



California | Campus Compact

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Press Release

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FRESNO STATE STUDENTS TAKE SUSTAINABILITY ACTION:

Fresno State students working to ensure nonprofit community-benefit organizations for the future

FRESNO, CA, OCTOBER 20, 2009: Six organizations were just selected to participate in the Capacity Building & Technical Assistance Grant of Fresno State's Sustainable Partnerships Project. The Sustainable Partnerships Project is an initiative of Fresno State to coordinate and leverage University resources to assist in creating and maintaining thriving, sustainable communities throughout the Central Valley by engaging in deeper relationships with nonprofit Community Benefit Organizations (CBOs) that are seeking to enhance their capacity.

The Capacity Building & Technical Assistance portion of the Project matches current Fresno State students and alumni with expert community consultants to create consulting teams that will help the participating CBO's who have committed to long-term viability despite the challenges of the current economy. While the American Humanics (AH) Program at Fresno State strives to develop the next generation of leaders for nonprofit, community-benefit organizations, the students are doing their part to contribute to the viability of participating organizations while they are completing their education at Fresno State.

This Project is made possible because of a 3-year grant from California Campus Compact which was awarded a Learn & Serve America Higher Education grant in excess of \$1 million from the Corporation for National & Community Service. The grant will fund *Social Innovation Generation*, California Campus Compact's new three-year initiative that will catalyze California colleges and universities to aid in the state's recovery and renewal through service, service-learning and inventive solutions embedded in social entrepreneurship, microfinance and social investment. Fresno State is one of nine California campuses chosen as initial lead collaborators on *Social Innovation Generation*.

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The nine participating campuses are California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo; California State University, Chico; California State University, Fresno; Dominican University of California; Humboldt State University; San Francisco State University; University of California, Berkeley; University of San Diego; and University of Southern California.

Fresno State's portion of the grant totals \$25,000 per year and is matched by a minimum of \$50,000 from local funders per year. **“As part of the Social Innovation Generation: California Recovery & Renewal (SIG:CARE) Initiative, our American Humanics Program at Fresno State will engage students, alumni, faculty, residents and community volunteers, local professional consultants, and community benefit organizations across four counties in California's San Joaquin Valley in a ‘Capacity Building & Technical Assistance’ effort to enhance the infrastructure and operations of five to six CBOs each year,” said Dr. Matthew Jendian, Associate Professor and Chair of Sociology.**

Fresno State's American Humanics Program has formed eight teams of four Fresno State students and alumni to partner with a local professional consultant to:

1. conduct organizational assessments of Community Benefit Organizations and prepare a report recommending best practices, along with an implementation plan with timelines;
2. work with organizational staff, board members, and a long-term volunteer to implement recommendations; and
3. re-assess organizational performance and impact after one year.

The six organizations selected through a competitive review process to participate in Year 1 of the three-year grant are Center for Independent Living, Focus Forward, Fresno Institute For Urban Leadership, HandsOn Central California, Health Smiles Mobile Dental Foundation, and Highway City Community Development.

President Welty has convened several listening sessions in which he has sought input from community leaders about their expectations for the University's role in assisting nonprofit, community benefit organizations. Through these meetings, four priority areas have consistently emerged: 1) convening (being a “neutral” convener to bring the community together for conversation around various issues); 2) research (especially on the economic contributions of nonprofits in the region); and 3) a “pathway” for training leaders (staff & board) for the community-benefit sector (through the American Humanics Program, Central Valley Business Incubator, University Business Center, & Continuing and Global Education).

When the project was explained to the group of students invited to participate, Marla Hartman, a Fresno State American Humanics student commented, “This is a chance for students to have access to organizations at a management level—something we have not had the opportunity to do prior to graduation.” Dr. Don Simmons, Project Director, explained further, “This experience is part of the

Sustainable Partnerships Project of Fresno State, being an engaged institution, giving students opportunities to apply their education to real-life situations, making the transition from classroom to workplace much smoother, while contributing to quality of nonprofit, community benefit organizations, and thus, their community.”

About the Corporation for National and Community Service and Learn and Serve America

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that each year engages four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America programs. The mission of CNCS is to improve lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. CNCS’s Learn and Serve America program awards grants to state agencies, schools, nonprofit groups and institutions of higher education to engage students in service activities linked to academic achievement and civic responsibility. This type of service is called service-learning. For more information, please visit www.NationalService.gov.

About California Campus Compact

Since its founding in 1988, California Campus Compact has worked to build the collective commitment and capacity of colleges and universities throughout California to advance civic and community engagement for a healthy, just and democratic society. California Campus Compact each year invests in and champions more than 500,000 students, faculty members, administrators and community members involved in diverse and ground-breaking activities that support and expand civic and community engagement throughout California. California Campus Compact is at the forefront in developing cutting-edge curricula in service-learning, an innovative educational strategy that fosters civic responsibility and meaningful service to the community. For more information, please visit www.cacampuscompact.org.

About the American Humanics Program at California State University, Fresno

Housed within the College of Social Sciences, the American Humanics (AH) Program is an applied offering of the Department of Sociology, allowing students of any major and community individuals to earn a certificate in management and leadership for community benefit organizations. American Humanics at Fresno State is part of a national alliance of colleges, universities and nonprofit organizations dedicated to educating, preparing and certifying individuals to strengthen and lead community benefit organizations. Our American Humanics Program works with hundreds of community benefit organizations in the region to prepare students and community members to strengthen our communities. More than two-thirds of 90 program alumni are employed regionally, helping dozens of organizations. For more information, please visit www.csufresno.edu/ah.

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If you would like more information about how to participate in this project, or to schedule an interview with Matthew Jendian, please contact him at 559-278-2234 or e-mail him at matthewj@csufresno.edu.