

Weaving Community Resilience

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Introduction

The Carbon Neutrality Fellow of UC Irvine, designed a project that aimed to create human infrastructure through which climate and sustainability solutions foster and reflect social cohesion and inclusion of diverse voices in our university community and beyond. The ultimate goal was to build community resilience on the university campus through campus centers such as the Center of Black Cultures, the Cross-Cultural Center, Fresh Hub, GSRC, Dream Center, and Student Housing. The current state at UCI is that discussions concerning community resilience about identity and environmental care are occurring on our campus but are not clearly interwoven in a way that allows students to see the intersectionality of certain issues.

Purpose:

- To enable students to connect the resilience conversations that individual units on campus are having with one another. We desire students to have a better understanding of all the ways social justice and environmental issues intersect.
- To broaden students' understanding of what resistance looks like and exposing students to unconventional ways of practicing it.

The purpose is not so much to make the weaving tighter among students who are already involved in our allied centers, but more so to weave in students who are not already involved but with whom the community resilience frame resonates.

We seek to understand, engage, and lift up the interests, contributions, and leadership of underrepresented communities on our campus and in communities in our region that are more vulnerable to the impacts of the changing climate. Some "signals of success" would be to see more cross-over student participation and involvement in each of these respective centers. Others would include increased student consistency in event attendance and representation (seeing and hearing diverse voices, complex representation)



Student Impact

My fellowship experience impacted the campus community by enabling students to connect the conversations surrounding resilience that individual units on campus are having with one another. We desired students to have a better understanding of all the ways social justice and environmental issues intersect and by broadening students' understanding of what resistance looks like and exposing students to unconventional ways of practicing it. We also participated in the Social Justice Summit and had a potluck for organizations and folks interested in community resilience. This event was open to all students, staff and student organizations. We wanted to build relationships for this fall quarter event. We invited folks to come teach us about them and their community. In that space we were able to connect with other students and student-led organizations on campus. For the Social Justice Summit, we called our piece, "Sustainability Meets the World." We came together to combat the strong stigma and misconception on our campus that sustainability can only be practiced by those coming from elite socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The truth is that sustainability practices vary from culture to culture and by embracing that diversity we can obtain a better understanding of each other and the steps we need to take to make environmentally and socially just changes in our community. By the end of this workshop, student staff left with understanding environmental justice and the ways that social justice and sustainability go hand in hand; Ways that the root cultures of many of our students here at UCI have been practicing care for the earth for generations. Lastly, we had a viewing and discussion of "The North Pole" web series, to which we had around 60 people present. Later in the afternoon, Josh and Reyna facilitated a "Make It Fresh!" spoken word workshop in the Ring Room. The 30 people present then took pen to paper to use imagery and our senses to describe our own homes, with the help of Josh and Reyna. This was an eye-opening experience because not only did we get to dismantle what others might think our homes are like, but we also found language to describe our own homes. This changed our perspective on home: what that looks like and who gets to decide what home is.

Materials and Methods

First, we aimed to change hearts and minds. With this, we deliberately sought out different organizations to foster relationships. By virtue of this we decided to have a potluck. The potluck was a end-of-Fall quarter potluck + meet and greet.

Next, we decided to do some behavioral changes. For the Social Justice Summit, I collaborated with the Global Sustainability Resource Center; the Center for Black Cultures, Resources and Research; as well as the other Community Resilience Fellows. We decided to call our Social Justice Summit piece, "Sustainability Meets the World." We came together to combat the strong stigma and misconception on our campus that sustainability can only be practiced by those coming from elite socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Ways that Housing staff and students can join us in building youth leadership for community resilience to a changing climate. As an example of traditional sustainable practices, we introduced students to simple homemade beauty/health product recipes from three of the countries mentioned.

Lastly, for our spring event, we had a viewing and discussion of "The North Pole" web series. Later in the afternoon, Josh and Reyna (the writer and actor of the web series) facilitated a "Make It Fresh!" workshop in the Ring Room. Make it Fresh! is a spoken word & writing workshop that explores the relationship between your environment and your community, race and place, 'hood stories and global climate change. During this 90-minute workshop, we explored how the origins of the word "eco" evoke "home," inviting us to include our own home environments, whether urban or suburban or rural, in our ideas of "ecosystems."

Results and Outcomes

For the potluck, we had about 31 people in attendance, for the Social Justice summit, we had a total of 41 attendees. This SJ summit was for RA's and these RA's disseminated this information to 9,000 freshmen. The Community Resilience Co-Lab had direct contact with around 131 individuals and we sent out multiple campus wide emails that reached all 29,000 students. Lastly, we cultivated a mailing list of 2,8000 students and community members who get emails regarding events and workshops the Co-Lab is hosting.



Conclusions

For each event that we hosted, we had a lot of student involvement and curiosity about sustainability and realizing how much these issues pertain to them and deepened their understanding about why they should care. This foundation that the fellowship established this year is essential in creating the physical infrastructure needed in order to carry out the goal to zero emissions. This human infrastructure got us halfway there.



Future Goals

Now that human infrastructure has been established, the next steps would be to create physical infrastructure in order to carry out more scientific ways to be sustainable and address the Carbon offsets problem on UC Irvine's campus. We will also continue to give students a better understanding of all the ways social justice and environmental issues intersect and by broadening students' understanding of what resistance looks like and exposing students to unconventional ways of practicing it. Next steps will be tackling the more of the science side of the goal to zero carbon emissions



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