

## **A Study of the Impact of SPARCI on Student Learning and Success**

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**Background:** The purpose of this project was to evaluate the impact on students who are involved with the newly formed Sustainable Park and Recreation Community Initiative (SPARCI). The SPARCI Project is a partnership between Fresno State's Department of Recreation Administration and parks and recreation agencies in the San Joaquin Valley. For Spring 2016, the City of Fresno Parks, After School, Recreation and Community Services (PARCS) Department partnered with SPARCI to address a number of concerns, issues and opportunities.

There is a need to better understand student learning and gauge faculty and Fresno PARCS staff support for the program. If the program proves beneficial to student learning, and has faculty and Fresno PARCS support, then plans can be made to institutionalize SPARCI and possibly a larger program on campus.

The SPARCI Project promotes student success by providing Recreation Administration classes with opportunities for applied learning, service in local communities, and research. Students in these classes engage in meaningful work that helps address a city's key sustainability challenges related to parks and recreation. Students acquire skills and experiences that they can list on their resumes; and they develop a professional network while working to solve issues.

**Objectives:**

- To identify the opportunities for improving recreational trails and paths in the City of Fresno
- To identify the benefits of park and recreation programs
- To identify the best practices of youth at risk programs and programming
- To identify the discrepancies in existing youth at risk programs, outreach and needs
- To identify the best practices of inclusive recreation programming
- To identify strategies for promoting services for all populations
- To identify staffing and staff development opportunities
- To identify and establish an after school program resource manual
- To identify water requirements for the city parks and recommend appropriate irrigation technology

**Methods:**

A pre and post survey (piloted for a former FIPSE service learning grant) will be given to students in the courses. In addition, a survey will be used to collect information from faculty and Fresno PARCS staff on the project, using a formative evaluation survey during the process, and a summative evaluation at the conclusion. Interviews will be documented by video of students, faculty and staff (PARCS) to identify the learning outcomes of the experience, perceptions of the value of student engagement, and value of the products produced. Data will be reported after the spring term ends once the post-test surveys are completed. In addition, data are being collected at the end of the project with city staff to better understand their experiences.