



UServeUtah College Community Engagement Council Final Report

2024 - 2025



CONTENTS

Amy Adams, Southern Utah University.....	4
Annette Cabrera Perez, Utah Valley University	6
Donovan Conley, Utah Valley University	8
Elisabeth Diaz, University of Utah	10
Ta’Mariah Jenkins, Utah State University.....	12
McKay Jones, Utah Valley University.....	14
Ammy Morales, Utah State University.....	16
Ily Olsen, Brigham Young University	18
Zion Robertson, Utah Valley University.....	20
Abass Sesay, Utah Valley University	22
Ruby Vejar, Weber State University	24
Helen Wang, University of Utah.....	26
Quenna Yuan, University of Utah.....	28

From September 2024 through May 2025, the UServeUtah College Community Engagement Council engaged **586 volunteers** in local youth-led community projects. Of the volunteers engaged, **54% were age 25 or younger**. Volunteers and council members **served a total of 1,305 hours**.

The UServeUtah College Community Engagement Council (CCEC) comprises dedicated students from Utah’s higher education institutions who collaborate to enhance community engagement both on and off campus. Throughout the academic year, council members lead service projects, address local needs, and promote volunteerism among their peers. Supported by UServeUtah, the CCEC offers training and resources to empower students to make a meaningful impact in their communities.

As the 2024-2025 council concludes its term, we commend each member for their commitment and the successful completion of their final projects. Their collective efforts have strengthened community bonds and fostered a culture of service and volunteerism that will continue to inspire future generations. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the council members for their outstanding contributions and dedication to making a lasting impact in their communities.



Amy Adams
Southern Utah University

Bridging the Gap

Preparing Pre-service Educators for ELL Success

In Iron County School District, English Language Learners (ELLs) comprise just 2% of the student population, meaning these students often go overlooked due to the relatively low demand for accommodations. As a result, preparing educators to support ELL students is not a core focus at Southern Utah University (SUU). While Utah state laws (HB 302 and 230) mandate that local education agencies provide support for students learning English, there is still a gap in equipping prospective educators with the necessary skills and strategies. My project was driven by the need to bridge that gap by providing additional resources for future educators at SUU to better prepare them for teaching ELL students.

Through my role as an undergraduate student at SUU, where I regularly work with ELL students, I observed that many pre-service teachers felt inadequately prepared to support ELL students in their classrooms. While SUU offers a required class on ESL and bilingual education, it is only available online, with a limited practicum component. Additionally, there are few opportunities for students

to gain practical, hands-on experience with ELLs. As a result, many future educators feel ill-prepared to effectively support ELL students, especially in general classroom settings. This lack of preparedness is a significant issue that my project addressed by creating a resource for pre-service teachers at SUU.

To assess the needs of prospective ELL educators at SUU, I employed a combination of observation, research, and informal interviews. I gathered information from census population databases, the SUU website, and conversations with peers, students, and professional educators in my community. The key findings of my research included:

- ELL students hold a significant presence in both national and local educational systems.
- Many pre-service teachers at SUU do not feel competent in supporting ELLs in a classroom.
- Existing resources and opportunities at SUU are limited, and the online format of required classes makes it difficult for students to fully engage with the material and their peers.



The primary goal of this project was to contribute to the pool of resources available for pre-service educators at SUU, helping them build their skills and confidence in working with ELL students. I created a professional development seminar and resource to increase awareness and provide practical strategies for working with ELLs in the classroom.

The volunteers for this project primarily consisted of attendees of the professional development seminar. These individuals actively participated in the presentation by taking notes, asking questions, and contributing to discussions about strategies for working with ELL students. Two volunteers also helped with logistics on the day of the event, setting up the presentation and picking up refreshments. These volunteers extended the impact of the project by educating themselves and preparing to better support ELLs in their future classrooms.

In the short term, this project has already made an impact by providing attendees with additional tools, strategies, and resources for working with ELLs in the classroom. Feedback from attendees indicated an increase in their confidence and preparedness to work with ELL students. On a scale of 1 (least confident/prepared) to 5 (most confident/prepared), pre-presentation levels ranged between 1 and 3, but post-presentation levels ranged from 3 to 5. This improvement reflects a tangible change in participants' attitudes and preparedness.

The project also provided a space for SUU students to connect with each other and discuss ELL topics, which is especially valuable considering the lack of in-person engagement opportunities in the current ESL class offerings. To promote sustainability, I distributed a list of resources for attendees to use and created a QR code for the College of Human Development and Education at SUU. This allows any student to access these resources at any time, ensuring the impact extends beyond the event.

In the long run, the impact of this project will extend beyond the immediate SUU community. As pre-service educators become more confident and prepared to work with ELL students, they will be better equipped to provide support for these students once they enter the K-12 public education system. This will contribute to creating a more supportive learning environment for ELL students in Iron County and beyond. The ultimate goal is to foster social change by promoting access to quality education for all students, including ELLs.

Overall, the feedback from volunteers was overwhelmingly positive. Participants reported feeling more confident and prepared to work with ELL students after attending the seminar. Some of the feedback included:

- "I feel more confident in tools to use in the classroom to support ELLs."
- "I love the resources provided and am able to look for more that I need."
- "I feel like there are a lot of little tips that are very helpful!"
- "I have some great strategies now for the whole class and individual instruction."
- "I feel confident about collaborating with other teachers and families of ELLs!"

One of the most significant successes of this project was the overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, who reported feeling more confident and prepared to work with ELL students. The project successfully addressed the need for additional resources and strategies for pre-service teachers at SUU, and it has already begun to impact their approach to teaching ELL students.

In conclusion, while this project is only one step in bridging the gap in ELL educator preparation, it has laid the groundwork for further development in this area. The creation of this resource is an important contribution to the preparation of future educators who will be more capable of supporting ELL students and fostering academic success for all learners.

Total volunteers: 19
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 17
Personal volunteer hours: 45
Project volunteer hours: 38
Total volunteer hours: 83



Annette Cabrera Perez
Utah Valley University

Stronger Together

Reconnecting Students with Resources and Support

When I first learned about the impact of HB 261, and how it restructured or removed some campus services, I felt a strong pull to do something. Many students at UVU were suddenly left in the dark and were unsure where to find their advisors, what centers were still available, and how to navigate the new campus support landscape. Students expressed not only confusion, but a deep sense of loss for the resources and safe spaces that once anchored them.

My project, Stronger Together, was created in direct response to this need. The goal was to reconnect students with campus resources, provide tools for mental wellness, and foster a sense of belonging despite recent changes. I chose to focus on raising awareness about key student support services such as the First Gen Center, Student Success Center, and student clubs. These spaces continue to offer critical support, but many students were unaware of them due to the restructuring.

We kicked off the project on January 17 by assembling Mental Health Wellness Kits. These kits were filled with items designed to help students manage stress and feel supported. Then, during MLK Service Week, we hosted a tabling event where we distributed the kits and shared information about available campus resources. On January 22, we also held an information session to directly address student questions and confusion about what support is still available.

This project aligns perfectly with my Direct Service pathway. It was about meeting people where they are and providing hands-on assistance, emotional support, and guidance to students during a confusing time. Through tabling and outreach, I had the opportunity to connect with students one-on-one, listen to their concerns, and point them toward helpful services. Volunteers played an essential role, from assembling the wellness kits to helping with logistics, promotion, and directly engaging with their peers during the events.

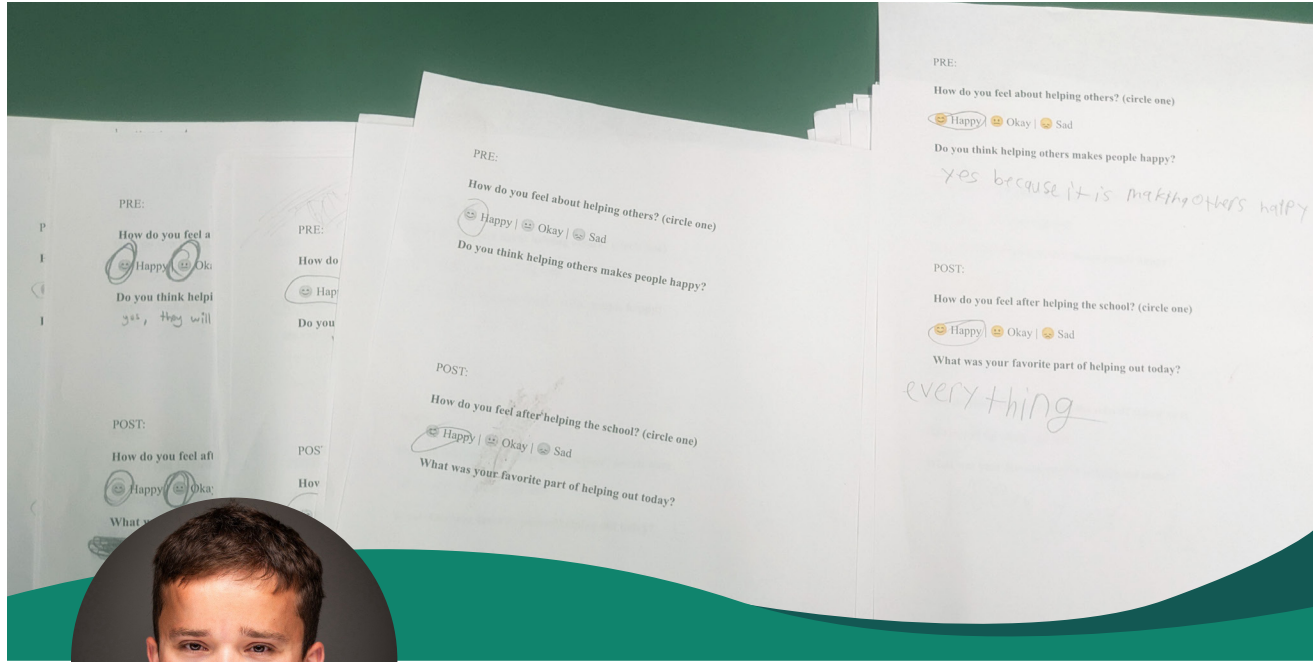


One of the biggest successes of Stronger Together was the feedback we received from students. Many shared how grateful they were for the wellness kits, and even more were surprised and relieved to learn about the centers and services still available to them. Some students told us they felt “seen” for the first time in a while. Since the event, several students have started attending club meetings and have continued to engage with campus support networks, which shows that our efforts sparked ongoing involvement and connection.

The impact extended to the volunteers as well. Many reported feeling more inspired to give back, and they developed skills in event planning and communication. They also expressed a

stronger connection to the campus and a better understanding of how vital community support is, especially in times of change. This project reminded all of us that even in difficult moments, we can come together to build something stronger.

Total volunteers: 58
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 58
Personal volunteer hours: 53.7
Project volunteer hours: 41
Total volunteer hours: 94.7



Donovan Conley
Utah Valley University

Volunteerism for Mental Health A Positive Psychology Approach

My project was selected for several key reasons, all of which align with the increasing need for effective strategies to address the mental health challenges faced by today's youth. First, Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) are universally applicable across age groups, offering significant benefits in fostering a sense of purpose and positively impacting mental health. This is particularly important given the ongoing mental health crisis among Utah's youth, which highlights the urgent need for interventions that can make a difference. Additionally, the global demand for increased mindfulness, kindness, and compassion is ever-growing, and my project aimed to address this by promoting these essential values to improve overall well-being.

My pathway is Community Engaged Learning and Research, which aligned perfectly with the goals of my initiative. The project involved delivering an informative presentation and providing survey gathering opportunities before and after a hands-on project for the students of Aspen Elementary

School. By integrating this learning approach, I aimed to engage students directly, allowing them to experience the benefits of volunteerism firsthand while also providing a structured method to assess the impact of the intervention.

To bring this vision to life, I collaborated with Principal Van Dijk and Mrs. Kirkman at Aspen Elementary School in Orem. Together, we explored the idea of volunteerism as a form of Positive Psychology Intervention (PPI) and discussed its associated benefits. I began by delivering a brief presentation to the students, explaining the positive impact of volunteering and encouraging an open-ended discussion about helping others. The students' reactions were overwhelmingly positive, and it was clear that they recognized the value of contributing to their community.

Following the presentation, I distributed a survey to assess the students' attitudes toward helping others. Once the survey was completed, the students



participated in a short cleanup project around the school, providing them with a hands-on opportunity to engage in volunteerism. Afterward, I handed out a second survey to evaluate how they felt about their contributions to tidying the school. To conclude the activity, I gave each student a small treat as a gesture of appreciation, reinforcing the positive feelings associated with helping.

My project would not have been as successful without the support of several dedicated volunteers. Brody from Utah Valley University, Zion from the College Community Engagement Council, Mr. Trentelman from the Utah Afterschool Network, and Mrs. Van Dijk and Mrs. Kirkman from Aspen Elementary School all played essential roles. Brody and Zion helped optimize the project and facilitated its presentation to the students, ensuring that the material was engaging and accessible. Mr. Trentelman offered valuable mentorship, helping me navigate unexpected challenges and adapt the project to better align with both the original objectives and the needs of the community. Mrs. Van Dijk and Mrs. Kirkman generously provided their time and the necessary facilities to execute the project at Aspen Elementary.

This project was designed to address the need for greater awareness and normalization of helping others. By discussing the benefits of volunteerism and giving students the chance to participate in a cleanup project, the initiative helped foster a greater

appreciation for contributing to the community. The survey results were encouraging: following the cleanup activity, students reported a significant increase in positive feelings about volunteering. Specifically, there was a 17.5% increase in students who felt "happy" about their involvement in the cleanup, while the number of students feeling "sad" decreased.

Brody, one of the volunteers, made notable strides in engaging with the students, coming out of his shell and discussing why helping others is important. This was an inspiring example of how the project not only impacted the students but also those who volunteered to support the initiative.

In conclusion, this project not only helped to promote the values of kindness, compassion, and mindfulness among the students at Aspen Elementary but also provided an opportunity for everyone involved to experience the positive effects of volunteerism. By fostering these values, my project aimed to contribute to the larger goal of improving mental health and overall well-being for the youth in Utah and beyond.

Total volunteers: 73
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 70
Personal volunteer hours: 14
Project volunteer hours: 19
Total volunteer hours: 33



Elisabeth Diaz
University of Utah

Brushstrokes in Bloom

Building Community in the Edible Campus Gardens

The Garden Box Painting Project emerged from research I conducted in Fall 2024, where students consistently highlighted the value of the Edible Campus Gardens (ECG) as a space for community building. Many also expressed a desire to see increased student involvement. Recognizing this, I designed a project that would address both of these needs, engagement and community connection, through a collaborative art initiative. By inviting students to contribute their creativity to the garden space, the project aimed to create a welcoming atmosphere that encouraged new and continued participation in ECG activities.

From November 20, 2024, to April 11, 2025, I facilitated the Garden Box Painting Project in collaboration with the Edible Campus Gardens at the University of Utah. The project unfolded in several phases:

- **Call for Submissions:** We began with a campus-wide call for stencil designs, encouraging students from all disciplines to submit artwork

that could be used on the garden boxes.

- **Stencil Workshop:** In January, we partnered with an on-campus art exhibition to host a collaborative workshop. Participants helped design and cut out the approved stencils, creating space for creativity and connection during the slower winter months.
- **Open Paint Event:** The final event was an open painting session, held as part of the Sustainability Office's Earth Month programming. Volunteers used the stencils to paint the raised garden beds, transforming the space with color and personality.

This project directly aligned with my top Community Engagement Pathway: Direct Service. Every step of the project from design submissions to painting offered students a hands-on opportunity to make a visible, lasting impact on the garden space. The immediate, tangible results of their work helped foster a sense of ownership and pride among the participants.



Volunteers played a vital role at every stage of the project. They contributed by designing and cutting stencils, supporting event planning, painting the garden boxes using the stencils, and assisting with event setup, facilitation, and cleanup.

This project created a vibrant and welcoming space while actively increasing engagement in the Edible Campus Gardens. The collaborative nature of the art project provided students with a way to connect during the winter, when activity in the garden tends to slow. It also drew in new participants and introduced eight individuals to the ECG community who had not previously been involved.

The Garden Box Painting Event saw students from nine different majors come together, facilitating cross-disciplinary connections and strengthening the community fabric. One student shared, "I really enjoyed the event. I liked interacting with the other people who came and getting to see the color added to the garden." Another noted, "Loved seeing the

community come together to make the space more beautiful." These moments of shared creativity helped fulfill the ECG's goal of fostering community.

One accomplishment I am especially proud of is the collaboration across multiple campus groups to bring this project to life. I partnered with CEL students from a Sustainable and Equitable Food Systems class, students from the art department, and staff and students involved with the Sustainability Office. These cross-campus collaborations enriched the project and expanded its reach and impact. The Garden Box Painting Project met its goal of strengthening community through creative engagement and left a lasting, colorful mark on the Edible Campus Gardens, both physically and socially.

Total volunteers: 32
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 26
Personal volunteer hours: 64
Project volunteer hours: 69
Total volunteer hours: 133



Ta'Mariah Jenkins
Utah State University

Creating Confidence Community Self-Care Night

Logan is a beautiful and growing community, but like many places, it has its gaps. As someone who lives here and engages deeply with local youth, I've seen firsthand how those gaps impact young people, especially when it comes to something as personal and everyday as self-care. Many teens, especially those with textured hair and melanated skin, face real challenges trying to learn how to care for themselves in a community where their cultural norms and identities aren't always reflected or understood. This can leave them feeling isolated, confused, and often frustrated, especially when they don't have access to the right tools, education, or representation.

In response, I organized an event called Self-Care Night, hosted by the Black Student Union at Utah State University. The goal was to create a welcoming, educational, and affirming space where youth could learn to care for their hair and skin with confidence. We brought in local stylists and estheticians who specialize in a range of hair types and skin needs.

We also provided free self-care products that were specifically chosen to meet the needs of attendees, from brushes and combs to face masks and moisturizers. The night featured a dynamic speaker who led a powerful conversation on self-love, beauty, and cultural pride.

This project is a direct extension of my academic and professional journey in Community Engaged Learning and Research. Through my coursework in political science, leadership, and nonprofit-social entrepreneurship, I've explored how identity, representation, and systems impact different communities. I've learned that something like hair care isn't just about looks. It's also about self-worth and belonging. Self-Care Night was a way for me to apply that knowledge to a real-world need.

Volunteers played an essential role in bringing Self-Care Night to life. They supported every aspect of the event from planning, setup, and take-down to coordinating with barbers and vendors, creating



flyers, and helping promote the event on social media. During the night itself, they greeted guests, guided them through the space, managed product giveaways, and even helped facilitate the Q&A session with our speaker. Their energy, compassion, and commitment made the event feel truly welcoming and empowering.

This event addressed a deeply felt need for culturally relevant self-care education among youth in our community. Many attendees expressed how meaningful it was to finally see themselves reflected in the products, the professionals, and the conversations. Attendees enjoyed having a space where they could ask questions, be affirmed, and walk away with knowledge and tools they could use every day.

For the volunteers, the experience was equally impactful. Many shared that their understanding of self-image and cultural identity broadened as a result of the event. They gained new skills in planning, communication, and outreach, and several expressed a desire to stay involved in youth-led initiatives going forward.



One of the biggest wins from this project was the turnout and response from the community. Over fifty youth showed up, more than we initially expected, and the energy in the room was incredible. So many attendees told us how much they loved the experience and how grateful they were to receive products that actually worked for them. For some, it was their first time owning a brush or a product made for their hair type.

Seeing those smiles, hearing their appreciation, and feeling the buzz of excitement throughout the event reminded me why this work matters. If we helped even one young person feel more confident, more seen, and more proud of who they are—that's a success I'll carry with me forever.

Total volunteers: 64
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 52
Personal volunteer hours: 122
Project volunteer hours: 116
Total volunteer hours: 238



McKay Jones
Utah Valley University

Voices for Clean Air

Elevating Community Perspectives on Utah's Air Quality

On March 27, 2025, I had the privilege of organizing and hosting an Environmental Justice Panel at Utah Valley University's campus. This event was designed to address a critical community need: the lack of representation in conversations and decisions about Utah's air quality. This panel elevated the perspectives of those most impacted by poor air quality but often left out of environmental policy-making. The panel created space for these leaders to share their lived experiences and professional expertise, helping to shift the public conversation about environmental health in Utah.

This project directly aligned with my pathway of Community Engaged Learning and Research. It was part of a larger research project I've been conducting on air quality and how it affects specific communities in the Salt Lake Valley. Hosting this panel allowed me to take that research beyond the classroom and into the community in a real and meaningful way.

The panel featured five powerful speakers, each with unique expertise and lived experience:

- Turner Bitton, Founder and Executive Director of the Utah Center for Civic Improvement
- Dr. Judy Ou, Epidemiologist focused on the health effects of air pollution on young cancer patients and survivors
- Ofa Matagi, Executive Director of the Utah Pacific Islander Health Coalition and environmental justice leader
- Wisam Khudhair, Community Capacity and Wellbeing Partnership Manager at University Neighborhood Partners
- Jay Rock, environmental advocate and member of the Climate of Hope community board at the Natural History Museum of Utah

Each panelist brought valuable insights that helped connect the dots between environmentalism, public health, advocacy work, and scientific research. It was inspiring to see the audience engage with such an experienced and deeply informed group.








A PANEL DISCUSSION

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Discover how scientific research and community efforts tackle air quality! Join for expert insights for a healthier future.

SPEAKER PANEL

TURNER BITTON JUDY OU OFA MATAGI WISAM KHUDHAIR JAY ROCK

THURSDAY, MARCH 27TH
Free Subway | @ 12pm | Center Stage
@uvusocialimpact

HUNTSMAN CANCER INSTITUTE
UVU CENTER FOR SOCIAL IMPACT
UVU COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

For more information: @uvusocialimpact

Volunteers played a huge role in making the event successful. They helped with event setup, directed panelists and community organizations to their spots, greeted attendees, assisted with food and snacks, and stayed afterward to help clean up. Many of the volunteers came from a political science course on sustainable development, while others were part of the Earth Science Student Association. It was rewarding to see how this experience deepened their understanding of environmental advocacy and local lobbying. They also gained knowledge about some of Utah's key organizations working on air quality and public health, such as HEAL Utah, GreenLatinos, Utah Clean Energy, UVU Sustainability, the Utah Pacific Islander Health Coalition, University Neighborhood Partners, and the Huntsman Cancer Institute.

One of the biggest successes of the event was bringing together five incredible panelists and ten community partners. That level of engagement

speaks volumes about the appetite for this kind of conversation in our community. It also shows how collaborative efforts can spark change.

I was especially touched by what Turner Bitton shared on Instagram after the event. He wrote, "Joy is our greatest act of resistance... Find the joy in the work." His reflection perfectly captured the spirit of the evening—an event grounded in hope, resistance, and collaboration. I'm proud to have helped create a space where joy and solutions could coexist and grow. This panel was just one step, but I believe it moved us forward on the winding path toward a healthier future for everyone in Utah.

Total volunteers: 40
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 20
Personal volunteer hours: 80
Project volunteer hours: 50
Total volunteer hours: 130



Ammy Morales
Utah State University

The Power of Mentorship

Exploring Student Engagement in Mentorship Programs

I chose to pursue The Power of Mentorship because I recognized a critical gap in mentorship opportunities available to high school and undergraduate students, especially within Cache Valley and more broadly across Utah. This project aimed to determine not only what mentorship programs exist, but also whether students are aware of these opportunities and understand their value.

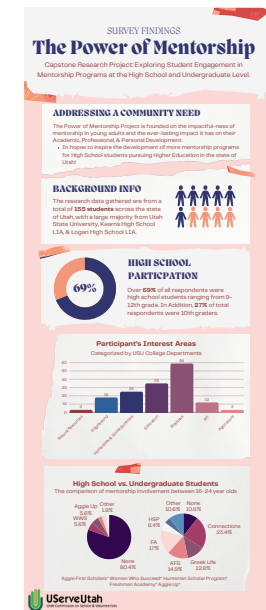
Mentorship has a powerful, lasting impact on young adults, influencing their academic achievement, professional growth, and personal development. However, I observed that many high school students, particularly those pursuing higher education, lack access to meaningful mentorship. Through this project, I wanted to highlight that gap and encourage the development of programs that can help students succeed.

I designed and implemented a capstone research survey called The Power of Mentorship Survey, which focused on identifying student engagement in mentorship programs at both the high school and

undergraduate levels in Utah. The goal was to assess existing engagement, awareness, and perceived value of mentorship, and then present findings to key stakeholders and mentorship organizations. My project aligned perfectly with my pathway in Community Engaged Learning and Research. By surveying students and collaborating with teachers and program directors, I was able to collect relevant data, analyze responses, and contribute meaningful insights back into the community.

The project relied heavily on community participation. I had:

- 155 student volunteers who completed the survey (from both high school and college levels);
- 2 Latinos in Action teachers, from Logan High School and Kearns High School, who helped distribute the survey and encouraged participation;
- 3 mentorship program leaders who volunteered their time to offer professional insight and feedback on the data collected.



These volunteers played a crucial role in shaping the findings and giving depth to the research.

The project helped address the need by confirming what many suspected: that a significant majority of high school students, over 80%, are not currently involved in an organized mentorship program.

I utilized large language models to help analyze open-ended feedback from volunteers and transform the data into visually compelling graphics. These visuals made it easier to share my findings and communicate the need for action with clarity and impact.

One mentorship director shared that their team would be shifting focus to recruit younger professionals to mentor college students based on feedback showing students prefer mentors closer to their own age. Another outcome was the opportunity to present my findings to three different mentorship programs, both at my university and statewide. These conversations sparked real interest in creating or adapting programs to better serve high school youth.

A surprising and inspiring impact was how excited teachers and directors were about the project. They saw the value in understanding mentorship needs across different student demographics. For example, Kristyn Allred, Director of Freshman Academy in

the Huntsman Business School, mentioned that she found the data extremely helpful and planned to share it with Bolder Way Forward as they consider launching their own mentorship initiative.

Similarly, Addie Huff, Program Manager for Women Who Succeed, appreciated learning that “closeness in age” was one of the top three qualities students look for in a mentor. This insight is now being integrated into how they structure their mentor-mentee pairings.

A major success from this project was identifying that over 80% of high school students are not currently involved in a structured mentorship program—a finding that clearly demonstrates a statewide need. Being able to share this insight and spark meaningful conversations felt like a true accomplishment.

This project not only provided valuable information to others; it also sparked something in me. I feel more inspired than ever to continue working toward creating more mentorship opportunities and helping close this gap for students across Utah.

Total volunteers: 161
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 4
Personal volunteer hours: 40
Project volunteer hours: 4
Total volunteer hours: 44



Ily Olsen
Brigham Young University

United Through Music

The Launch of Provo United Sound

The Provo United Sound chapter at BYU was created to address two pressing needs: providing music education students with the opportunity to gain experience teaching music to students with special needs, and offering adults with special needs a sense of belonging through music. The project aimed to remove barriers and foster social change through music, aligning with the mission of United Sound, an organization dedicated to promoting belonging in music programs. Currently, there is only one other United Sound chapter in Utah, located in St. George, so this new chapter at BYU represents a significant step in expanding opportunities for both students and individuals with special needs throughout the state.

This project directly aligns with my Community Engagement Pathway, Community Engaged Learning and Research. The project provided BYU students with experiential learning opportunities, allowing them to practice teaching methods for students with special needs through mentorship.

Additionally, surveys were conducted to assess the students' knowledge and skills before and after their involvement, offering valuable insight into how the experience influenced their understanding of fostering belonging and teaching practices.

I began the project by writing a charter to BYU to officially create the club and gain approval. I also raised \$2,500 to fund the club's operations, which included purchasing materials, providing food for meetings, and supporting other activities. A critical aspect of the project was recruiting mentor volunteers, and I worked closely with the student body to build a team of students who were passionate about the cause. To ensure participation, I also focused on advertising the club to adults with special needs and their families, encouraging them to join the program. I presented at a university forum to raise awareness about the importance of belonging in music education, and I collaborated with United Sound representatives to ensure that our efforts were aligned with their broader mission.



Volunteers were integral to the success of the club. They were involved in a variety of tasks, from creating and distributing flyers to mentoring adults with disabilities and leading group activities. Volunteers also helped with logistical aspects such as picking up food for meetings, writing the club's charter, and scheduling meeting spaces. Their commitment helped to build a community around the club and ensure that the program could continue to grow.

The project had a significant impact on both the BYU students and the adults with special needs who participated. The music education students gained invaluable insight into the challenges and rewards of teaching students with special needs. Many students reported that the experience inspired them to incorporate the practices they learned in their future classrooms. Even those who did not volunteer were more aware of the cause after attending the university forum. For the families and caregivers of the participants, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. They expressed that their students felt they were improving their guitar skills, making friends, and, most importantly, felt that they belonged. Many of them were eager to return next semester. It was particularly gratifying to see how volunteers, many of whom initially signed up out of obligation, became increasingly excited and committed to the club as the semester progressed.

One of the most fulfilling accomplishments of this project was its lasting impact. I was able to establish



a foundation for the club that ensures its continued operation. I set up a leadership presidency for the following year, which will help the club maintain its momentum. Additionally, I hosted forums and motivational talks that raised awareness about the importance of including special needs students in music education. Although it was initially challenging to recruit volunteers, we raised enough awareness and enthusiasm to secure a strong base of mentors for next year. This has set the stage for the club's growth and sustainability.

In conclusion, the Provo United Sound chapter at BYU has made remarkable progress in creating a sense of belonging and offering meaningful learning experiences for both music education students and individuals with special needs. Beyond its immediate impact, the project has contributed to a growing movement to foster belonging within music education throughout Utah. The club's success and enduring influence on the BYU community highlight the powerful potential of initiatives that blend educational growth with a commitment to social change.

Total volunteers: 25
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 15
Personal volunteer hours: 46
Project volunteer hours: 135
Total volunteer hours: 181



Zion Robertson
Utah Valley University

Knowing Your Roots and Resilience

Exploring the Power of Family History

Over the past decade, mental health challenges, especially among college-aged students, have risen by nearly 50 percent. From increasing academic and financial pressures to growing feelings of isolation, this trend is heartbreaking but not surprising. While therapy and other resources have become more accessible, I've heard from many peers that these tools still don't always feel like enough.

As I started researching other ways to support mental health, family history kept standing out. Some organizations and universities have explored this idea, and the data caught my attention. One study at UCLA, for example, found that students who engaged in family history for just three months experienced a 70% reduction in anxiety and a 70% boost in self-esteem. That was powerful to me—healing through connection, through knowing where we come from. That's what inspired me to launch my project: Knowing Your Roots and Resilience.

My project was a multi-part event focused on helping students explore their family and cultural

history while connecting it to emotional resilience. We hosted a gathering where people could participate in cultural crafts, enjoy food from different traditions, and hear stories from peers who shared how connecting to their roots has given them strength and a sense of belonging. We also shared the research linking family history work to improved mental health.

To help us understand the interest in this topic and shape future efforts, we invited participants to complete a survey. This helped us gauge what students already know, what they're curious about, and whether they'd be interested in future classes, workshops, or institute efforts focused on family history.

This project fit perfectly with my interests and goals, and allowed me to dive deeper into the Direct Service pathway. I enjoy working directly with people, and this was a very hands-on opportunity to serve and connect.



I couldn't have done this alone. Volunteers played a key role in every part of the project. Some helped run the craft stations and engaged attendees in conversations about family history. Others prepared and shared food while telling the stories behind their family recipes and traditions. We also had volunteers who helped with outreach and promotion, set-up and clean-up, and even helped organize the space and present research findings in creative ways. Their support brought the event to life.

This project sparked real conversations about mental health, belonging, identity, and connection. It raised awareness of family history as a resource for emotional resilience. Several students left the event wanting to know how they could learn more, whether classes or workshops might be available on campus. Others shared stories about their own families and felt more connected after doing so.

Beyond the event itself, the project gave us valuable information through the survey responses. Now, we have data to help advocate for ongoing family history programming for students, and maybe even shape campus-wide wellness efforts in the future.



In presenting the project and research to different groups for support, I watched attitudes shift. Some students were skeptical at first, but as they heard the evidence, they became curious. I've already heard stories of students who began exploring their family history after learning about the benefits and seeing how it made a difference in their lives. I also met many who wanted to get involved but didn't know how. This project showed me just how much potential this topic has to inspire growth, healing, and connection.

The biggest success for me was hearing the conversations happening at the event. People were talking about their ancestors, their cultures, their families—many for the first time in a long time. It was amazing to realize that something I had researched and cared about resonated with others too.

Total volunteers: 30
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 29
Personal volunteer hours: 74
Project volunteer hours: 30
Total volunteer hours: 104



Abass Sesay
Utah Valley University

Sandbox Bridging Innovation and Community Impact

This project was born out of a clear need: while the Sandbox startup incubator at Utah Valley University (UVU) offers a space for innovation, many students weren't finding the structure or real-world application opportunities they needed to truly grow. I wanted to change that. My project aimed to bridge the gap between student entrepreneurs and the local community by creating hands-on, service-oriented experiences that helped students apply their ideas in meaningful ways.

The core of the project involved connecting students in the Sandbox program with local organizations to solve real community challenges. We hosted workshops and provided mentorship opportunities that focused on building service-driven, impact-focused startups. Students had the chance to work side-by-side with local leaders, applying their classroom learning in real-time while serving the community.

This experience aligned perfectly with my own academic and career goals in accounting and business as well as my Corporate Social Responsibility pathway. I'm passionate about entrepreneurship, leadership, and community service, and this project brought all three together. Coordinating this effort gave me practical experience in project management and public engagement, skills I know will serve me well as I pursue a career in finance with a strong community focus.

I'm incredibly grateful to the volunteers who helped make this possible. They played a huge role in advertising the event, inviting attendees, and managing logistics on the day of the project. Their work was essential in driving both student involvement and community turnout. Volunteers reported that they walked away with a stronger sense of connection to the UVU community and gained skills in communication, event planning, and leadership. One common piece of feedback was how valuable they found the experience, and that they



would love to see more events like this in the future. The impact of this project was clear: it gave students a structured way to apply their entrepreneurial skills while meeting real community needs. Mentorship was strengthened, new ideas were born, and classroom knowledge was put into practice. One of the biggest accomplishments I'm proud of is seeing students step up, take ownership, and truly collaborate with community partners. Watching ideas come to life and receiving such positive feedback from both students and local organizations was a powerful reminder that with the right support, students can make a real difference beyond the classroom. This project enhanced the Sandbox program and helped build lasting bridges between UVU and the broader community.

Total volunteers: 15
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 2
Personal volunteer hours: 15
Project volunteer hours: 6
Total volunteer hours: 21





Ruby Vejar
Weber State University

From Clutter to Care The Ogden Free Swap

For my project, I organized a community “Free Swap” in Ogden. The idea came from something I’ve seen a lot—people moving in or out of town and ending up tossing perfectly good items in the dumpster because they don’t have the time or means to donate. I wanted to help people give back in a way that was easy and impactful, and the Free Swap did just that.

We invited people to bring items they no longer needed, and we took care of sorting and donating anything that wasn’t picked up by the end of the event. Some people showed up just to drop things off, while others came looking for things they needed. It was amazing to see it come full circle. One woman who came looking for diapers and found some that had just been dropped off. They were a little big for her baby, but she was still really happy, saying the baby would grow into them soon.

This project aligned really well with my pathway of Philanthropy, because it was all about helping

people give back to others with items they no longer needed. But it also involved a good amount of Direct Service, since I was actively involved in setting things up, helping carry and sort donations, and taking the leftover items to donation centers afterward. It was a way of helping others give back, while also making sure they could help themselves and each other in the process.

Volunteers were a huge help throughout the project. Some helped carry things from people’s cars and sort them by category so it was easier for others to find what they needed. At the end of the day, volunteers also helped package everything up into boxes, making sure it was organized based on which community partner needed what. We separated everything by type and made sure the condition was acceptable—clean, working, and respectful of the people receiving it.

The impact was bigger than I expected. We helped people do some serious spring cleaning, gave others



a chance to find items they needed, and prevented hundreds of pounds of usable goods from ending up in the landfill. People were excited to receive free items, but they were also thoughtful; most didn’t just grab everything they saw. They were mindful about what they took, and many people also brought items to contribute. It felt like a true community effort.

One success I’m especially proud of is how much we collected and repurposed. We gathered about 200 pounds of clothing (and only had 106 pounds left over), around 400 pounds of household items (with only 50 pounds left, mostly dishes), and a full box of toys, of which only three toys were left by the end of the day. That’s a lot of stuff that went to new homes instead of the trash, and a lot of people helped and benefitted along the way. This project reminded me that sometimes giving back doesn’t have to be complicated—it just takes a little organizing, a little effort, and a lot of heart.

Total volunteers: 46
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 3
Personal volunteer hours: 43
Project volunteer hours: 60
Total volunteer hours: 103



Expanding Languages

Vietnamese
Arabic
Japanese
Chinese

Helen Wang
University of Utah

More Than Words

Bridging Language Gaps in Community Health

My project was undertaken with the support of Connect2Health, a student health volunteer program aimed at providing community-based resources to patients at clinics such as Fourth Street Clinic, the Wellness Bus, and SUPeRAD. In conversations with volunteers at these clinics, I identified a significant gap in language access: while resources were often available in English and Spanish, many patients spoke other languages, such as Vietnamese, that were not represented in the existing materials. This was an issue that needed immediate attention, especially considering the growing population of Utahns speaking languages other than English and Spanish.

The primary goal of this project was to expand the language accessibility of resource packets given to patients by Connect2Health volunteers. I focused on translating materials into Arabic and Vietnamese, with the eventual inclusion of Chinese and Japanese, based on the languages most frequently encountered by volunteers during their service. This expansion aimed to better serve patients who may

not be fluent in English or Spanish but needed access to critical community resources.

My pathway is Community Engaged Learning and Research, and this project perfectly aligned with my studies. I utilized research data, such as community demographics and language prevalence in Salt Lake City, to identify the most needed translations. This project combined research with direct community impact, addressing a real need in Salt Lake City by providing translated resource packets in Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese. By engaging in this project, I was able to take what I had learned in my coursework and apply it in a tangible, meaningful way to improve access to community resources.

Volunteers played a crucial role in this project. Initially, I spoke with several volunteers informally to gather insights about the languages they commonly encountered while serving patients at the clinics. This informal feedback helped to shape the focus of the project and prioritize languages like Arabic and



Vietnamese. Later, volunteers were more heavily involved in the editing and review process. They ensured the accuracy, fluency, and grammatical correctness of the translated resource packets. Volunteers who were fluent in the target languages, or who had language skills, were essential in refining the translations of Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese packets. Their participation was invaluable in ensuring that the translated materials were not only accurate but culturally appropriate as well.

Volunteers expressed deep satisfaction with the project. After learning about its purpose and reviewing the translated packets, they felt proud of the work and recognized the importance of the resources in supporting the community. Many volunteers shared that they had gained a greater understanding of the services available in Salt Lake City and intended to share this valuable information with their families and friends. This not only extended the reach of the project but also created a ripple effect in raising awareness of available community resources.

This project made a significant impact by addressing the urgent need for multilingual access to vital community resources in Salt Lake City. With the expansion of the translated resource packets, volunteers were better equipped to serve communities. For many community members, the

availability of resources in their preferred language helped them access essential information more effectively and with greater confidence. My project laid the foundation for the continued expansion of language translations for resource materials.

One of the major successes of this project was my ability to expand its scope beyond the initial plan. Originally, I intended to focus only on translating resource packets into Vietnamese and Arabic. However, through the involvement of dedicated volunteers, I was able to expand the language offerings to include Japanese and Chinese as well. This was a significant accomplishment, as it allowed the project to reach an even broader audience and better address the diverse linguistic needs of the Salt Lake City community.

Overall, this project has contributed to improving language access to important resources for communities in Salt Lake City. It has set the stage for future expansions and has reinforced the critical role volunteers play in creating a more accessible and supportive community for everyone.

Total volunteers: 8
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 8
Personal volunteer hours: 21
Project volunteer hours: 15
Total volunteer hours: 36



Quenna Yuan
University of Utah

Addressing Student Food Insecurity

The Feed U Pantry Recipe Book

As a college student, I know firsthand how tough it can be to find affordable, healthy food on campus. Between overpriced market items, limited dining options, and the long trip off-campus to get groceries, it often feels like there are no good options. When I learned that 2 in 5 students in Utah experience food insecurity, I knew I wanted to take action. That’s why I created the Feed U Pantry Recipe Book, a resource designed to help students make nutritious, affordable meals using ingredients from our campus pantry.

This project was born out of a real and pressing need: food insecurity among college students. Too many students face limited access to healthy food, and often, the campus pantry is one of the only reliable resources they have. However, many students may not know how to turn those pantry staples into meals, especially if they’re new to cooking or short on time. My goal was to create a recipe book that would make it easier for students to prepare quick, healthy, and budget-friendly meals,

while minimizing food waste and maximizing the use of pantry items.

With the help of a dedicated team of volunteers, I created a recipe book that includes a variety of breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack, and drink recipes—all designed to be ready in 30 minutes or less. Every recipe features ingredients commonly found at our campus pantry, making it accessible to students who rely on that resource.

To take the project even further, we worked with pantry directors to launch Zoom Cooking Hours—virtual sessions where students could cook along with others, ask questions, and learn new techniques in a friendly, supportive environment. This gave students hands-on experience and helped build their confidence in the kitchen.

This project aligned with my direct service pathway by offering immediate and tangible support to students in need. Creating and sharing the recipe



book provided a practical solution to food insecurity, while the Zoom Cooking Hours created a sense of connection and empowerment. Through this initiative, I was able to directly impact the lives of my peers in a meaningful way, offering both resources and community.

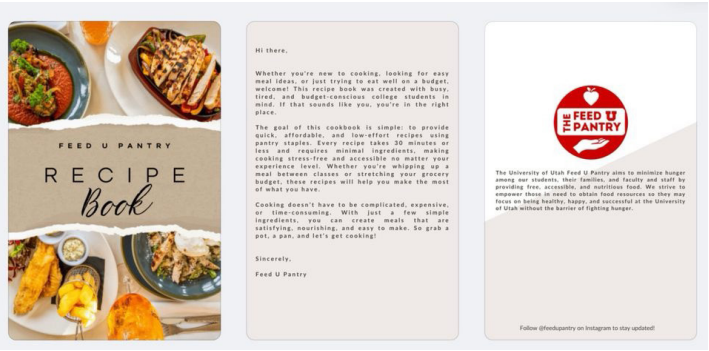
Volunteers played a crucial role in bringing this project to life. They helped collect easy-to-make recipes that used pantry staples, ensuring that all options were student-friendly. Others contributed to the design and formatting of the book, making it visually appealing and easy to use. Some volunteers focused on editing and organizing content, while others promoted the project through social media and campus networks, encouraging students to use the recipe book and join Zoom Cooking Hours. Their collaboration and enthusiasm were key to the project’s success.

Volunteers consistently shared how rewarding the experience was. They felt a sense of pride seeing the final product come together, and many mentioned how their awareness of food insecurity had grown through the project. Knowing that their efforts would help other students in a direct way made the work even more meaningful.

The impact of the Feed U Pantry Recipe Book was measured through direct conversations and a survey. Students who used the pantry told me they loved the recipe book and appreciated having clear, easy-to-follow ideas for meals. One student shared, “I never knew how to make something filling with just pantry ingredients. Now I feel more confident cooking for myself.”

We received 36 survey responses, with promising results:

- 88% said the recipe book helped them create healthier meals with pantry items they didn’t



- know how to use.
- 75% reported increased confidence in their cooking abilities.
 - 72% said they would use the recipe book regularly.

These responses showed us that the book was not only useful, it was genuinely improving students’ daily lives.

The project also had a big impact on the volunteers. Many said they enjoyed the hands-on nature of the work and were proud to contribute to something meaningful. They learned new recipes themselves and gained a deeper understanding of the challenges their fellow students face with food insecurity. In addition to building new skills like teamwork and project coordination, they also felt more connected to the campus community and expressed interest in supporting similar efforts in the future.

One of the biggest successes of this project was seeing how well the recipe book was received—not just as a helpful tool, but as something that genuinely empowered students. Knowing that students are now cooking healthier meals, feeling more confident in the kitchen, and finding community through Zoom Cooking Hours is incredibly fulfilling. Creating something that addressed a real need and made a tangible difference in people’s lives is a success I will always be proud of. I’m grateful to everyone who contributed, and I hope this resource continues to serve students for years to come.

Total volunteers: 15
Volunteers age 25 and younger: 15
Personal volunteer hours: 45
Project volunteer hours: 60
Total volunteer hours: 105



UServeUtah

Utah Commission on Service & Volunteerism

UServeUtah is a division of the Utah Department of Cultural and Community Engagement



Utah Department of
**Cultural & Community
Engagement**