CityQuest 2009
Post-Event Review

Owen Sallee
Coordinator for Global and Urban Involvement

Spring, 2010
Description

- On the Saturday before the start of Fall Quarter classes, all new SPU students are invited to participate in a day of community service activities in teams with classmates from their University Seminar course. Following a morning kickoff rally featuring encouraging words and musical performers, students are transported to work projects around Seattle. The day concludes with group debriefing discussions facilitated by student team leaders as the group returns to campus.

Goals and Vision

- CityQuest serves as a strong first exposure to the SPU mission “to engage the culture and change the world.”
  - CityQuest provides an opportunity for cultural engagement; students experience first-hand the work of a variety of community-serving agencies through which ongoing involvement has the potential to change the world.

- CityQuest provides a meaningful connection between students, faculty, and community, creating opportunities for ongoing academic and service connections.
  - Student participation in the CityQuest event and ongoing service is increased through recruitment of Faculty USEM professors to participate in the project.
Statistics

Participants:
- 700 members of the SPU community, including over 550 new students (freshmen and transfer students), over 100 returning student leaders and 10 University Seminar faculty.
- 562 new students represent 72% of Seattle Pacific’s 2008 incoming new student class.
- 10 University Seminar faculty represent 29% of professors teaching this freshman cohort class (35 total).

Transportation: 20 chartered school busses

Sites served: 32
Benefits of Sponsorship: BECU

BECU contributed $8,500 toward CityQuest 2009. This generous support highlighted BECU’s support of Seattle Pacific University and its dedication to community engagement. In 2009 a portion of these funds were used to purchase digital video recorders to document the CityQuest experience and students’ ongoing volunteer work. These videos are available online at www.spu.edu/cityquest.

CityQuest has long been recognized as an important example of Seattle Pacific University’s commitment to engaging the culture and changing the world through practical community service. New students arrive at SPU excited to participate in their university’s spirit of service; the event is an important drawing factor that encourages students to understand and appreciate their new community.

Sponsors of CityQuest have the opportunity to identify with this event, demonstrating commitment to the community through the volunteer efforts of SPU’s students. CityQuest offers wide exposure for sponsors; the event attracts a significant percentage of SPU’s new student population and serves more than 30 agencies around Seattle.

Potential avenues for sponsorship include full or partial underwriting of the event’s cost or donation of products or services. For example, donation items might include:

- Lunches or bottled water
- T-shirts or apparel
- Transportation to service sites
- Incentives to promote faculty participation
- Rally event product sample give-away items
CityQuest begins with a rally in Martin Square, located in the heart of campus. Students gathered early before the event to enjoy the music of local band Joslynn's Territory. Later, Owen Sallee, John Perkins Center Coordinator for Global and Urban Involvement encouraged the group to see their work on this particular day as a contribution to the much bigger work of community development going on across Seattle.

“These are big goals that can’t be accomplished in a one-shot effort – they require ongoing work, trusting relationships built over time, and commitment that’s in it for the long-haul.

“Everyone’s looking for purpose, impact and meaning. We find what we’re looking for when we put our work in perspective and see it for what it is: One piece as part of God’s big-picture plan.

“I pray that you’ll take a chance today to look around, see the bigger picture of what’s going on, and look for ways you can make today a starting point toward an ongoing connection to God’s work in Seattle.”

One freshman student remarked, “This was a fantastic event! It was my favorite part of orientation because it communicated to me that I was here at SPU to serve the community. I love that that’s how we started our freshman year.”
Individual Impact
After CityQuest 2008, students responded to an online survey. These are some of their thoughts:

What impact did this service have on you? On the community? What changed?

“I learned a lot about the fact that there are a lot of different cultures in just one city! The community was hopefully impacted in a positive way by being encouraged to sign up at the fitness center and stay healthy! I’m not sure what actually changed in the community as our task for the afternoon was more to ‘plant seeds.’ We were not able to see the results but I’m sure that there were many and will still be many to come.”

“It was great to serve, but the best part was the fellowship in the name of service. Without the other students it wouldn’t have been the same experience for me. People were walking and biking past, thanking us and telling us how important what we were doing really is.”

“It really opened my eyes that at a hospital it’s not just the doctors and medical care providers that make things possible. Even the maintenance group for the grounds makes an impact! Without these people the community of the hospital would not be able to enjoy the aesthetics of the grounds! We were able to clean up the grounds and make the place generally more presentable.”

“The work project was an excellent opportunity to get to know my UPod better while serving.”

“It was a massive culture shock. I learned how different races interact with each other, and that we need to be more respectful.”

“If I gained anything from CityQuest, it would be greater understanding of the racial problems that are still prevalent in our world today. I have no doubt that the African American Reach and Teach Health Ministry greatly benefited from our help, and I was very happy to serve them.”
“It made me feel like I could actually be involved and change something in my community.”

“Throughout the experience I was able to meet many new people and serve with them which helped me feel welcomed into the Seattle community and SPU.”

“We helped the staff work more efficiently. I hope to go back [to serve as] a tutor.”

“It wasn’t a huge ‘life-changer,’ but it was awesome to be in community with my group members, working for a cause together. Pulling ivy probably didn’t have a huge immediate impact on the community around Seattle, but it helps a lot of people out in the future and saves tax dollars from being spent unnecessarily there.”

“This service allowed me to see the potential difference I can make in the near future. I realized that even a single individual can make a difference.”

“It was really cool to see a community working together to create something beautiful.”

“It showed me that restoring a park can help a community by preventing crime.”

“CityQuest helped me realize just how many opportunities there are to serve in our community. Almost anywhere you go, if you ask, there’s something you can do.”
Service Partners

In 2009, 32 agencies hosted CityQuest service teams:

- Associates in Cultural Exchange
- Ballard Boys and Girls Club
- Beacon Alliance of Neighbors
- Bread of Life Mission
- Burke-Gilman Trail at Sand Point
- Burke-Gilman Trail at Sand Point
- CoffeeTalk International Student Ministry at Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church
- Columbia Lutheran Home
- El Centro de la Raza
- Fremont Abbey Arts Center
- Friends of Cheasty Greenspace at Mt. View
- Friends of Hicks Lake
- Friends of Lewis Park
- Friends of Lincoln Park
- Friends of Saint Mark's Greenbelt
- Friends of the Burke Gilman Trail
- Green Seattle Partnership
- Lawton Elementary School
- Longfellow Creek Watershed Council
- Longfellow Creek Watershed Council
- Magnuson Park
- Nature Consortium
- Nature Consortium
- Operation Nightwatch
- Pioneer Human Services
- Quest Church
- Seattle Children's Hospital
- Seattle School District P-12 Inquiry-Based Science Program
- Taproot Theater
- The Friends of Interlaken Park
- The Friends of Interlaken Park
- Trolley Hill Park
- Trolley Hill Park
- Union Gospel Mission Men's Shelter
- Union Gospel Mission Youth Reachout Center, Hope Place
- World Concern
- Zion Preparatory Academy
Community Feedback

Based on the belief that those in the community are best-equipped to identify community needs and effective ways to help, CityQuest service projects were designed and supervised by Seattle-area community organizations. Each organization was encouraged to invite students to return to serve again with the organization, building ongoing connections between SPU students and the Seattle community.

Work projects included:

- Environmental restoration
- Community cleanup
- Facility maintenance
- Organization and cleaning
- Conversation with elderly individuals

In a 2008 post-event survey, site hosts made these comments:

“Besides having the best weather ever, the students were all focused and committed to the tasks at hand. We were able to save five large trees at the creek site that were in danger of being crowded out and taken over by invasive plants. The day was truly one of the most productive ever. Thank you!”

“Your students were a wonderful, motivated group and it was a pleasure for us to work with them!”

“I would hope we can invite SPU City Quest volunteers to help us next year!”

“This was one of the best organized [events] and had some of the best communication that we have had with large group volunteer events! Congratulations! It is getting better and better!”

“The students were fun, responsible and hard working. They made a real impact on our project. Thanks!”

“This program is the most wonderful thing for students to engage with community. Please keep it as a great pride for now and then.”

“One of my colleagues made a special effort to tell me that one of her students, a woman from Japan, was simply ecstatic about her experience at the party on Saturday and that she plans to come every Friday! The SPU students were a big hit! Professor Darrel's group gave our international guests a most wonderful time.”

“Thank you to all energetic SPU students who worked so hard at Lewis Park. This project actually brings students to engage with our community.”
Connecting Students, Faculty and Community

One of the important features of the CityQuest program is its ability to connect students and faculty in a group project before the start of classes. Throughout Welcome Week, students are grouped with their University Seminar classmates.

Students benefit from their professors’ presence during CityQuest; in 2006 a student remarked, “Our USEM professor came with us on CityQuest and I was impressed by that. I would encourage all USEM professors to join their class and set the example for their students.”

In a post-event survey, faculty members reflected on their participation in CityQuest:

“It was a great bonding experience for the class and they really appreciated having me there as the instructor. All in all [CityQuest was] a wonderful time for fellowship with great people.”

“Members of the class commented on how they found interacting with international students both meaningful and fulfilling. Indeed, several have already planned a return visit.”

“Hopefully, I can build on how international awareness cannot help but inspire compassion and empathy towards the world’s peoples.”

“This was such a wonderful experience for my class. It was heartwarming to see how eagerly and readily students interacted with attendees and readily engaged in the behind the scenes grunt-work both before and after the main event.”

“It was an excellent experience of growth for me.”

Benefits of faculty participation in CityQuest include:

- Stronger connections between faculty and students. Student-faculty interaction is an important component of freshmen retention.¹
- Enhanced USEM content, providing connection to real-world and community serving activities. Participation in community-serving activities related to course content has a significant impact on students’ vocational choice, academic success and self-efficacy.²
- Promotion of a lifestyle of service, instilling SPU signature values.³

---

