



2022-2023

CENTER FOR
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT

ANNUAL REPORT



UtahState
University

From the CCE Campus Director



Dear Friends,

I'm excited to present the 2022-23 USU Center for Community Engagement (CCE) annual report. Our dedication to community engagement is not only an essential part of USU's land-grant mission, but also a core value that defines who we are as an institution. By actively listening, collaborating, and responding to the needs of our community, the CCE has worked hard to create positive and lasting change.

One of the highlights of the past year was the establishment of the Christensen Office of Social Action and Sustainability (COSAS). Through Social Action and Sustainability programming, COSAS gives students opportunities to engage with the greater community and become life-long active citizens. COSAS student leaders organized the campus farmers market, gleaned thousands of pounds of fruit for pantries, organized Rakes & Shovels, led bi-weekly Legacy of Val service days, and so much more.

Utah State University's commitment to community engagement is also reflected in our efforts to enhance educational opportunities for underrepresented groups. Through the CCE Education Outreach program, we partnered with 16 local K-12 schools to provide after-school and mentorship programs through federal work-study and AmeriCorps. By empowering K-12 students from diverse backgrounds, we aim to ensure that all Cache Valley students have equal access to higher education and a chance to achieve their full potential.

In addition to the Carnegie Community Engagement classification, USU's commitment to community engagement was recognized this year by the 2022 Washington Monthly National University Rankings. Since 2005, Washington Monthly has ranked colleges and universities based on their contributions to the public good. USU was the highest-ranked public university in Utah, and was selected as the No. 8 public university and No. 22 among all national universities.

Thanks to the USU and Cache Valley communities for supporting this collaborative work. We look forward to another year of meaningful community engagement.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Stephens".

Kate Stephens, Associate Director
USU Center for Community Engagement



From the CCE Campus Director



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Our Mission

To support student development as active citizens and generate positive, community-driven change locally and around the world.



Our Values

- Mutually beneficial partnerships that inform community-driven change
- The equality and full potential of all
- Critical and reflective thinking
- Active and informed citizenship
- The tradition of National Service in American society

Community Engagement Awards

2023 Community Engagement Awards: Each year, USU recognizes the work of outstanding faculty, staff, students, partners and alumni that exemplifies collaboration between the university and greater community, demonstrating ongoing commitment to community engagement and positive social change.



Community-Engaged Faculty Presidential Award

Jayme Walters
Assistant Professor, Social Work

Awarded for her outstanding leadership with Transforming Communities Institute, Community-Engaged Research, and the W.A.B. Warming Center.

“Working side-by-side with community members on real problems, developing solutions, and making a measurable impact provide our students with invaluable experiences, skills, and confidence they will take into practice,” Walters said.



Community-Engaged Alumnus Presidential Award

Mary Heers
Volunteer Producer, Utah Public Radio

As a non-traditional student, Mary graduated from the Caine College of the Arts with a theatre arts emphasis in 1986. Mary was awarded for her extensive volunteer work with Utah Public Radio, bringing community together through programs such as StoryCorps and Wild About Utah.

“I believe telling each other our stories helps bind us together as a community,” Heers said. “Each story I write is a journey of learning. I go. I listen. I learn. Then I come and write the best parts down. Radio lets me share this journey with the community. For me, sharing stories is an act of love.”



Committed Community Partner Presidential Award

Science Unwrapped
Dr. Greg Podgorski, Committee Chair

The mission of Science Unwrapped is to demystify or “unwrap” science, technology, engineering and math and engage Cache Valley in the excitement of science learning.

“We face many global challenges that require accurate and swift access to scientific knowledge, and we need to empower people to seek this knowledge,” said Science Unwrapped Chair Greg Podgorski. **“Engaging the local community is an amazing team effort involving our committee, speakers, volunteers, and attendees.”**



Community-Engaged Student Presidential Award

Zoyee Thomas
Senior, Kinesiology & Health Science

This winter, Zoyee completed over 400 hours of service with the W.A.B. Warming Center, a new organization providing shelter during the winter months for individuals experiencing homelessness in Cache County. Zoyee was a critical member of the on-site leadership team. Every week, she served many hours supervising volunteers, serving guests, and coordinating laundry.

“In community-engaged work, the end goals can change and evolve, and it’s the experiences you gain on the journey that often have the greatest impact on community.”



Community-Engaged Staff Presidential Award

Shonna Hemmis
Former Director, Public & School Partnership: AmeriCorps VISTA

Shonna started her service at USU in 2014 as an AmeriCorps VISTA member at Wilson Elementary School with the Public and School Partnership. In subsequent years, Shonna moved up to VISTA Leader and program coordinator positions for PSP and assumed the director position in 2019. Before her time at USU, Shonna was a youth development coordinator in Cameroon for the United States Peace Corps.

“It’s important for me to engage with and serve in the greater community.”



Ivory Prize for Excellence in Community Engagement Award

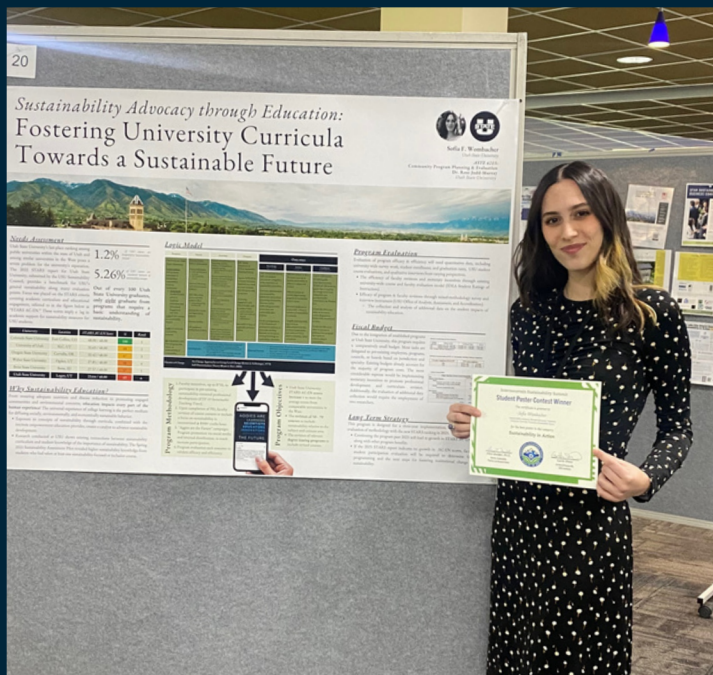
Danielle Berger
Graduate Student, Wildland Resources

This year, the Ivory Prize was awarded to Danielle Berger for her development of the Hope Community Garden. The garden will help feed hungry families in Cache County by providing a source of anonymous food aid, a current service gap that may be preventing food insecure individuals from seeking assistance. The community garden will also provide a welcoming outdoor space that fosters connection among community members and serves as an example of green stewardship in Cache Valley.

Christensen Office of Social Action & Sustainability (COSAS)

What is COSAS?

The Val R. Christensen Service Center and the Student Sustainability Office have joined forces to become the Christensen Office of Social Action and Sustainability (COSAS). Through Social Action and Sustainability programming, COSAS gives students opportunities to engage with the greater community and become life-long active citizens.



Sofia's Story

True Blue Reuse is filling an important need for education on textile waste and clothing sustainability at Utah State University. I am proud to be a part of the Christensen Office of Social Action and Sustainability as it makes me feel like I am contributing value to my community. Through COSAS, I am able to try out my ideas and make a difference in sustainability!

Sofia Wambacher

COSAS Lead, True Blue Reuse & Repair

2022-23 COSAS Impact

- 11,773 lbs. of fruit gleaned for pantries that would otherwise have gone to waste
- 1,219 in-kind and monetary donations collected for the William A. Burnard Warming Center
- 2 successful Alternative Spring Breaks completed, tackling Animal Welfare in Kanab, UT and Sustainability in Jackson, WY
- 2,475 service hours completed by 7 AmeriCorps student leaders
- 20 vendors participated in USU Farmers Market
- 329 students used Farmers Market Double Your Bucks program
- 7 Social Action and Sustainability (SAS) grants successfully completed



Kate's Story

I can confidently say that being involved with the COSAS Office and running the gleaning program has completely changed my experience at USU in remarkable ways. Before my involvement with COSAS, my world within Cache Valley existed between the boundaries of campus and whatever student housing I was living in at the time. I enjoyed my time as a student but did not feel connected to the place in which I was attending school. Getting involved with the COSAS Office has brought an enormous sense of belonging and adoration for the Cache Valley community. In addition to enriching my school experience, it has also given me a sense of direction for my life post undergrad. I feel confident in the skills that I have developed during my service with the gleaning program and know that they will aid me in successful endeavors in my future.

*Kate Markman
COSAS Lead, USU Gleaning*

Student Nutrition Access Center

SNAC continues to expand and grow with an increase in patron visits by more than double previous years. Enthusiastic SNAC volunteers show up consistently to get involved and make a difference. Many of these volunteers were recognized through the new Volunteer of the Month initiative.

Observing that many students go without breakfast, SNAC hosted the first “Finals Week Breakfast,” where students could enjoy a free nutritious breakfast from the pantry to aid in overall well-being when taking the final examinations.

This summer, SNAC oversight is transferring from the Center for Community Engagement to the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences (CAAS) and the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Sciences (NDFS). Don't worry! SNAC services and volunteer opportunities will remain the same.



2022-23 SNAC Impact

- 21,796 visits (more than double last year)
- **2,289** unique SNAC visits
- **137,946** pounds of food received through donations
- **23,544** pounds of food recovered (that otherwise goes to waste)
- **111** unique volunteers





Kaily's Story

Being a volunteer at SNAC was something I started as a requirement for my degree. I was nervous and anxious going in my first day and really wanted to go home. My worries all went away when I met the people that run SNAC. They were kind and fun and always willing to answer my questions and guide me. As the school year progressed, SNAC became something I looked forward to, especially when my mental health declined. Being a transfer student who had no real connections to campus and hardly anyone I could talk to, my grades and outlook on life reflected how I felt. I lost the will to do anything and felt as though my existence was nothing. The only thing that I didn't give up was volunteering at SNAC. It always made my day and I got to learn new and different things. It kept me going and at least trying. I can't form into words how much I enjoyed being there even if most days I hardly talked. SNAC let me focus on helping my fellow peers and kept away the thoughts that were always on my mind. Thanks to SNAC and the people who run it, I was eventually able to get out of my slump and try again!

SNAC isn't just a food pantry. It's so much more than that. It's a place that students can turn to. It's a place where students can connect and understand how to handle donations; where anyone can go no matter what background they come from. I learned a lot about how pantries work and how much the people who run them care for the students and the community. I genuinely enjoyed my time there and I hope others will too.

Kaily Ruiz
SNAC Volunteer

Thank You!

SNAC would like to thank Dairy West and Smith's Grocery for their generous donations of milk, gluten-free bread, non-dairy milk, and other supplementary items.

Education Outreach

2022-23 was a great year for Education Outreach! We returned to our traditional programming and a near pre-COVID number of tutors and students in after-school clubs.

The teams at schools throughout Cache Valley really pulled together and displayed some great camaraderie. In the Cache District, we were able to add two new schools and we made significant programming improvements using the 4H curriculum with a focus on STEM. In the Logan District, we were able to re-affirm our commitment to serving students and families who need us the most and, with the approval of the Logan City School Board, we initiated priority registration for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch.

The highlight of the year in Logan City schools was Wilson Elementary taking home first prize in our annual soccer tournament and cheer contest. This was the first time they won in the 10-year history of the tournament. We look forward to more wins all around as we move into the future.



2022-23 Education Outreach Impact

- 92 tutors
- **22,933** hours served
- **\$310,601** in work-study wages earned
- **25** tutors completed 300 hour AmeriCorps terms and earned **\$34,350** in Education Awards that can be applied to **USU tuition**



Carmen's Story

My parents always taught me that education was key to not being broke, but I've come to understand it as so much more than that. Education is the key to making the world a better place. Despite its importance, not all kids have the same access to creative hands-on STEM activities. Thanks to America Reads, kids from all backgrounds and income levels are given access to STEM education.

As a kid, I had the opportunity to participate in the after-school program Todd developed, and I can now reflect on the importance of educating impoverished kids that would otherwise not have the chance. Through after-school programming, I was given the opportunity to explore activities that encourage the pursuit of higher education. I also got to see the lack of STEM activities and career advice given in public schools, so I made it my goal to fill that gap a little bit. For the last few years, I've been able to teach unique monthly STEAM activities at schools all over the valley. Activities range from flying drones, soldering, to building bridges or testing towers on earthquake machines! It's been an honor to contribute to the program. Going forward, I hope many more kids get to explore different career pathways and higher education through the many tutors that work hard to help kids succeed in school.

Carmen Ramirez

America Reads Tutor, CCE Education Outreach

Utah Conservation Corps

Developing the conservation leaders of tomorrow through service to our public lands and surrounding communities



Jacob's Story

It was mid-October, halfway through the fall season, and my crew and I were tasked with aspen surveying for the day.

When we stopped for lunch I looked around at the aspen stand where we had sat, the vivid amber leaves flickering like small flames in the trees, the ghostly white bark with piercing black eyes, poised against a deep blue sky, the gift of the earth's beauty.

I see it as one of our great duties to be stewards of this beauty, to preserve it, and the UCC has furthered my ability to do that; bestowed me with skills, connections, and further opportunities to continue in protecting this gift of nature.

In just a few weeks I'll be heading onto wildland fire in Montana, with intentions to continue down this path for some time and I accredit this sense of direction to the UCC's mission to develop the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

Jacob Marshall
Fall Crew Member

2022-23 Utah Conservation Corps Impact

- 219 AmeriCorps members
- **137,789** hours served
- **334** miles of trail maintained or constructed
- **4,410** acres of habitat restored
- **22,649** students participated in UCC environmental stewardship programming
- **716** volunteers served **5,296** hours



LGBTQAI+ Affinity Crew

Last fall UCC launched its first LGBTQAI+ affinity field crew. This initiative stemmed from the recognition that we need to be more purposeful in supporting this community. Em Jenkins (they/them) spoke to us about why they felt LGBTQAI+ crews are important and said, "I think there are a lot of barriers to LGBTQ people both outside and inside of the conservation world. For example, there have been a lot of barriers for me in Utah just existing as a Queer person. Because of this, we need more opportunities like identity-based crews to move toward greater acceptance and inclusion in conservation fields and in the larger society."



The LGBTQAI+ affinity crew provides a safe space for members to be themselves, make genuine connections, share stories, and discuss common challenges among their fellow members. When speaking with member Hannah Niccum (she/her), she described her time serving on the crew as being "a really great experience. Being on the crew has been good for all of us to have a truly queer space where we get to work and live together. We get to know each other and see things from other viewpoints, while sharing a common LGBTQ lived experience."

Aggie Blue Bikes

This year was a busy period of growth and learning at Aggie Blue Bikes. We checked out a record number of bicycles, and donated more bikes than ever before to non-profit organizations such as CRIC, CAPSA, and Athletics United. We also had the highest level of event attendance and tool board usage of all time.

This summer, we have big plans to develop safe riding skills throughout our community. In addition to the bike rodeo obstacle courses, we will be hosting a weekly group ride and skills clinic on Fridays at 5pm. The objective of these rides is to create a sense of community among cyclists of all skill levels on the USU campus as well as greater Cache Valley.

In addition to our rides and clinics, we have hosted numerous events geared towards encouraging people to commute by bicycle and creating community. Our most popular event of the year is Bike to Breakfast, and we had over 250 people attend. Because of its success, we decided to do it again in April, but this time with a twist. In order to make the event more sustainable, we asked attendees to bring their own plates, mugs, and utensils instead of using disposables. Because of the additional effort required in bringing plates and utensils, we were worried about attendance, but we had another record-breaking number of attendees and had to order additional food to supply the masses.

Aggie Blue Bikes is excited about this year's successes and can't wait for next year!

2022-23 Aggie Blue Bikes Impact

- 531 three-month student bike checkouts
- **17** Commuter Club bikes checked out (the whole fleet!)
- **39** adult bicycles restored and donated to local organizations: CRIC and CAPSA
- **20** kids bikes refurbished and donated to local organizations: Sub for Santa and the Family Place
- **192** pounds of food donated to Cache Food Pantry at the annual Cranksgiving alley cat ride
- **1303** uses of student tool board
- **85** hours worked by ABB volunteers
- **701** people attended events and workshops at Aggie Blue Bikes



Nolan's Story

I started working at Aggie Blue Bikes in August 2020, at the start of my freshman year at USU. Prior to this time, I lived in Wisconsin where I started mountain biking at a young age and got into cross country racing in high school. I fell in love with all aspects of the sport of mountain biking, and got a job at my local bike shop when I was 15 years old. During the summer of my Junior year of high school, I chose to attend USU due to the premier location for mountain biking and skiing.

I moved to Utah during the midst of the COVID pandemic, so my freshman year was unconventional to say the least. Making friends after moving to a new place can be difficult, not to mention during a pandemic. Fortunately, working at Aggie Blue Bikes allowed me to meet new friends rather quickly. Even though I have been working at Aggie Blue Bikes for almost 3 years now and have worked with many other mechanics that have come and gone, the mechanics at Aggie Blue Bikes have always been a tight-knit group of likeminded people. In addition, being involved in the community has allowed me to meet others that share my love for bicycles.

Working at Aggie Blue Bikes has helped me tremendously in my social life and getting involved in my relatively new community.

The emphasis that Aggie Blue Bikes places on sustainability has changed the way I view sustainability. As previously mentioned, I fell in love with biking from racing against others and ripping down single track. While I still love these aspects of biking, working at Aggie Blue Bikes has opened my eyes to using bicycles as a form of sustainable transportation. After about a year into my employment, I purchased a 1990s Specialized HardRock that I use daily for commuting around town and running errands. I have become very attached to this bike and don't know how I ever lived without having a dedicated bicycle for commuting.

Choosing to work at Aggie Blue Bikes has been one of the best decisions I have made in my life thus far. Not only has my AmeriCorps position allowed me to grow as a mechanic, but it has allowed me to grow into the person I am today.

Nolan Zigler

Aggie Blue Bikes AmeriCorps Member



Community-Engaged Learning

Christensen Community Scholars

In 2003, student leaders Cameron Woolf and Aaron Brown started the process of creating a Service-Learning Scholars certificate program, aimed at recognizing Aggies who go above and beyond to connect their academic work with service in the wider community. The first Service-Learning Scholar, Karen Gourley, graduated in 2005. To better align with best practices in the field, the program was renamed “Community-Engaged Scholars” in 2016. Dozens of students have graduated with community engagement honors since the inception of this program.

With the passing of Dr. Val R. Christensen in November 2022, staff in the Center for Community Engagement decided to honor the legacy of this legendary administrator and Aggie by connecting his name to this program. Dr. Christensen, known to all as “Val,” believed in the impact that service and community work could have on students and the Cache Valley community. He enthusiastically encouraged students to reach beyond their regular academic requirements and find opportunities to make the world a better place during their time at USU. The Christensen Community Scholars continue to embody this idea as they work closely with community organizations to meet community-identified needs and create projects that have a lasting impact.

On April 19, 2023, 13 Christensen Scholars were honored at the annual Center for Community Engagement Celebration and Poster Session held in the TSC Lounges. They represented ten different majors and five different colleges. One student at USU Eastern completed the requirements for the Excellence in Community Engagement recognition. Christensen Scholar Jaidyn Thomson was selected to receive the CCE Outstanding Service Award for Community-Engaged Learning. Each scholar completed at least 200 hours of documented community work, took Community-Engaged Learning designated courses, worked with a community partner organization to identify a Community Action Project that integrated their academic expertise with a community need, and attended various “Legacy of Val” Days of Service and workshops. After presenting a poster about their Community Action Project, graduating scholars received honor cords, recognition in their commencement program, and Community-Engaged Scholar designation on their transcripts.



2022-23 Community-Engaged Learning Impact

- 81 CEL courses offered
- **647** students in CEL courses
- **36** Christensen Community Scholars
- **8** students enrolled in Peace Corps Prep
- **36** CEL community partner organizations
- **50** posters at Community Engagement Celebration & Poster Session

CEL Designated Courses

Each semester, dozens of USU faculty throughout the state teach courses that successfully integrate principles of community-engaged learning into their content. Rather than simply adding volunteer hours to a class, this integration applies the knowledge and skills at the heart of the course to a community-identified need. Faculty members and their students work alongside community partner organizations in a mutually beneficial way and make the time to reflect on their experiences. To make their courses more visible to students and to highlight their work in promotion and tenure documentation, faculty are invited to request Community-Engaged Learning designation for these kinds of courses. Students accepted into the Christensen Community Scholar program are required to take a certain number of CEL-designated courses, but anyone can register for these courses.

This year, students and faculty in **81** CEL courses worked with partner organizations large and small. Aggies in both lower- and upper-division courses read with young students, conducted SWOT analyses with organizations and businesses, assisted with marketing and development opportunities, and crafted educational materials to donate to schools. They learned about the issues facing municipalities and National Parks and presented ideas to leadership councils. Through the communication-intensive coursework that challenged many students' comfort zones, students learned in hands-on ways. "This class made a really massive impact on my life," one student wrote. "[It showed] me that I could have a real impact on changes in the world, however small they might look in the moment." CEL faculty mention students changing their majors or deciding to pursue graduate studies because of the community-engaged learning involved in their classes. Faculty also find opportunities to serve on the boards of the nonprofits with which their students work, and they enjoy maintaining relationships with partner organizations over the years.

Anyone interested in the benefits and the how-to's of community-engaged learning are encouraged to reach out to the Center for Community Engagement!

Community-Engaged Learning Peace Corps Prep

As a Christensen Community Scholar, students can choose the Peace Corps (PC) Prep track and prepare for international development fieldwork and potential Peace Corps service. PC Prep students develop the following four core competencies through interrelated coursework, hands-on experience, and professional development.

- **Training and experience in a work sector**
- **Foreign language skills**
- **Intercultural competence**
- **Professional and leadership development**

Upon completion of the program, students receive a certificate from the Peace Corps - and a competitive edge when applying for Peace Corps service.

Starting fall semester of 2023, PC Prep students can take a 7-week course that fulfills many of the requirements for the PC Prep certificate.



Lauren's Story

During my first year of college, one of my professors sparked my interest in the Peace Corps. I had the intention of applying for the volunteer program after graduation; however, I was uncertain whether I had obtained the right qualifications. Throughout college, I served two separate AmeriCorps terms with American Conservation Experience (ACE) and USU Center for Community Engagement Chapter of Food Recovery Network: both of which strengthened my leadership and team-building skills. Peace Corps Prep helped me outline my educational, professional, and volunteer experiences while defining their relation to the program's values. With the guidance of my Peace Corps Prep coordinator and recruiter, I received my certificate in May 2022 and will serve in Paraguay as a Community Environmental Promoter beginning September 2023.

Lauren Gorman

Peace Corps Prep student, Forest Ecology and Management

CCE's Impact on Students

90%

of surveyed students reported that their CCE program motivated them to explore ways to contribute to the public good.

94%

of students surveyed were aware of the social issues and root causes relevant to their community engagement.

89%

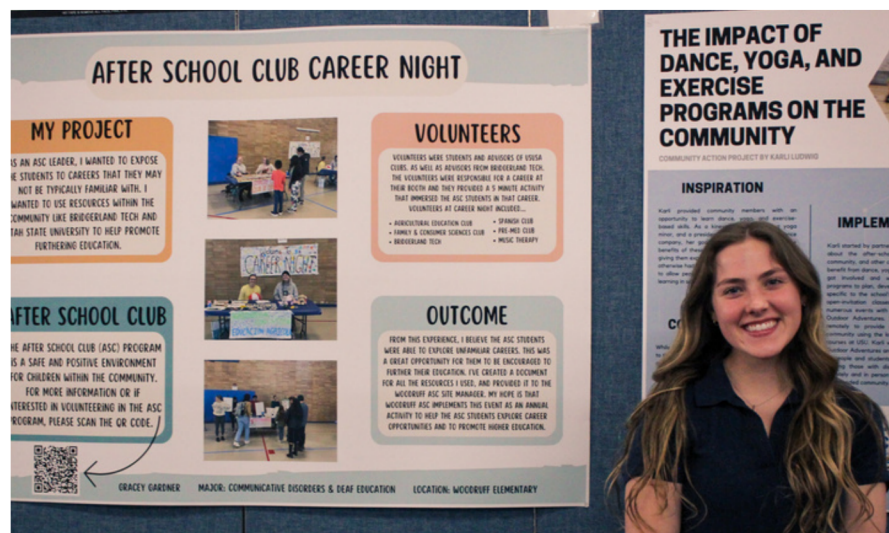
of students surveyed reported that their CCE program prepared them to listen to diverse perspectives and collaborate more effectively.

89.5%

of surveyed students reported that their CCE program helped them make a positive and measurable impact in the community.

90%

of students surveyed reported that their CCE program aided them in understanding how to apply their degree to the greater good.



Center for Community Engagement

usu.edu/community-engagement

435.797.9681

TSC 318

Our Team

Sean Damitz, CCE Executive Director

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Todd Milovich, Education Outreach Program Coordinator

Giselle Bandley, COSAS Coordinator

Rachel Schwartz, SNAC Coordinator

Avery Cronyn, Aggie Blue Bikes Program Coordinator

Greta Schen, Individual Placement & Disaster Response Coordinator

Jake Deslauriers, UCC Assistant Director

Temis Taylor, UCC AmeriCorps Coordinator

Jake Oakden, UCC Operations & Logistics Coordinator

Holly Newell, UCC Marketing Coordinator

Kirstin Mosbrugger, UCC Recruiter

Olivia Flores, UCC Recruiter

Ben Borgmann-Winter, UCC Regional Coordinator (Logan)

Joe Zelman, UCC Regional Coordinator

Ryland Bates, UCC Technical Coordinator

Kenny Henager, UCC Regional Coordinator (Cedar City)

Mark Dubé, UCC Technical Coordinator



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