CityQuest 2010
Post-Event Review

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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 musical performers, and encouraging words from BECU and CityQuest representatives, 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 first exposure to the SPU mission “to engage the culture and change the world.”
  - CityQuest encourages 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:
- 730 members of the SPU community, including new students (freshmen and transfer students), nearly 40 returning student leaders and 17 University Seminar faculty.
- **670 new students represent 70% of Seattle Pacific’s 2010 incoming new student class.**
- 17 University Seminar faculty represent 46% of professors teaching this freshman cohort class (37 total).

**Transportation:** 20 chartered school busses

**Sites served:** 28
Community Partnership: BECU

BECU contributed $10,000 toward CityQuest 2010. This generous support highlighted BECU’s support of Seattle Pacific University and its dedication to community engagement.

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.

BECU’s sponsorship of CityQuest highlights the community commitments of both organizations. As new students learn about Seattle Pacific’s commitment to “engage the culture and change the world” through hands-on community involvement during CityQuest, they are simultaneously introduced to BECU’s commitment to service.

At the 2010 CityQuest kickoff rally, Community Affairs Manager Debbie Wege explained BECU’s lending practices, identifying particular ways in which BECU promotes community development through its work as a credit union. Students left the event with a better understanding of BECU’s desire to support a college workday as well as its commitment to long-term community health and economic growth.

BECU’s support of CityQuest is recognized publicly through:

- T-shirt printing
- Kickoff rally presentation
- Post-event informational booth
- Online recognition at www.spu.edu/cityquest
**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 the International Praise Band, members of a local church also hosting a CityQuest work project. Later, Owen Sallee, John Perkins Center Coordinator for Global and Urban Involvement encouraged the group to understand the one-day work of CityQuest as a step toward addressing social justice issues.

One freshman student remarked, “My experience with City Quest was wonderful! It was a great way to connect with my classmates and it made the first day of class much less nerve-wracking. I actually had friends to sit with and did not have to awkwardly find a seat and ask the intro questions again (What is your name? Where are you from? Which dorm are you in? What is your major?) We were able to share in an experience in which we were helping those in need and that automatically made our bonds stronger.”
Individual Impact

After CityQuest, students reflected on their experience. These are some of their thoughts:

“CityQuest was amazing. It was so cool to see how easy it is to help a lot of others in a short amount of time. We are able to pack tons of squash and apples. It’s nice to see the University join together for an excellent cause!”

“City Quest was a blast. I think it was a great way to get to know the other students in our USEMs and Seattle area. Our group went to a retirement home and sanitized all the surfaces and cleaned all the windows. Then later enjoyed a game of Topingo - a form of Bingo. It was very fun and I enjoyed interacting with the elderly folk. I think it would be a great idea to go again and sing to them some time. They seemed to enjoy having us around so they would most likely love us singing to them. All in all it was a great experience.”

“CityQuest was AMAZING! I had so much fun! My uPod and I went to World Concern and wrote thank-you letters to the people who donate to the cause. We also had the chance to sign up and volunteer more time with World Concern. All in all, CityQuest was amazing and I wouldn’t change a thing.”

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

“I loved CityQuest!! It was an amazing experience and I really liked the fact that SPU decides to set itself apart and engage in their community. Honestly that is why I decided to come to SPU and it was the main deciding factor when I looked at other colleges closer to home...”

“CityQuest was fun my group went to Operation Nightwatch and we were able to serve the community by picking up trash around the neighborhood. It was really nice especially with the sun out and it was a great chance to just get some fresh air, talk to my new classmates and serve the 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.”
“I really enjoyed the opportunity on Saturday. I've participated in events for a community like this in the past but never in this venue. It was definitely different from what I've done in the past. Working in a greenbelt pulling ivy and blackberry bushes was tough but felt good because I knew I was helping the situation.”

Faculty participants noted:

“The Urban Impact site was well-managed and a great fit for my students. They worked on demolishing the inside of an old house to retrofit it for a teen center. Lots of sledgehammer and crowbar action, as well as jobs for the less adventurous students. There were a half-dozen supervisors and 15 or so other volunteers working, so the students felt they were part of a real project. This was also a great chance to introduce the students to the concept of a diverse urban church.”

“This was my first time at CityQuest and I thought it was wonderful. I attended because I heard so many [other faculty members] speak positively about the experience. Thank you for urging the rest of us to attend...it did not disappoint.”
Service Partners

In 2010, 28 agencies hosted CityQuest service teams:

- Beacon Alliance of Neighbors
- Burke Gilman Trail: Sand Point
- Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church CoffeeTalk
- Cheasty Greenspace at Mt View
- Columbia Lutheran Home
- El Centro de la Raza
- Empowering Youth and Families Outreach
- First Covenant Church
- Food Lifeline
- Fremont Abbey Arts Center
- Friends of Hicks Lake
- Friends of Interlaken/Boren Park
- Friends of Lewis Park
- Friends of Lincoln Park
- Friends of the Burke Gilman Trail
- Magnuson Park
- Meadowbrook Community CARE
- Nature Consortium
- Neighborhood House
- Operation Nightwatch
- Quest Church
- Solid Ground Lettuce Link
- St. Mark's Greenbelt
- Taproot Theatre Company
- Union Gospel Mission Hope Place
- Union Gospel Mission Men's Shelter
- Urban Impact
- World Concern
Service Partner 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

Following CityQuest 2010, project hosts had this to say:

“I appreciated their can do attitude, enthusiasm, and willingness to help restore a park most have never set foot in. The work party today was a great team building exercise when you consider that these young adults have just recently been introduced to each other. One of my goals is to instill the sense of volunteerism in youth I work with. I left the work site today feeling confident that some of these students will take up the volunteer flag, in time.”

“There’s a lot to be said for walking the talk of good works, and SPU does that and helps me do so, too.”

“Thank You! Your volunteers were awesome! They worked hard and diligently at our site gardening, whacking weeds, repairing fencing, organizing paperwork, cleaning up inside and out. All of your students had such great attitudes about serving and giving back to our community. We accomplished much and would not have been able to do this without your help.”

“Thank you so much for hooking us up with some volunteers! We are very thankful for not only the projects they completed for us, but also the energy they brought to the projects. It is easy to get bogged down with unending, daunting projects. But these freshmen were so cheerful that I remembered what it was like to be a freshman.”

“I hope the students who came to Nightwatch had fun. What they did was perfect for us.”

“What a fantastic Saturday CoffeeTalk Cook-In we had with your City Quest volunteers!! Thanks from the bottom of our hearts!! We got main dishes for 6 Friday meals all ready. All we have to do is pull them from the freezers. The volunteers came with enthusiasm, a can-do attitude and good humor!! ”

“The High Point community looks so clean and inviting thanks to Seattle Pacific’s volunteer team!”

“Once again, the SPU students did a fantastic job helping us toward our goal of restoring our forests. I look forward to next year’s event.”
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 2008 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.”

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

“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.”

In Fall, 2010 Professor Derek Wood joined his “Diseases, Plagues and Pandemics” USEM class to serve at World Concern, a non-profit organization promoting global health. As a follow-up to their CityQuest project, his class partnered with World Concern to help reduce the global impact of parasitic worms in children through educational displays and fundraising activities on campus.

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