

SERVE Grant Final Report: Tent City 3 at SPU 2015

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Overview

In Winter Quarter 2015 Seattle Pacific University hosted Tent City 3 (TC3), a traveling encampment of up to 100 people experiencing homelessness, on Tiffany Loop. This encounter offered significant opportunity for student learning as well as for the University to demonstrate its Strategic Plan commitment to “Embody the University’s grounding in the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ and historical commitment to human flourishing through a cross-unit, inter-disciplinary, curricular and co-curricular effort to address selected local and global issues” (Seattle Pacific University, n.d.).

SERVE funds were obtained to hire a student intern to facilitate multiple points of engagement between students, faculty and staff and Tent City 3. Eight objectives were identified in the SERVE Grant proposal:

The intern will be supporting the Tent City 3 Host Committee at SPU by:

1. making connections with campus clubs and student organizations through attending meetings, posters, and social media
2. recruiting a student team that will encourage student clubs and residence hall engagement with Tent City 3
3. representing a student perspective in TC3 committee meetings
4. compiling a list of churches and organizations that address homelessness (shelter, food, housing) to provide students places to serve after TC3 leaves campus
5. assisting in planning and executing two public education events during Fall quarter to raise awareness (film/art/music event)
6. assisting in planning and executing Winter quarter educational forums
7. promoting a *Real Change* reading group in partnership with Owen Sallee
8. providing additional support for faculty research by Karen Snedker and Jennifer McKinney including data collection and analysis.

As the project developed it became clear that certain objectives were of greater significance (Objectives 1, 2 & 3) while others (Objectives 7 & 8) were either not practical or less pressing.

To that end, the student intern’s time was focused primarily on developing opportunities for

student engagement with TC3, facilitating student-prepared meals in partnership with the faculty/staff host committee, and representing SPU at TC3's weekly meetings.

Student Intern

Heather Bean, a senior Sociology major, was selected as the TC3 liaison intern. Heather's prior experience with issues of homelessness through the Urban Involvement program's Urban Plunge and her academic interest in issues of policy and systems made her an ideal candidate for the role. Additionally, Heather's prior service as a Residence Life Peer Advisor gave her unique connections to a broad range of campus departments engaging students.

Student Engagement Objectives

As noted above, Heather's attention was devoted primarily to Objectives 1-3, which focused on student engagement with TC3. Several significant outcomes were observed:

- Weekly student-facilitated and TC3 resident-led tours of the camp were offered throughout Winter Quarter on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Based on sign-in sheets monitored by TC3, 470 individuals visited at least once, and 54 returned between 2-12 times.
- Student groups prepared and shared a meal with TC3 on every Thursday night in Winter Quarter. These meals were served in the SUB Gazebo Room, with the intention of promoting interactions between SPU and TC3 residents. Thursday meals were funded through a proposal drafted by Heather to ASSP student government. These meals were prepared in the Peterson Hall Foods Lab under supervision from a FCS student worker. In addition, First Free Methodist Church provided preparation space for several student-prepared Monday meals.
- Several social groups emerged including a poetry group, a board game night, a drum circle and worship night.

Upon reflection it was determined that a future hosting of TC3 might encourage the hiring of two student workers, even if the overall hour commitment were not increased. Significant time was involved in communicating with student groups to arrange meal schedules and events. Heather's presence at the weekly TC3 community meeting provided a valuable learning opportunity for her

and was recognized by the camp as SPU's endorsement of their presence on campus. This liaison role allowed for important communication that could not have been achieved through email or other means because of the camp's unique structure and communication patterns. Student groups benefited from the presence of a peer with whom they could consult for program ideas and meal scheduling.

Objectives Not Addressed

Not all of this proposal's initial objectives were addressed. Event planning (Objectives 5 & 6) was coordinated by members of the faculty/staff host committee; Heather's student intern responsibilities centered on promoting these events through posters, email and Facebook. The *Real Change* reading group (Objective 7) idea was dropped after further exploration revealed that a *Real Change* vendor would not be viable on the SPU campus, and existing programming had already filled the calendar. Sociological research (Objective 8) was conducted by Dr. Snedker and Dr. McKinney with the assistance of students participating in independent study coursework. Objective 4 was not addressed, however an ongoing awareness campaign through Facebook, promoting such events as public testimony at Seattle City Council and other educational events addressing homelessness has extended the broader SPU community's opportunity to be aware of and involved with issues addressing homelessness.

Budget Reporting

The total budget request for this grant was \$2000. \$1830 of this was devoted to student labor for the intern position. Of the remaining \$170 designated for supplies, \$38.12 was spent on serving utensils, bowls and spoons for TC3 meals. \$131.88 remains unspent at the end of the grant.

Conclusion

We are grateful to the SERVE Grant and the Center for Scholarship and Faculty Development for the provision of these grant funds. As indicated above, these funds made possible significant student engagement with TC3 through the employment of Heather Bean, student liaison intern. Over the course of this engagement we learned that perhaps the grant funds could have been divided between two students to better focus students on particular tasks and to spread the work between more hands. Despite these lessons learned, we believe these funds accomplished their purpose in facilitating the engagement of students, faculty and staff with TC3 during Winter Quarter, 2015.

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References

Seattle Pacific University (n.d.). Strategic planning. Retrieved from <http://spu.edu/university-leadership/president/presidential-news/strategic-planning>