culture change for social justice, the environmental regeneration, and economic viability. We act as a catalyst and facilitator of systemic change through undergraduate action- education, research, advocacy, and civic engagement” (Kresge College). Common Ground focuses on the need for responsible and sustainable solutions to problems we face in common via educating students and providing an

open space of dialogue centered around social and environmental justice issues. When discussing sustainability, Common Ground Center focuses on the aspect of equity. Equity refers to fairness and the right that all individuals should have similar opportunities and the basic tools needed to live a quality life.

When looking at UCSC's Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus, Common Ground Center aligns with the theme regarding social and environmental justice. One vision from the blueprint is, "interconnection between campus and community sustainability organizations" (Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus). This is a shared vision with Common Ground Center, since the Center strives to be as inclusive as possible, by supporting a number of different organizations with diverse goals and perspectives. These organizations include: the World Cafe, Take Back the Tap, the Kresge Garden, and Friends of the Community Agroecology Network. Moreover, there are many on campus organizations that align with the subject of sustainability, like the Sustainability Office or the People of Color Sustainability Collective, but there is not a lot of collaboration between these groups on campus. Therefore, there is a big opportunity to connect these groups, which is something that Common Ground Center strives to do by inviting these organizations to coordinate and co-host Common Ground events, like the Bioneers Conference. Ultimately, this will increase perspectives when planning the event, thus making the event more diverse by appealing to a wide range of audiences. Additionally, collaboration with other groups is vital when discussing solutions to problems that we face in the common, because when we explore different opinions and voices, we can then create new innovations.

The second vision from the blueprint in regards to social and environmental justice is "to support solidarity between students and service" (Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus). In order

to do this, there should be more open spaces for discussions between students, staff, faculty, and community members. Common Ground Center was built upon this vision and believes in empowering students to take action by discussing issues involving sustainability, health, and the well being of the UCSC campus and beyond. One very important event that we put on weekly was the World Cafe. The goal of World Cafe was to engage people in conversations that matter by bringing people together from different backgrounds and age groups to share food, tea, and dialogue in a safe environment (The World Cafe). Each week there was a different topic that encouraged thought provoking conversations. Some examples of topics we have had in the past include: Climate Change, Living Simply, Time Management, and much more!

In addition, the UCSC Bioneers Conference, a two day conference with speakers and workshop leaders who are dedicated to social and environmental justice, was an open space to further discuss problems that we faced in the common. The event was free and open to the public, and was a great opportunity to connect the work of students at UCSC with community members, and host a place for them to discuss these topics.

Project Description

Goal Statement:

The goals of my project were to help promote and grow Common Ground Center. Specifically, I aimed to create systems and processes that were necessary to make all the programs and events hosted by Common Ground more sustainable in regards to equity. In order to complete this goal, I strengthened our relationship with other on and off campus organizations by reaching out to them in hopes that they would collaborate or co-host events with us. This in

turn increased diversity and perspectives at our events, and overall make it a more inclusive space. Additionally, I created greater interconnectedness across all campus sustainability organizations and with the Santa Cruz community by increasing outreach on and off campus. I desired to create successful outreach strategies that would stick with Common Ground Center and enable it to grow more once my position as PSI is over.

Project Objectives:

This year through the PSI program, my first objective was to build strong relationships, communication, and capacity within the Common Ground Student Board and Executive Committee. I achieved this through overseeing the hiring and oversight of student paid positions, who would make up the Student Board. The Student Board was the main decision maker for all Common Ground Center activities. Additionally, attaining my objective required me to participate in 5 Common Ground Center Student Board meetings and 5 Executive Committee meetings a quarter. Participation was defined as coordinating and facilitating the student board bi-weekly meetings, as well as facilitating two executive meetings. I successfully completed this task except during spring quarter, because the Executive Committee stopped meeting bi-weekly due to the capacity for staff members to meet. Moreover, through these two bodies I participated in grant writing and acted as a mediator between the two different groups to ensure that all ideas were heard and that a fair census was reached regarding any decisions that needed to be made.

My second objective was to co-create and participate in events or activities hosted / co-hosted by the Common Ground Center. Major events included UCSC Bioneers, World Cafe, University Cafe, and the Ecovillage (there will be 6 small events and 2 big events a quarter for

Common Ground Center). The two major events that I had a prominent role in helping create and host were the World Cafe and the UCSC Bioneers Conference. Specifically, my role for the World Cafe included acting as the main coordinator for the World Cafe leadership team. Duties for this included creating the weekly topic, coming up with questions, helping facilitate the conversation, and overseeing the other students on the team as well. I successfully completed this during fall and winter quarter, but during spring quarter we acquired two World Cafe interns. I trained the interns and taught them how to host the Cafe and facilitate the conversations. I co-hosted two World Cafes with them and they hosted the rest of the spring quarter Cafes on their own. In regards to Bioneers, I was the main student coordinator and my obligations were to attend the weekly Bioneers planning committee meetings, help facilitate the meetings, invite on and off campus organizations to the events, secure the food vendors and food donors, collect money for honorariums from different departments, and to help the day of the conference with any logistics.

My third objective was to boost participation by strengthening media outreach for any events, speakers, or activities hosted or co-hosted by the Common Ground Center. I aimed to increase the number of subscribers for the newsletter to 1500 and facebook members to 1000. Moreover, I promoted all events via the Facebook page by creating separate event pages for them and scheduling the posts a couple days before the events to appear on the Common Ground Center Facebook page. In addition, I created bi-weekly newsletters to update members on the different events and opportunities that Common Ground had to offer. I achieved this objective during fall and part of winter quarter, but mid winter quarter we hired two new media coordinators. The media coordinator took on this task and began managing the Facebook page,

newsletter, and any other social media outlets. Thus, this objective was something I let go of during the end of winter quarter and spring quarter.

Impact/needs statement:

This project ensured that Common Ground Center was sustainable in regards to equity by making sure that all outreach and events hosted by the Center were inclusive and accessible to an array of audiences. This was done by ensuring that all student groups under Common Ground's branch- Kresge Garden Coop, the World Cafe, Take Back the Tap, and Friends of the Community Agroecology Network - worked together towards the common mission, which was to create culture change for social and environmental justice. My project also promoted intergenerational learning, since our events were open to the public and heavily promoted and attended by Santa Cruz Community Members. For example, the Bioneers conference aimed to engage both on and off campus communities. By doing this, we bridged the work of students to the work of community members and created a space for students to further explore topics they found interesting with visionaries and activist working in our community. Thus, both students and community members positively benefited from my project, because both groups got to experience a type of collaboration that they would not typically experience. Additionally, since events were intergenerational we had the chance to hear voices from past and current generations, which was necessary in order to make events equitable. Ultimately, the work of Common Ground Center and its guiding values and principles such as, inclusivity and diversity, intergenerational learning, collaboration, compassion and empathy, regeneration community design, were what made Common Ground Center unique. All of those values were an important

component in sustainability because in order for outreach and events hosted by Common Ground Center to be sustainable, they must first be equitable to all individuals. Often times many groups ignore the social aspect of sustainability and instead focus on the ecological or economics part of it, but Common Ground Center thrives to focus on equity because it is essential to create opportunities for all diverse groups of people and backgrounds to enjoy.

Project Timeline:

Fall:

- Participate/ Facilitate 5 student board meetings and 5 executive meetings
- Interview and hire 3 student staff positions
- Send out 6 newsletters
- Pre-schedule all events on Facebook and create Facebook event pages
- Develop a World Cafe leadership team and develop topics and guiding questions for winter quarter World Cafe
- Write grant for Measure 43 winter round

Winter:

- Participate/ Facilitate 5 student board meetings and 5 executive meetings
- Send out 6 newsletter
- Pre-Schedule all events on Facebook and create Facebook event pages
- Attend and host 10 World Cafes
- Interview and hire a Media Coordinator position

- Help write and review CSC grant for winter round
- Student Coordinator for Bioneers Conference:
 - Create Bioneers planning team and meet weekly
 - Book Kresge Town Hall
 - Invite on and off campus organizations to table
 - Create PSA
 - Write and present SUA grant

Spring:

- Participate/ Facilitate 5 student board meetings
- Train 2 World Cafe interns and help co-host first 2 World Cafe's with them
- Attend 6 Bioneers Planning Committee Meetings
- Student Coordinator for Bioneers Conference:
 - Create Press Release for Bioneers
 - Speakers, workshop leaders, performers, and those tabling are booked and confirmed
 - Secure Food Vendors and Food Donors
 - Collect donations of \$100 for honorariums from different departments. These departments included College 8, Feminist Studies, and Environmental Studies
 - Attend Bioneers! (April 23-24)
- Help write and review CSC grant for Spring Time

Project Stakeholders, Student & Mentor Roles:

The stakeholder involved in my project were the whole UCSC community, including students, faculty, staff, and the Santa Cruz community. We reached out to all these communities so members of all ages could attend our events or volunteer via flyering, email, the newsletter, the Facebook and Ning Page, and other social media outlets. Specifically, I focused on outreach with other on campus organizations in order to make Common Ground more inclusive. I did this by emailing on campus organizations and asking them to collaborate or co-host any events with us. I also created newsletters and updated our facebook page, so that community members could always be updated about Common Ground Center and see our future events.

The stakeholders involved in the actual execution of my project include:

- David Shaw: My mentor and Co-founder of Common Ground Center. David Shaw was responsible for holding regular meetings with me, helping me create a work plan, and guiding my work and any questions that I had.
- The Student Board: Comprised of 4 paid student staff positions and the PSI (myself). The Student Board essentially made all the decisions for Common Ground Center. This included deciding how we spent money, what events to host, who to hire for the team, and any other decisions that needed to be made.
- The Executive Committee: Supported Common Ground Center and the Student Board. They also oversaw the brand and any interaction with Common Ground and the rest of the UCSC Campus and beyond. The committee was comprised of 3 faculty members - Christine King, David Shaw, and Ben Carson (The Kresge Provost). There were also two students on the committee, which were Kevin Ulibarri (Treasurer) and myself (Natalie Hazrati)

As PSI, I was responsible for helping co-create and co-host events, as well as outreach. I also communicated with other campus organizations and sent out the bi-weekly newsletter. Lastly, much of what was done at Common Ground center was funded by the previous year's grant from the Campus Sustainability Council. I also wrote a grant for Measure 43, which we unfortunately did not get. I also helped co-write a grant for the Student Union Assembly, and the winter round for the Campus Sustainability Council grant. Metrics for the success of these grants and further details will be discussed in the next section.

7. Measurable Results *200-400 words*

The Student Board and Executive Committee:

To measure the success of this I was to attend 5 Student Board meetings and 5 Executive Committee meetings a quarter. I attended all 10 meetings a quarter during both fall and winter, but during spring quarter the Executive Committee stopped meeting due to the capacity of the staff to meet. Moreover, I hoped to build a sense of connection with the student board, and during winter quarter I thought we were lacking in this because there was little to no communication between all the students. To fix this, we did evaluations at the end of winter quarter, and students were asked to say what was working for them and what challenges they were facing. We reviewed these evaluations at the start of spring quarter, and after having a productive discussion, communication has increased since. Student Board members then began to respond to their emails in a timely manner, were in contact with one another, and kept the rest

of the Student Board up to date on their individual projects.

Newsletter:

To measure the success of this I was to send out 6 bi-weekly newsletters a quarter, which was something that I completed during fall and part of winter quarter. After mid winter quarter, the two new media coordinators took on the role of sending out the newsletters. Newsletter were sent to 1,177 subscribers bi-weekly with an opening average of about 30%.

Grants:

The first grant I wrote was the Measure 43 grant and I was asking for \$3,000. \$1,500 was to hire a World Cafe staff position and the other \$1,500 was to hire a professional graphic recorder.

Unfortunately, we did not receive any funding from this grant. The second grant I helped write was for the Student Union Assembly asking for \$5,150 for the UCSC Bioneers Conference. We were awarded with \$2,000 that was allocated for honorariums for guests speakers. The third grant I helped co-wrote along with our Treasurer for Common Ground was for the Campus Sustainability Council grant and we were asking for \$3,500. \$2,500 was for the UCSC Bioneers Conference, \$500 was for a World Cafe intern, and the remaining \$500 was for office supplies. We were awarded \$200.

The World Cafe:

In regards to the World Cafe, I was suppose to attend all 10 World Cafes during fall and winter quarter and during winter quarter, and I was the main host and facilitator for the Cafe. Here is a look at the topics / questions I created for winter quarter:

1. January 4th: The World Cafe: What makes for a good conversation?
2. January 11th: Food & Water / Take Back the Tap - Host: Cristal Gonzalez
3. January 18th: MLK Holiday
4. January 25th: Time - how do we focus on what matters? How do we set priorities?
5. February 1st: Interculturality, Community & Agroecology: - Host: Liz Lee

6. February 8th: Less Is More: How might “living simply” contribute to our health and happiness? - Host: Cecile Andrews
7. February 15th: Presidents Day Holiday
8. February 22nd: Digital Detox: How Might Our Society Be Addicted to Communication Technology?
9. February 29th: Ritual and Ceremony: What are your personal practices? How might ritual and ceremony add value to our lives and communities in times of joy, grief, and renewal?
10. March 7th: Social Movements: What is your theory of social change?

An average of about 10 people came to each World Cafe during winter quarter. We got this number, but counting how many people attended each World Cafe and then dividing that number by 10.

Bioneers Conference:

I was the main student coordinator for the Bioneers Conference and my duties included dealing with all of the logistics of the conference as well as finding and securing organizations to table. To begin, I secured one food vendor for the first day of Bioneers, Vivas, and I secured two food vendors for the second day, Vivas and Zameen Mediterranean Cuisine. I also received food donations for breakfast from the Bagelry, Grocery Outlet, and Staff of Life. I received this by writing a letter asking for a donation and discussing what the Bioneers Conference is and why it is important. Additionally, I created and sent out a Press Release to 13 organizations with newsletters on campus, and to 3 newspapers in Santa Cruz (Good Times, Santa Cruz Sentinel, and Santa Cruz Weekly). Moreover, I emailed different departments on campus asking for a donation of \$100 for honorariums for our guest speakers. I was successful in collecting a total of \$300 from the College 8, the Feminist Studies department, and the Environmental Studies department.

Also, I sent out emails asking different on and off campus organizations to table and we got a total of about 18 organizations to table at the event. Some examples of off campus organization

that participated included: Santa Cruz Climate Action Network, Citizen's Climate Lobby, Romero Institute, Sprout Up, and Hilltromper. Example of on campus organizations included: Fossil Free UC, the UCSC Arboretum, Banana Slugs for Animals, and Sustainability Studies.

8. References:

Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus. (n.d.). Retrieved May 24, 2016, from

<http://www.blueprint.envirolug.org/>

Common Ground Center. (n.d.). Retrieved May 24, 2016, from

<http://kresge.ucsc.edu/commonground/>

The World Cafe. (n.d.). Retrieved May 24, 2016, from <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

9. Appendices:



The check-in table for the Bioneers Conference, with Media coordinator Mindy Nguyen (left) and student volunteer Erika Scott (right).



All the organizations tableting for the Bioneers Conference!



The podium where the plenaries were held.

The Press Release that I created for the UCSC Bioneers Conference:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t-OO8CiDkPyZf5aczL0lkpsMSoadGmLKieIN6DMdETs/edit?usp=sharing>

The Public Service Announcement that I created for the UCSC Bioneers Conference:

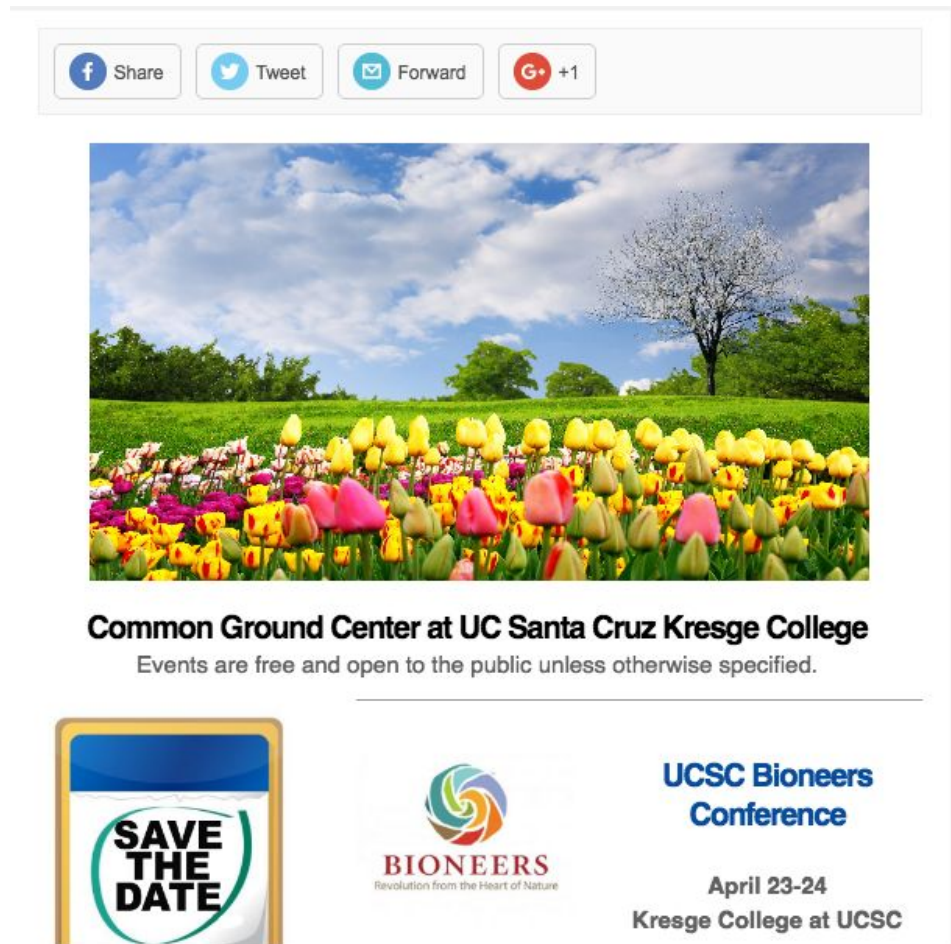
https://docs.google.com/a/ucsc.edu/document/d/1tQGRn7Esc9nY8t8vovEYtzfk_dJDOujBHFIXmtFuGwo/edit?usp=sharing

The Common Ground Facebook Page that I help manage:

<https://www.facebook.com/commongroundcenter/>

The Common Ground Center Ning Page that I help manage. We also used this site to heavily promote the UCSC Bioneers Conference:

<http://commonground.ning.com>



A newsletter I created at the beginning of winter quarter



The last World Cafe of winter quarter - "What is your Theory of Social Change"