Recruiting College Students

Merrimack College
Think pair share

- What efforts got you to volunteer as a freshman in college?
- What opportunities might you have missed that year that you wish you had taken advantage of?
Today’s Students

- Extensive interest and experience volunteering
- Part of highly structured programs
- Committed to social justice and equity
- Arrive on college campus without a plan.
How college organize volunteers

- One-time recruitment events
- Tabling
- Some programs require service
- Some courses require service
College problems

- Many academically strong students drop out due to lack of connection to campus
- Many students not connected to their own campus
- Residential students are having the same problems as commuters connecting to campus - many just on their phones
- Joining too many organizations - mirror of college admissions process.
- Problems “Finding your people” - making friends and connecting to people
- Higher rates of anxiety on campus
How Volunteering Can Help!

- Connecting volunteer experiences to what students want to study and do as a career
- Connecting students to other students in an activity-based setting
- Getting students something to care about beyond themselves
- Volunteering gets you out of your help head and into the present moment
- Volunteering gives you another perspective
Getting Students to Participate!

- Join the Special Olympics: Young Athletes Program.
- YAP Mission: grant students the opportunity to aesthetically enrich their academic experiences here at Merrimack College by teaching the significance of building community. We are a volunteer group, serving the local North Andover and surrounding area. The students will exhibit compassion, love, and knowledge as they work with young children with special needs.
Special Olympics: Young Athletes Program at Merrimack College

- We currently have over 90 volunteers.
- We currently have 40-50 children.

Set up, back up, one on one buddy
Special Olympics: Young Athletes Program at Merrimack College

Mission

Special Olympics: Young Athletes Program is a sport and play program for children with and without intellectual disabilities (ID), ages 2 to 7 years old. The mission of the Young Athletes Program is to provide a fun and safe environment where children can learn and develop. The Young Athletes program provides age appropriate activities and games that foster physical development as well as social and emotional development. Young Athletes introduces basic sport skills such as running, kicking and throwing. Children also learn to share, take turns and follow directions. Young Athletes offers families, teachers, caregivers and the surrounding community the chance to share the joy of sports with all children. Young Athletes is a fun way for children to get active and learn how to take care of their bodies and live a healthy and active lifestyle. Young Athletes can set the stage for a life of physical activity, friendships and learning.
Recruiting philosophy

Know your audience. Who are they? What motivates, captures, and influences them. This will then help you understand their capabilities. And what their abilities are.
In person recruiting of students

- Be passionate and excited (but do not overdo it!)
  - Let the student “lead” in discovering strength, self-awareness, and potential passion or most of all positive influence

- Positive influence such as discovering new ideas, new areas of interest, skills, things to work on professionally or personally, and much more
Social Media

- Major foundation of today’s society
  - Whether we like it or not
    - Using today’s main form of communication to recruit, advertise, and educate
    - Resulting in increased awareness and participation leading to gaining (student) experience
    - Posts for upcoming events
    - Volunteer profiles
    - Ways to be involved - large and small
    - Ways to extend outward to regional and state events
Social media examples

Spacial Olympics: Young Athletes Program at Merrimack College
May 7 at 5:31 PM 🍴
Our day A Favorite memory of YAP is..........
Because Nice Matters
This event was for a great cause hosted by Alison. Several people from the Merrimack Community stopped by and pledged for inclusivity and kindness.
More examples
FYE section

- First year experience is a required course for freshman
- A special section was created to help students learn about working with kids with disabilities
- Students in the class participated in a once per week class and volunteered on a series of Saturdays with young athletes
- Students participated in a poster fair at the end of the term
Student feedback from FYE

- I think that this course was very eye-opening. I loved participating with the special olympics kids. I can take away from this course on how to be successful during college and that working with these kids have made a difference in both our lives.

- My biggest takeaway from my FYE 1050 course was how supportive everyone was because we all have had similar experiences with the Special Olympics: YAP and therefore can connect with one another. To make the course stronger, more concentrations should be offered to apply to other majors and interests.
Down sides for students

- Some of my students complained that they enjoyed the special olympics part more than the class.
- Some students found it hard to fit the activities into a work schedule.
- Some students objected to the choice of organizations.
- Some students find it hard to step outside of their comfort zone.
Down sides for students

- Some of my students complained that they enjoyed the special olympics part more than the class.
  - However, the program aspect encourage the student to be active in class and have higher attendance

- Some students found it hard to fit the activities into a work schedule.
  - Resulting in learning life skills such as time management, responsibility, etc. early in the students college career

- Some students objected to the choice of organizations
  - However, students found ways to develop in a new or unexpected environment as planned. Most were often pleasantly surprised

- Some students find it hard to step outside of their comfort zone
  - However, thus provided the student a safe place to learn, grow, and confidence. Learning early into their college careers important personal skills
What are potential ties between college classes and volunteerism?

- Volunteerism builds a better school life, causing student(s) to become more engaged in the classroom.
Action plan

1. Where are there post secondary students who would benefit from a volunteer experience?
2. What required activities might be completed through your agency?
3. What unique experiences will volunteerism provide? How will this help the college students be more successful?
4. What key training will students need before stepping on site? What opportunities for reflection will they have to deepen their learning?
5. Who is key to making the above program happen?
6. How will you know this is successful?
Final ideas and reflections

● What would your freshman year have been like with more thoughtful recruitment of volunteers on your campus?
● What would your freshman year have been like if you had more opportunities to participate in clubs, extracurriculars, etc. better?