

How to Make Your Resume Sparkle:
Insights on Motivations and Pressures to Volunteer at St. Olaf College

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Executive Summary

Abstract

Our research investigates the social, cultural, and institutional motivations and pressures behind student volunteering at St. Olaf College. Through interviews with current students, this study comments on the various ways in which St. Olaf students are engaged with volunteering, while providing insight into the many motivations, pressures, benefits, commitment levels, and limitations concerning student involvement. Additionally, interviews with administrative personnel of the college informed our research into how the college's mission and institutional expectations influence student volunteering. The study produced a number of interesting findings that overall pointed to a shift in institutional understanding of volunteering away from a sense of service and volunteerism, to opportunities rooted in career aspiration and outcomes.

Main Points of Findings

- Nearly all students volunteered before attending St. Olaf college. All students put their volunteer experience on their college applications, as they believed it would enhance their chances of getting in. Besides college acceptance, there were multiple other motivations behind high school volunteering ranging from church based services (i.e. mission trips) to obligations in order to graduate.
- Various students said that obtaining access to volunteer opportunities in high school was easier than in college. This was the case because the majority of high school volunteer programs are run and organized by adults.
- Many students cited the origin of pressure to volunteer as one born from within the student body, creating a culture of service and volunteerism, rather than one coming from the institution overall.
- St. Olaf was cited by students and administration as an institution that attracts service-minded individuals who practice volunteering on a regular basis.
- Both administrative and student participants noted a shift in the institutional understanding and devotion away from service-minded involvement to one more heavily focused on outcomes and career goals.
- Student involvement, commitment, and dedication to volunteer opportunities constitute a wide spectrum of varying degrees.
- Some students cite a lack of tangible benefits, and potential infringements upon the ability to perform successfully to academic expectations as reasons for not engaging in volunteerism. Others discussed the fluctuation of their involvement as depending on school work.
- Students tended to take a meaningful approach to volunteering, preferring to engage in programs that were most relevant and interesting to their current life direction and future career goals.

- Many students described feeling a moral responsibility to volunteer (helping others, giving back to the community, etc.), paralleling the college's mission to encourage students to "lead lives of worth and service."
- The most meaningful volunteer experiences were those tied to student passions and/or were long-term experiences resulting in meaningful relationships.
- Volunteering purely to enhance one's resume is not a significant motivating factor.
- Many students volunteer, in part, to escape the stressful academic and social environment at St. Olaf.

I. Research Setting

Founded in 1874 by Norwegian immigrants, St. Olaf College is a private liberal arts college rooted in the Lutheran tradition (St. Olaf College 2012). As a four-year residential college, 91% of its approximate 3,100 students live on campus and contribute to the campus community (St. Olaf College 2012). St. Olaf students balance an academically rigorous education with participation in music ensembles (one-third of St. Olaf students are involved in choirs, bands, and/or orchestras), and options to get involved in over 200 recognized student organizations, focused on a range of awareness, cultural, political, religious, service, and special interest topics (St. Olaf College 2012). Located in Northfield, Minnesota, a historic town of 20,000 people, St. Olaf College is forty-five minutes from the Twin Cities (St. Olaf College 2012). Students are encouraged to remove themselves from “The Hill” and engage with the wider community through internships, practicums, and volunteer service opportunities.

St. Olaf College aims to foster the development of the whole person in mind, body, and spirit. Students choose a major from 39 disciplines in the natural sciences, mathematics, social sciences, fine arts, and humanities (St. Olaf College 2012). However, it is often emphasized that the major is not of the utmost importance to a fulfilling education. Rather, it is the holistic nature of a liberal arts education focused on fostering critical thinking and moral formation. The college prides itself in producing Rhodes Scholars, Fulbright Fellows, Peace Corps volunteers, and students who go on to earn doctoral degrees. Additionally, as a college of the church, St. Olaf faculty and staff encourage critical and reflective religious conversation.

St. Olaf students are described as “seekers of truth” and “citizens of the world leading lives of unselfish service to others” in the college’s mission statement (St. Olaf Mission 1987). In accordance with this concept, 75% of the class of 2012 participated in off-campus programs and 68% participated in international programs (St. Olaf College 2012). The college highlights the development of a global perspective through offering 110 off-campus semester-long and year-long programs in 46 countries while also supporting off-campus internship and service opportunities in Northfield, the Twin Cities, nationally and abroad (St. Olaf College 2012).

II. Methodology

Our research draws from qualitative data gathered through interviews with St. Olaf students who volunteer and St. Olaf staff and administrative personnel who oversee student volunteers. We also conducted a focus group for students who do not volunteer at St. Olaf. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in person. These settings were informal, as we intended to create a comfortable environment where our participants would feel inclined to share with us their experiences and perceptions of volunteerism at St. Olaf. The interviews with St. Olaf staff and administration were generally held in their offices, and interviews with fellow students were conducted in convenient and accessible locations around campus.

Our research populations constituted 36 students and 10 staff and administrative personnel who oversee student volunteers. Participants were recruited through a variety of methods. We contacted the student-run campus volunteer network, service organization e-mail aliases, recruited through personal networks, and distributed personal emails to selected administrative figures.

We utilized precise, yet open-ended questions to address how volunteering affects St. Olaf students, St. Olaf College, and the programs and communities that they serve. Additionally, our questions served to help us understand the motivations behind student volunteers, the impacts and implications perceived by student volunteers, institutional expectations for volunteering, and how volunteering fits into the college's mission.

During interviews with students who volunteer, we focused on their expectations and obligations as students at this institution. To gain insight into their motivations, we asked questions that required self reflection, as well as institutional and structural considerations regarding volunteerism at St. Olaf.

For students who are not involved in volunteer activities, we held a focus group, which consisted of seven participants. We did this for the sake of alleviating potential social stigmas that may be associated with the practice of not volunteering. We encouraged organic conversation focusing on challenges and obstacles to engagement in volunteering at St. Olaf. Last, we gathered data and gained

insight from staff and administrative personnel who oversee student volunteers. We asked them a number of questions based on the motivational forces behind volunteering that we posed students.

After all the data had been transcribed and organized, we began the process of analyzing and developing our findings. Conversations with our research group highlighted trends in our data, as well as unique characteristics of volunteerism at St. Olaf that prompted deeper analysis of certain issues. Keeping in mind preconceived notions of students who volunteer vs. students who do not volunteer, we looked for recurrent patterns to form themes of volunteerism, as well as outliers that defied our understanding of the implications and motivations of volunteerism.

Our research upholds the standards of the Institutional Review Board of St. Olaf College, and we adhered to the ethical principles of beneficence, respect, and justice of our project participants. We were explicit with the intention of our research, and followed the appropriate behavioral conduct when recruiting and conducting our research. Individuals who agreed to partake in our research were read a letter of intent, and we were clear and intentional about making sure the individual knew their participation was voluntary. We also guaranteed the privacy of our subjects and ensured their anonymity. We were intentional that our questions did not cause unnecessary harm, while making it clear that research participants had the option of not answering any question that they were not comfortable discussing with us.

Limitations in Methodology

We interviewed 36 members of the St. Olaf student body, a number that might have been significantly larger given a much wider time frame. Although these qualitative interviews allowed us to gain multiple perspectives on volunteerism at St. Olaf, it is essential to keep in mind that our participants represent a small percentage of the student body who volunteer at St. Olaf. It is possible that their experiences do not reflect the typical St. Olaf student's volunteer experience. As a result, our data must not be generalized to populations beyond our research participants. Not only is this the case with St. Olaf students, but also with the 10 staff and administrative personnel who oversee student volunteers.

Due to the nature of our topic, participants may have felt pressured to respond in a certain manner regarding their volunteer experiences for fear of going against cultural norms associated with volunteer work. Additionally, since many of our interviews occurred in public settings, the possibility of being overheard may have affected participants' responses. Furthermore, we chose to define volunteerism as uncompensated labor. While this broad definition allowed participants the ability to comment unrestrictedly on many experiences they characterized under volunteerism, the lack of a truly operationalized definition of what volunteering is (e.g. is an unpaid internship considered a volunteer experience?) may have contributed to confusion amongst participants.

III. Problem & Literature Review

In the initial stages of research, our plan was to focus on the immigrant communities in the Northfield and Faribault areas. In a community where a significant portion of the population is composed of Latino/Hispanic and Somali/East African immigrants living within a predominantly white area, there are a number of organizations, small businesses and individuals working to facilitate the transition of immigrants to the local community. It was our hope to explore the nature of community, transition and resettlement revolving around immigrant populations, as they exist in Rice County. We envisioned being able to interview individuals, community partners and students working in some capacity with the immigrant community.

In an attempt to engage with a community partner, we reached out to the United Way of Faribault (UMF), an organization working specifically with connecting the Somali immigrant population of Faribault to social and health services. In reaching out to the UWF as potential community partners, we hoped to perform research that could act as a form of evaluation to the outreach and service connection programs that the UWF offers. Unfortunately, the partnership with the UWF fell through, as the nature of the research they were hoping to conduct was purely quantitative.

Additionally, we sought a partnership with the Advocates for Human Rights' One Voice Minnesota Project (OVMP), a human rights initiative aiming to combat biases and address immigration-related issues with the aim of building healthy and welcoming communities (One Voice Minnesota Project 2013). In placing our research within the wider parameters of the OVMP, our findings would contribute to a much larger, long-term study of Minnesota as an expanding immigrant community. Once again, however, a potential partnership with the One Voice Minnesota Project fell through. Due to the nature of the project, there were many logistical and time constraints that disallowed us from being an eligible partner.

Finally, the continuation of our research project based around immigration fell to an ethical evaluation of our methods, aims and resources. Despite our well-intended motivations for studying immigrant communities in the surrounding areas, we came to understand that we lacked an individual or organization to act as the necessary entry point for engagement in this potentially sensitive and vulnerable community. Furthermore, the realization of language and cultural barriers proved troublesome. Without adequate time to recruit translators, or to familiarize ourselves with the socio-cultural backgrounds of our potential interviewees, we became astonishingly aware of the paternalistic and imbalanced power systems at play between researcher and subject.

Further evaluating our research aims, we realised that the ethical limitations preventing us from pursuing a study of immigrant communities did not hold up when considering student subjects involved in community efforts. Allowing this transition to take form, we began avidly researching the role of student volunteer initiatives as they relate to immigration. We were quickly limited by the parameters of research and accessibility of this topic. Finally, by expanding this topic to one that includes students volunteering across all issue bases and organizational focuses, we came to the current topic of our research study: the motivations and structures behind volunteering at St. Olaf College. Through our current topic, we hope to explore many of the same thematic discussions that we initially had in mind. How are students engaging in volunteer opportunities in a way that creates a meaningful experience?

Where does the motivation and intention for such outreach begin, and what is the role of the college on an administrative level in creating an environment for volunteerism.

Historical development of student volunteers

The term volunteering originated as a two-fold definition formed out of the political, cultural and philanthropic customs of Britain during the Tudor period (Oppenheimer 2008). In her book “Volunteering: Why We Can’t Survive Without It” (2008), Melanie Oppenheimer discusses the nature of volunteering as it first relates to the offering of military service, a concept that grew outward into religious servitude and finally into a socio-government constricted order to relieve mass amounts of poverty in Britain. With the 1601 Elizabethan statute of Poor Law, the state adopted measures of altruism that had previously fallen in the domain of religious order (Oppenheimer 2008). Historian M.J Daunton discusses volunteerism in a similar social context. In his article “Middle-Class Voluntarism and the City in Britain and America”(1996), Daunton sites the creation of a middle class in the late 1700’s in Britain as the root for civic engagement and the introduction of volunteer organisations. The disparity in socioeconomic status between the bourgeois, poor, and even within the middle class created a forum wherein volunteer organisations acted as a means to establish top-down inter-class relationships (Daunton 1996).

Extending into the parameters of inter-racial service-learning, Multicultural Service-Learning (MSL), a philosophy that aims to extend service learning to teaching about race, culture, and class, follows a similar top-down practice of volunteerism at many colleges (Dunlap 1998). The intercultural service-learning experience often cited is that of white college students tutoring black or latino youth. College student participants in MSL programs benefit from a deeper understanding of the realities facing minority groups, while programs lacking personal gain the free student-service (Sperling 2007). However, many ethical issues arise with MSL, as researchers have found that generally, the white college students benefit more from the program than the marginalized populations with whom they work.

Historically, students have been involved in volunteering for a significant period of time. With a lack of formalized citizenship education in Britain in the early 1970's, students in higher education began creating volunteer outreach as a means for expanding civic responsibility beyond the classroom (Student Hubs 2012). Marks and Jones (2004) discuss similar phenomena that occurred with volunteering in the United States in the early 1990's. In 1990, a governmental initiative began promoted service and outreach to US citizens. The movement acted as a means for routing citizens against a sense of self-centered individualism in favour of community connection. In particular, student centered community involvement. Policy-makers and educational institutions provide incentive and momentum for student-community engagement by offering service-oriented scholarships, grant programs, and service-learning programs. Furthermore, top-tier colleges and commendable honor societies began requiring or strongly encouraging volunteering and/or service as criteria for admission. Resulting from this national initiative, students currently engage in community based service and service-learning more than ever before in the US (Marks and Jones 2004).

In recent years in the United States, volunteering is prominent and rising amongst college students (Handy et al. 2010). Student volunteering rates rose from 20% in 2003, to over 30% in 2005, making student rates higher than the 28.8% of general adults who participate in volunteering for the first time (Handy et al. 2010). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005, individuals with higher levels of education are consistently more likely to volunteer than those with less education. Currently, the growth rate of college student volunteers is more than double the growth rate of all adult volunteers, and in 2009 slightly more than 42% of college graduates volunteered during their collegiate career (Dote and Cramer 2005.) According the Corporation for National and Community Service (2013), in 2011, volunteerism reached its highest level in five years when 64.3 million Americans reported having volunteered in some capacity, making up a total of approximately \$171 billion in free labor.

Campus-Community Connections

The benefits of volunteerism are twofold; they are felt by both college students and the community in which they are involved in. For example, students gain real world experience and develop leadership skills, while community programs benefit from free services (Bonsall Harris, & Marczak 2002). Colleges all across the nation are contributing to increased efforts to engage students in their greater community. This is exemplified by the investments into the creation of easily accessible volunteer programs, with tutoring and mentoring being the most popular volunteer activities amongst college students (Sperling 2007). A study done by S.D. Bruning (2006) suggests that the relationship between university students and their respective communities is a positive one; 90% of all surveyed community members believed that the university was an asset to the community, which is partially due to student engagement in the community (Bruning 2006).

Motivations of volunteerism

Volunteering is understood to be a non-compulsory activity choicely undertaken and engaged in by students without monetary reimbursement. But the motivations behind volunteer involvement are progressively understood to be complicated and multifaceted, to the extent that the very nature and insight into the implications of student involvement in volunteerism need to be reevaluated. As institutions of higher education are becoming increasingly saddled with the responsibility of fostering the creation and growth of conscious and responsible citizens, in which the social and ethical underpinnings of volunteer engagement play a role, interpreting student motivations of volunteerism has begun to acquire poignant significance (Beerth 2012). The motivations of volunteerism can be compartmentalized into three broad categories: altruistic (or values-based), utilitarian, and social motives (Handy 2010).

Altruistic motivations are core, generally intrinsic, values that students report influence their decision to engage in volunteer work. Altruistic motivations are internal and do not require external rewards (e.g. praise), they are inherently unselfish, and they stem from religious beliefs and/or a sense of moral responsibility to help others and support worthy causes (Handy 2010; Marks 2004). Borrowing from Selznick's theory of social participation, student volunteers who are motivated by altruistic values

are essential participants of organizations that depend on volunteer contribution – their involvement reflects a deeply held set of personal conviction that is integral to one’s identity and assures dedication to the organization they are involved in (Marks 2004). Beerth (2012) also found that growing up in families that are actively involved in social and community outreach programs positively correlates with later student volunteer involvement in college. Altruistic motivation is linked to engrained, a priori inclinations to appreciate and recognize the importance and benefits of volunteering within a community (Marks 2004)

Utilitarian motivations are generally external factors that impact students’ volunteerism through the potential to increase cultural capital (Handy 2010). They include examples such as the ability to enhance and create distinct resumes, develop new skills in a formal setting, and gain valuable work experience (Handy 2010). Students hoping to herald desirable characteristics in a job market are likely to employ utilitarian motivations to distinguish their worth as potential employees from other potential candidates. Students engaged in volunteerism are also reportedly more inclined to exhibit pronounced leadership abilities, greater self-confidence in social settings, and more developed critical thinking and conflict resolution skills (Handy 2010).

Sax (2004) found that college students are more likely to be engaged in episodic volunteering, defined to be an engagement of two weeks or less over a one year period – a behavior typical of utilitarian-motivated students. Attempts to explain and justify episodic volunteering include recognition that students do not have copious amounts of extra time to volunteer regularly, as they are generally preoccupied with academic work, paid work, extracurricular activities, etc., in addition to volunteer engagements. But the notion that students are too thinly stretched is disputed, as one study found that extracurricular activities (such as student government associations, performing arts, sports, etc), and work conflicts did not decrease the level of involvement of student volunteers (Marks 2004). Lending again from Selznick’s sociological theory of social participation, students who engage in episodic volunteerism are segmental participants – they demonstrate a limited level of commitment, and are able to be defined in cost-benefit terms by the organization they are involved in (Marks 2004).

Lastly, social motives for volunteerism include social pressure (e.g. friends involved in volunteering) and the possibility of creating and extending social networks and resources (Handy 2010). College environments may also foster and facilitate an expectation of student involvement in volunteering, where the students feel compelled or forced into volunteering. This distorts the nature of volunteering, as defined and understood as “non-obligatory helping” (Beerh 2012). This externally administered pressure may reduce students’ internal motivation, and may lead to episodic and noncommittal involvement in volunteer opportunities. It is also important to note the possibility that many students feel unable to report that they only volunteer to enhance their resume or gain job experience because of the social expectation that volunteer work must be altruistic and that separate, personal desires to benefit are immoral (Handy 2010).

Ultimately, the motivations behind student volunteerism are a complex interplay of altruistic values, utilitarian benefits, and social pressure. For example, motivations to volunteer may stem from an interest in developing friendships, acting upon an idealistic desire to contribute to positive social change, and the necessity to enhance post-graduation career opportunities. It is interesting to consider, then, that students repeatedly report altruistic motives as their primary source of motivation to engage in volunteering, which follows a general consensus in research that internal sources of motivation exert a greater impact than external sources of motivation (Ozorak 2003). Another situation to consider is how motivations develop and change during an individual's involvement in an organization; utilitarian motivations may have been the initial reason why someone chose to volunteer, however the volunteer may develop other motivations to continue their involvement. Community service and volunteer work is reported to have transformative abilities, which helps explain how and why students volunteer initially and why they chose to continue (Ozorak 2003).

Turning to our theoretical framework, we are able to incorporate a critical analysis of the limitations of volunteerism with backing from the concept of cultural capital, as presented and understood by Bourdieu. As he discusses, cultural capital is a concept that refers to social mobility outside the compartmentalization and understanding of social mobility as only existing within purely economic

means as it was historically argued by Marx. Bourdieu's argument of cultural capital exists in three forms of embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital, all of which are aspects that contribute to the social relations and systems of exchange that determine human difference and existence within a society.

Particular forms of skills, knowledge, education and experiences are just a few components of cultural capital that are gained by students involved in volunteer activities. Because these beneficial attributes of volunteering are institutionally recognized as contributing to the legitimacy, credentials, and qualifications of an individual in society, the cultural capital of individuals who volunteer can be translated into economic terms.

IV. Findings & Analysis

Throughout the interview process, we came to understand the ambiguity that accompanies the term volunteering. Students and administrative participants alike deemed the concept questionable and applied it to a number of different experiences ranging across the board. Keeping the definition intentionally open-ended, participants cited experiences such as: tangible long or short term volunteer work, service projects, mission work, unprovoked acts of kindness, advocacy, academic civic engagement, domestic and/or international aid work, and unpaid internships. Additionally, students volunteer through a number of organisations affiliated with the college, as well as those engaging the community at large.

A significant portion of our student participants cite the origin of their volunteering as engagement through their "honor house", a St. Olaf initiative that allows students to cohabitate in a campus house built around a common theme that often involves volunteering. Many students cite volunteer opportunities with local medical/health related institutions, such as hospital volunteering. Similarly, student participants noted educational tutoring and mentoring among the most popular types of volunteering. Some students discussed their role in weeklong student-organized alternative spring break options as among their most significant volunteer experiences, such as Habitat for Humanity, Ole Spring Relief, and Fellowship For Christian Oles Spring Break.

Despite bearing a visible presence as a branch of the Student Government Association, the Volunteer Network (VN) was not cited by student participants as a prominent resource for volunteer connection. Rather, the VN, which offers collective volunteer resources and systems of support to students leading and participating in volunteer activities, went significantly unmentioned by student and administrative participants, indicating a lack in visibility overall.

In order to best convey our findings pertaining to volunteerism at St. Olaf, we chose to categorize our data into the following sub-topics: pre-college volunteering, institutional expectations, student motivations and benefits, level of volunteer commitment, and limitations to volunteering at St. Olaf.

Pre-College Volunteering

Nearly all students who were interviewed, both current volunteers and non-volunteers, volunteered at some point before attending college. The majority of interviewees said they put their high school volunteering experience on college applications in order to boost their likelihood of achieving acceptance. As one student described, “(volunteering in high school had a) more tangible gain - volunteering for your resume for college applications. Whereas now there are less tangible benefits.” This sentiment was complemented by a St. Olaf administrator who described, “St.Olaf puts a value behind volunteering during the admissions process.”

Additionally, through interviews with St. Olaf administrators, we learned there are 50-60 service leader scholarships awarded each year to deserving St.Olaf students. Volunteering is often an integral factor in determining scholarship recipients. That said, one administrator commented on the transparency of volunteer experiences, mentioning how one can usually tell the difference between volunteer experiences used strictly to enhance a resume and volunteer experiences that reveal more altruistic motivations. While the former experiences do not hurt an application, the latter experiences often prove to be more enriching, indicate greater involvement, and contribute to increased understanding of social issues.

Along with the motivation to volunteer in order to gain acceptance into college, many students completed mandatory volunteering in high school. For example, multiple students volunteered in order to meet the quota required of National Honor Society members. A few interviewees attended high schools that mandated a certain number of volunteer hours each month in order to graduate. One student described having a scholarship to attend a private high school. In order to pay the school back for this scholarship, she volunteered 360 hours each school year.

Furthermore, some students volunteered in high school because they were encouraged to by their parents or had grown up volunteering. A couple interviewees noted that their families volunteered together as bonding activities. For example, one student mentioned how every Christmas her family volunteered at a food pantry. A few students also mentioned how their parents served as role models regarding their volunteer involvement. One student described:

[My] dad really thinks that is important to volunteer (does stuff with nonprofits) and that it is crucial for college applications. My mom [feels that] volunteerism is connected to church, faith, and being a good Catholic. My sibling volunteered too.

Along these lines, many students described a connection to high school volunteerism and the church. As one student described, “I think religion is how it all started. Serving the poor to be a good Christian. Turned into fun - what I like to do and begin a good citizen, neighbor, etc.” Church-led mission trips were referenced amongst a multitude of interviewees. Others volunteered simply because they enjoyed volunteering, which was often a social outlet for having fun. One student drew upon multiple explanations for her volunteer involvement when she said, “high school volunteering was a big part of who [I] was, mostly because it was part of the pressure to do what was right and [it was] what everyone else was doing.”

Various students stated that volunteering was easier to do in high school. Not only did students have more time to volunteer, but it was easier to find opportunities to do so. As mentioned above, church-led mission trips were a popular volunteer experience. These trips were already organized by adult supervisors, and the students enjoyed the ease of simply paying a fee and spending a week or two with

their friends. The places where students volunteered varied greatly: vacation bible school, Feed My Starving Children, Boy/Girl Scouts, National Honor Society, Big Brother Big Sister, ESL programs, and advocacy groups.

Institutional Expectations

The level by which student and administrative participants recognize institutional pressure to volunteer varies significantly. Many responders, both administrative and student, cited the pressure as one generated within the student populace, rather than at an institutional level. In other words, students felt a high level of “peer pressure” to complete the image of an appropriate St. Olaf student by engaging in volunteerism. Directly referencing an instance wherein she felt “peer-pressure” one student participant quoted the accusatory conversations that riddle her daily life: “Oh, you didn’t go to relay for life? You don’t have a couple of hours to feed the hungry?” Another participant cited the entry to volunteer involvement as social, encouraged and pressured by friends engaged in the organisation, not pressure from the college as a whole. Furthermore, an administrative participant commented directly on this phenomenon of social pressure by saying, “The opportunities [to volunteer] are encouraged by the college, but the pressure comes largely from the students themselves.” Another administrative participant went on to say:

The institution and college experience must be relevant for students and their experiences, lives, and interests that are developed during college. There is a perception that the students want deeper engagements with their college experience.

Therefore, this comment once again draws attention to the fact that students are the driving force to make volunteerism a core college value and initiative beyond merely academics and extracurricular activities. Many student participants acknowledged the social aspect of volunteering, and the peer pressures associated with that. Rather than the college inciting a pressure for students to uphold levels of engagement and service, students noted that the “image” of the college is perpetuated and upheld by the students who volunteer of their own accord. To this, one respondent said:

The institution has created an environment of social pressure to volunteer. There is a culture of volunteerism on the campus. The image, mission and idea of the college are upheld through the students who are engaged and who volunteer.

The concept of campus culture was a prominent theme that many other participants also addressed. In many ways, participants would comment on the culture of the college in the place of addressing institutional pressure or student-born pressures directly. For those who brought it up, student and administrative participants were in majority agreement that St. Olaf “culture” is one dedicated to values of service and volunteerism. Citing volunteerism as a cultural norm derives back to Bourdieu’s theories of cultural capital. In many ways, volunteerism seems to fit the mold of institutional cultural capital, or, capital that is ingrained in the social imagination of an institution as one with value equal to that of economic capital, where students gain significant benefits from partaking in volunteer activities and living up to institutional expectations. However, despite student’s describing volunteering as “the norm”, there remains a gap in the level of benefit that does not quite reach an economic equivalence. One student participant honed in on this idea by saying: “Volunteering is really important – really necessary to do community service. It is crucial to the perception of who an Ole should be: involved in the Northfield community.” The administrative participants were nearly universal in a discussion of St. Olaf as a community with inherent service and volunteer ideals. One administrative participant said, “Volunteering is a part of the collective spirit at St. Olaf” and went on to discuss the culture of the college as community minded. In one case, an administrative participant projected the way this community of serving culture can extend beyond the campus and into the personal characteristic of students saying, “St. Olaf develops students who stop and think about the poor. When walking by a homeless man, they may not necessarily give money, but [they will] acknowledge that a beggar is still a person.” Furthermore, one administrative participant went so far as to comment on the changing nature of this culture as shifting away from its roots in volunteering:

St. Olaf definitely attracts students called to lead lives of worth and service- the school used to be much more public about that, but it has now taken a backseat due to the initiative to market students in light of the recession and higher education trends. We’ve become outcomes oriented.

This administrative participant was the sole participant to draw specific attention to the changing nature of the college in an interview setting, however, the sentiment was alluded to in many participant responses, one that might be reflected in the sense that students are feeling a less intentional pressure to volunteer. Though not a significant percentage of our study population, some students, especially those who do not volunteer, cited a lack of overall pressure to engage in volunteerism. In fact, some students went so far as to say that volunteering sometimes takes on a negative stigma as something burdening students to step away from their more important academic pressures. One student commented on institutional pressure as something that is definitely present, but not associated in any way with volunteering or service. Perhaps citing another indication for the potential shift away from volunteering, or a pressure to volunteer at St. Olaf, one administrative participant discussed the “limited network of institutional support” offered to students who volunteer in comparison to other similar institutions. The participant brought up St. Olaf’s neighboring college, Carleton College, to discuss the much greater level of attention and resource that they offer students hoping to become civically engaged. Another administrative participant commented on the outcome-oriented focus of the college in saying, “the job of the college isn’t to graduate poverty stricken students”. If that means enriching the students education through volunteer initiatives, then the administration have demonstrated a dedication to shifting the parameters for student-based involvement away from service to a career-oriented, high profile level of engagement.

Overall, however, many students and administrative participants cite the undeniable pressure that stems from the nature of our college institution. For instance, a few participants cite the locus of this service-minded pressure as a manifestation of the college’s religious ties to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. One student participant discussed this by describing the spiritual belief that goes hand in hand with service. This participant continued, “Volunteering and service are a part of being affiliated with the church of our institution.” Additionally, student and administrative participants cited the institutional mission as a source for the perpetuation of pressure to volunteer. One student participant describes being very aware of the ties to the mission as what initially drew her to volunteer. She says:

I think there is a pressure to volunteer at St. Olaf. It's a pressure to be involved in a global citizenship that lends itself well to why we would volunteer. I played into that idea more early on in college than I do now as a senior.

Similarly, an administrative participant discusses the relationship to volunteering as one supplemental to overall institutional aims. The participant explains, “volunteering is vital because it facilitates academic opportunities, and supports and enriches student perspectives.” The trend in participant comments focus around a conception of the college as an institution wherein volunteerism and service act as a beneficial addition to a college education. From the collective administrative responses, it seems as though this pressure (though participants hesitated to use the term “pressure”), is intentionally proliferated. One administrative participant clarified this notion in saying that administrative individuals “knowingly engage” in the creation of these expectations – expectations that have not gone unnoticed by the student population. A significant portion of student responders discussed a feeling of direct and intentional institutional pressure to volunteer. In many cases, students substitute the term “volunteering” with the more ambiguous, “getting involved”. One student participant discussed that the only way to combat these overwhelming pressures was to give into them and back out later. She continued, “Sometimes when faced with a pressure to participate, it is easier to just write your name down and know that you have no intention of getting involved rather than actively choosing not to.” This participant’s response perfectly brings up the complex relationship formed between student and institutional pressures. Another student responder comments on this interchange between college pressures related to service and career-outcomes respectively, by citing the college’s career center, the Piper Center, as a locus for involvement, “where service is institutionalized at St. Olaf”.

Student Motivations & Benefits

Many interviewees commented on the positive emotional effects that were provoked when volunteering. Comments such as, “It feels good to volunteer,” “I like being appreciated,” and “I experience a high effect when I volunteer” were stated in almost all interviews, leading us to conclude that many people volunteer, and continue to volunteer, in part because they enjoy the experience.

Ironically, focus group participants, who do not volunteer, commented on how their volunteering friends often complain about negative volunteer obligations (e.g. large time commitment or annoyances while volunteering) rather than emphasize the positive aspects. We believe that this disconnect may be a result of the pressure to constantly appear busy, stressed, and involved at St. Olaf, as St. Olaf students express different views on volunteering in different contexts. Despite this external pressure, through our interviews, we found that there are many internal factors interacting with each other, influencing one's motivations to volunteer and shaping the benefits one receives as a result of their involvement.

To begin, participants frequently described feeling a moral responsibility to volunteer, which they sought to satisfy by volunteering often, whether that translated to once a week or once a semester. Interviewees who felt some sort of moral responsibility to volunteer believed that if one has the time to volunteer, it is something one should do. As one participant described, "I feel obligated to use the time, talents, and gifts I have to help others." Statements such as the one above parallel St. Olaf College's mission statement, which encourages students "leading lives of unselfish service to others." For some students, service is a way of life and an undisputed act in their lives. For these students, volunteerism is one way in which they are able to fulfill their desire to serve. As researchers, we chose not to conceptualize the difference between service and volunteerism in order to allow participants the opportunity to articulate their own definitions. Generally a consensus was reached amongst participants: an administrator described the difference between the concepts when he said, "Service is an attitude but volunteering is a clearly defined practice." Another student further elucidated the distinction.

The word volunteer makes me think of helper and could be a one time thing and maybe you just do it to put on your college application. But service is more of a desire from the heart to help...Some people think my volunteering isn't genuine and that the only reason that I do it is so it will look good on my resume. Volunteering is resume boosting. Serving is not for the resume. It (service) is what I like to do. It (things I like to do) could have been sports or choir.

We came to understand that leading lives of service through volunteerism could be a manifestation of one's deeply rooted values and volunteerism can be an exercise in vocational discernment. One administrator described:

The reason it (volunteering) is an asset is because it's a test of your skills, interests, and values. If you're a reflective student in the process, then you're learning about what you might want to do in the future.

This statement is supported as students explain how volunteerism can be a tool students use to better understand how their passions can be translated into future careers. Both students who do and do not volunteer agreed that volunteering should be in line with your values and passions. One student described her current volunteer work with health organizations: "The volunteerism I do is very relevant. I hope to devote my future to addressing health care discrepancies in some way as a doctor or as a medical professional." Another student described how volunteering directly relates to her career aspirations saying, "I want to find a career that ascribes to my vocation: working in a way that is helping people help themselves and strengthening community." Another student described how volunteering and academics have become intertwined:

I got really involved (in volunteering) when I came to St. Olaf, where I realized that I am really interested in education and social justice. Combining involvement in the community with intellectual activities has been really meaningful. Volunteering directly relates to my future plans, as I choose to volunteer with organizations I am passionate about.

Similarly, another student, majoring in theater and Spanish, described how her senior seminar, which incorporated an academic civic engagement component, has been her most rewarding volunteer experience. She is part of a group of students working with Latino high school students putting on a play about immigration. She believes that because of her academic study in these subjects, she was more qualified and made a greater impact, in comparison to her previous volunteer experiences. Many interviewees described helping others and giving back to the larger community as positive aspects regarding their involvement. However, focus group participants were conscious of the broader implication of volunteer work and concerned whether volunteerism is the best way to contribute. Similar feelings were found in interviews, albeit a small minority, as some students were hesitant to say if the work they had done was good and were unsure about their actual impact.

Many students described how they believed they made positive impact in volunteer experiences in which they were engaged in long-term relationships with the people they were serving (consistently volunteering with the same program for at least one year). Despite the fact that volunteerism, by definition, does not manifest in a reciprocal relationship, several students stressed the equal exchanges between those they are serving and their own personal benefits, which include stepping out of their comfort zone, learning humility, and widening their perspective on different backgrounds. As one student described, “I enjoy the conversations I have with people outside of my personal perspective. They see the world in a way that is completely different from my own, and I learn a lot from them.”

Many students believed that these relationships formed through volunteering enriched their lives. They may have also enriched their resumes. As one administrator described, “Places like Goldman Sachs don’t care about volunteering, but law firms and business firms want multidimensional people.” While both administrators and students described that volunteering enhances resumes as it makes one appear “more well-rounded” and showcases “an ability to interact and engage with people,” both students who do and do not volunteer said that volunteering solely for the sake of improving one’s resume isn’t worth it. The resume appeal is not enough motivation to sustain dedicated volunteer involvement.

In addition to feeling a moral responsibility to volunteer, incorporating one’s passions in volunteer work, and emphasizing the two-way relationships formed, one other prominent theme appeared in many interviews: volunteerism offers an escape from the academic, social, and future anxieties afflicting St. Olaf students. For one student, vocational goals were outside his volunteerism. For him, volunteering is primarily a means to step away from the ever-present stress at St. Olaf College. Another student described how when she does something she enjoys (volunteerism), she is able to escape the St. Olaf mindset, which is consumed with academics and social life, and focus on real world issues – what is really important. For some students, volunteering provides a balance to their all-consuming St. Olaf reality. Participants in the focus groups claimed that personal time is more valuable than time spent with others. As one student described, in order to volunteer at St. Olaf, in addition to academics, work, etc., one must have the “fervor of a revolutionary.” Interestingly, most students did not report volunteering as a

social activity, or a time to hang out with friends, a finding that coincides with the frequent desire to use volunteerism as an escape.

Level of Volunteer Commitment

Student involvement, commitment, and dedication to volunteer opportunities is reportedly dependent on a variety of different components from our interviewees. The stories told by students constitute a wide spectrum of volunteer engagement, where the multiplicity of aspects that make up the life of a college student influence how and in what capacity students engage in volunteerism. Accounts of volunteering range from deep and continuous engagements to more indiscriminate and noncommittal undertakings of volunteer activities.

“I am here to be a student, and that comes first for me”: the prioritization of class-related academia was a notion that manifested itself in many different forms. For example, students who were not engaged in any volunteer opportunities, and who partook in our focus group instead of individual interviews, talked about how their academic education was the most important component of their student experience at St. Olaf. Because additional volunteering activities often times lack “tangible benefits,” potentially infringe upon a student’s ability to be successful in their academic pursuits, and contribute to a culture of “time poverty”, it was not a part of their routine as a student in college. In these ways, students lacked a feeling of commitment, or did not identify sources of pressure to be involved in volunteer activities.

Despite being theoretically involved in volunteer activities, various other students admitted to not being overly committed or dedicated to their program: “depending on my work load for any given week, sometimes I don’t participate in the volunteer program I am technically a part of”. We found that there was significant variation in the amount of time students allotted to their volunteer involvements. Commitments ranged from one hour per week up to four or five hours, while others quantified their involvement in terms of monthly or quarterly participation in events. Students involved in the more minimal time commitment positions admitted to feeling less pressured and obligated to maintain a constant and regularly occurring contribution to the volunteer program, and felt able to prioritize their

time management accordingly. The potential impacts of inconsistent involvement in volunteer projects were not overlooked by most students. One student describes her struggle to accept how her contribution to the program affected the recipient of her involvement:

I dropped out of the “Adopt a Grandparent” program when I went abroad and was not able to continue when I returned. I think about visiting her again, but I am afraid she is dead - she was 100 years old when I visited her. I worry about the effect of going abroad because we were it is a relationship, and if you drop out, then it means something. I think I was her only visitor and she really loved our visits - I did too. This should be a full school year commitment because of how much it affects the grandparents. It seems too soon to quit after one semester. Sometimes I think about her.

Other students similarly cited the difficulties of getting re-involved in a volunteer program after a period of absence in their participation.

“I used to be more involved, but not as much these days.” Another trend we observed was the decline of student involvement in volunteer activities as they proceeded through their four years as an undergraduate student at St. Olaf. During freshman year, the co-curricular fair allows for students to circulate through different options and sign up for several different email aliases of volunteer organizations. This generally results in a high rate of involvement of lower classmen in a range of volunteer activities. As students become more aware of their particular interests, or their schedules become more demanding, involvement transitions into more narrowed and focused choices, which results in diminished numbers of upperclassmen who are actively involved in volunteer opportunities. Impacts of volunteering, as one student discussed, are also made difficult to quantify with shorter involvement time: “Maybe because I haven’t done the same thing all four years at St. Olaf it is difficult to measure my impact with the program”.

Students also described taking a more unsystematic approach to volunteering, viewing it as an “overall way of life rather than [manifested in] one specific program”. One student talked about how she has made an active effort to be involved in a different volunteer program every year. An intentional decision, she said, so that she could explore possible career aspirations, and help develop her interests and

passions. The success volunteer programs have in helping student find and develop their passions is evident; several students described how their volunteer involvement became more specific due to the discovery of their interest and passion in a certain topic area. For example, one student discovered that they were really passionate about the combination of education and social justice issues, which is something they would not have realized had they not been involved in that particular volunteer activity. Students articulate their recognition of the opportunities provided by the institution, and how beneficial it is to take advantage of these resources while attending this college.

“This is related to what I want to do.” For students with decidedly clear and well-defined career paths that they are working towards in their academic pursuits, they described how their volunteer involvement often took on characteristics of those career goals. For example, one student remained committed to volunteering within a similar population group throughout her involvement because she was pursuing similar academia in the field, and felt that her experience could be beneficial to the volunteer program as well as to her future career aspirations. Commitment to volunteer programs were often described as being linked to motivations behind volunteerism, where they ranged from being closely linked with job-related incentives, to more ethical and moral underpinnings of the decision to volunteer.

“I have developed a relationship with those kids.” An important and influential aspect of student commitment, involvement, and dedication to a volunteer organization is the invaluable sense of self-worth that results from sacrificing your time and being rewarded with a feeling of self-worth and contributing to a larger cause. These notions again stem from motivations behind volunteerism, whether they are pragmatic or altruistic in their nature, and are often a determining factor in whether or not a student remains involved. One student talked about the “great feeling” that came of seeing how her mentees reacted positively to her efforts to connect with them and help them with various homework activities. Another described how she would not continue to be involved if she didn’t feel “valued and appreciated” for the work that she did as a volunteer. The personal gain of a students’ commitment, involvement, and dedication are undoubtedly connected to personal gratification, which exists in more than one way.

From a more administrative perspective on volunteering, it is a belief that St. Olaf does a great job of providing several different service and volunteer opportunities, such as through events like the co-curricular fair, or opportunities provided by the Piper Center and various other institutionally funded resources. “College is a cool time to discover the types of service you are interested in,” and through funding, organizational efforts, and taking care of more technical logistical concerns, the administrative body of this institution works to make volunteer opportunities as approachable and easily accessible as possible. College is meant to be “relevant to student’s lives,” it is intended to incorporate “deeper ways of educating students,” of which volunteering is arguably part of. The intention of the college is clear, and the institution works to create an expectation of St. Olaf students to be as committed, involved, and dedicated to volunteer programs as possible.

Limitations to Volunteering at St. Olaf

Despite the hype, there are tangible limitations to involvement in volunteering and community engagement that deserve to be acknowledged within our community organizations. While impressions may seem to allude to a flawless system of being able to access information about volunteer opportunities, in fact, a number of students reflected on the difficulties they have been faced with in regards to accessing information. Students described how the process by which to access organizations and get more involved with volunteer opportunities is not particularly clear, and that there is no official orientation provided for students involved in any volunteer organizations. In addition, there seems to be no support for students who are interested in seeking out volunteering outside of already established programs. As one student noted, the abundance of health and education related volunteer opportunities pointed to the lack of other opportunities; “what if I don’t want to do those, then what?”

Additionally, volunteer opportunities are unaccommodating with their time frames: “I feel uncomfortable joining something half way through”. Most volunteer opportunities have a set deadline before which students need to express their interest in getting involved and becoming a part of whichever opportunity. Oftentimes, this time frame is structured around the beginning of the school year, which

doesn't allow for students to develop a potential interest and formulated imperative for getting involved in a volunteer program at any point later during the school year.

Volunteering is a time commitment, and for some, it is a luxury they cannot afford. Obligations and extracurricular activities such as student work, off campus jobs, choir, lab, sports, student organizations, etc., often times already monopolize a college student's schedule, and volunteering simply adds to that list of obligations outside of their class work. In these cases, volunteer opportunities that are more event based, instead of programs and opportunities sustained through continuous student involvement, allow students to dedicate time to a more general, one-time event volunteer opportunity rather than engaging in a sustained time obligation.

Continued participation in and dedication to volunteer programs is also contingent upon the sense of worth and value they have to the participant. Students who express "not feeling appreciated" where they volunteered had a decreased sense of motivation and involvement, whereas students who feel their work is valued were more likely to make sacrifices to continue their involvement. In this case, in order for a students' volunteer experience not to be limited by its context, it must have some direct correlation to an area that the student can personally identify with and take an interest in.

The administration goes to some significant lengths to provide opportunities to students that are both beneficial and valuable. Institutional programs such as the Piper Center, courses with Academic Civic Engagement components, and the SGA are just a few examples of the aspects by which the college is involved in volunteer and community service based initiatives. Figures of the college work behind the scenes to secure the proper insurances, overcome any potential logistical challenges, and surpass any liability concerns there might be with having students working outside the college but still under the context and affiliation of St. Olaf. Any shortfalls of these responsibilities on behalf of the institution may result in the volunteer opportunities being limited. Students are also shouldered with the notion that they are representing the college within the volunteer organization that they are a part of, and if anything were to go awry, the integrity of the image of the college could potentially be compromised. Depending on the volunteer context, the implication of how student volunteering reflects upon St. Olaf may play out in

different ways. For example, the college may more readily recognize a student who is engaging in a program of a higher profile and status than a student who is not. St. Olaf frequently celebrates consistently ranking in the Top 10 in regards to the numbers of Peace Corps volunteers, yet never mentions the students who volunteer on a regular basis at local high schools or hospitals either during or after their college career.

Our definition of volunteering, described only as uncompensated work, is complicated through the theoretical framework of Bourdieu, which places limitations on our understanding of the benefits of volunteer involvement. Through his argument of cultural capital, Bourdieu points to the ways in which volunteerism, which claims altruistic, utilitarian, and social properties, can be ultimately quantified. By being able to inadvertently quantify volunteer work, the altruistic value is lost and so the inherent selflessness of volunteering time, effort and labor towards a volunteer program (volunteerism as being uncompensated work choicely undertaken by individuals) is muddled by this realization. Suddenly, students unable to utilize or engage in volunteer opportunities are at a significant institutional and cultural capital disadvantage, as these missed opportunities may point to their lacking legitimacy, credentials, and qualifications to be a contributing member within society.

V. Summary & Conclusions

Main Findings

The majority of students whom we interviewed actively volunteered in high school. The motivations behind this were various. First and foremost, students were aware that most colleges look for volunteering through their admissions process and that it increased their chances of getting acceptance. Another motivation was for the church. Many students participated in mission trips or in Christian organizations such as Feed My Starving Children. We found that students believed it was easier to gain access to volunteering opportunities which suited their skill set in high school than it is in college. Students felt that they were able to pick and choose from volunteer opportunities in high school and, unlike in college, it wasn't uncomfortable joining volunteer opportunity midway through the school year.

With the progression to college, we found that students gauge a higher level of institutional expectation to pursue volunteer opportunities. Many students cited St. Olaf as having a culture of service ingrained in the student body, with volunteerism acting as institutionalised cultural capital. Additionally, administrative and student participants cited a direct institutional pressure encouraging students to partake in a level of civic engagement that extends beyond mere classroom learning. Furthermore, we found that all participants acknowledged a shift in the institutional framework for involvement away from service-oriented experience to career-focused outcomes oriented engagement.

Many students feel a moral responsibility to volunteer- a manifestation of deeply-rooted values to help others and give back to the community. Additionally, the most meaningful volunteer experiences reported by students were those tied to student passions and/or involved meaningful relationships developed from consistent, long-term volunteer involvement with the same organization. While both students and administrators commented on the “resume appeal” of volunteerism, students do not believe that volunteering purely as a means to enhance one’s resume is a significant motivating factor. Importantly, many students volunteer, in part to escape the stressful academic and social environment at St. Olaf.

Many students are faced with limitations in their ability to engage with volunteer opportunities, and these limitations constitute a wide spectrum of explanations. Even without any direct correspondence to a particular volunteer opportunity, students cited difficulties with accessing information about volunteer opportunities in a clear, concise way. If students were successful in accessing the information that they felt was most relevant to their interests in volunteering, time is another limitation that exists, preventing students from joining a program after a certain amount of time passes after the start of a semester. Being at St. Olaf College first and foremost as students, many students also described how their academic obligations came first for them, and how they resented the expectation that they spread themselves in more directions than they could manage. Additionally, other academic or extracurricular activities such as student work, off campus jobs, choir, lab, sports, or student organizations often time

already monopolize a college student's schedule, making volunteering another addition to the list of obligations outside of their school work.

Perhaps the most pertinent limitation of student volunteering is the characteristic of relevancy; a student who doesn't feel like a valuable member has a decreased sense of motivation and involvement in a volunteer service opportunity, than students who felt their work is valued. Institutional and administrative responsibilities can additionally both facilitate and hinder student engagement in volunteer organizations. Incorporating a theoretical analysis of the limitations of volunteerism, it can also be understood that as volunteering is able to be quantified, cultural capital assigns volunteerism discriminatory attributes of value.

Future Research & Recommendations

Despite the various intriguing results that we found through our study, we have some suggestions for potential future research that might offer further insight on this topic. Due to time restrictions, we were unable to interview community supervisors who ran the programs with which many college students volunteer in Northfield, Faribault, and the Twin Cities. Their voice is necessary in order to gain insight into how student volunteers impact the programs, despite the student perspectives on the impact of their volunteering. Community supervisors are in the position to comment on how their programs are potentially benefitting and/or limited by college student volunteers. Thus, to strengthen our findings, further research can incorporate interviews with community supervisors. Additionally, future research can examine a variety of college student populations (large, public universities, technical colleges, etc.) in order to gain a greater understanding of what makes the volunteering experience unique at St. Olaf. Last, due to recent administrative efforts to market students in light of the recession and high education trends (outcomes oriented approach), we propose further research into how volunteerism aligns with St. Olaf's mission and future direction.

In direct correlation with these findings, we have one recommendation for the college in order to significantly improve students' volunteer experiences while at St. Olaf. Many student and administrative

participants commented on the nature of volunteer experiences to be more meaningful when aligned with a student's passions and interests. Oftentimes, these passions were tied into career aspirations and academic work. Several students described how the classes they took (e.g. classes that focused on public policy, structural injustices, etc.) helped inform their volunteerism. Additionally, a few students described how academic civic engagement courses made them feel more qualified to be doing the volunteer work they were engaged in.

However, focus group participants expressed concern regarding the implications of volunteer work, a barrier for many who originally planned to be active volunteers while in college. Furthermore, many students described the lack of institutional support for volunteerism and bemoaned the seeming lack of volunteer opportunities outside of education and health care/medical fields. In order to encourage more meaningful volunteer experiences and address student concerns, we propose that the school creates a Civic Engagement Center, staffed by adult supervisors and students. We imagine the center directly engaged in providing support for student volunteers by connecting students to long-lasting opportunities in the surrounding communities, fostering meaningful reflection, strengthening the ACE courses, and expanding on volunteer opportunities for students. We imagine that this center will work in partnership with the student-run Volunteer Network (VN) in order to increase the organization's visibility on campus and increase support for student volunteers. In order to best access the resources of VN, we envision previous VN student leaders as stepping up and acting as peer advisors to students hoping to access volunteer and civic-minded engagement.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

For Students Who Volunteer:

- 1 What volunteer programs are you involved with?

- a Please explain the mission and population base addressed by this program.
- 2 How did you find out about this volunteer opportunity?
- 3 How long have you volunteered with the organization(s)?
- 4 What is the time commitment for each volunteer site?
- 5 What are your roles as a volunteer at each site? (What do you do?)
- 6 Did you volunteer before coming to St Olaf College (through high school clubs, church, etc.)
 - a Did your parents encourage you to volunteer?
 - b Did your siblings/friends volunteer?
- 7 Have you had any previous experience in the volunteer work you do before you got involved at St. Olaf?

Is so, please describe your previous experience(s)?

 - a Was it required to have experience before you got involved?
- 8 What motivated you to volunteer?
- 9 How do you benefit from volunteering?
- 10 Is volunteering a social activity for you?
- 11 How does volunteering relate to your future plans/goals?
 - a Does the program/nature of volunteering line up with what you want to do in the future?
 - b Are you making connections with individuals that could be of potential benefit to you in the future?
- 12 Would you continue to volunteer if it did not benefit your future? Please explain.
- 13 What sorts of extracurricular activities, academic workload, and jobs are you involved in at St.Olaf? (sports, choir, etc)
- 14 Do you feel pressured to Volunteer at St. Olaf? If yes, what are some aspects that contribute to that pressure?
 - a Are they social pressures from friends? Y/N
 - b Religious? Y/N
 - c Career-oriented? Y/N
 - d Familial obligation? Y/N
 - e College mission? Y/N
 - f Sense of moral responsibility? Y/N
- 15 How do you view your impact with the program? Is the program benefitting from your commitment?
- 16 Do you feel invested in the program?
- 17 Do you feel your work is valuable/appreciated?

For Students Who Do Not Volunteer:

- 1 Did you volunteer before coming to St. Olaf?
 - a) If yes, what was your experience like volunteering before college
- 2 What is your experience with volunteering as a college student?
- 3 What do you think are the biggest obstacles or challenges to volunteering at St. Olaf?
 - Do you think you would have time to incorporate volunteering into your schedule as it stands
- 4 Do you feel there is any sense of pressure from the college or your peers to engage in volunteer opportunities? If so, how does that happen?
- 5 Do you think that pressure influences other students to volunteer?
- 6 Do you think volunteering could benefit your career goals in any way?

- 7 Would you be interested in volunteering if you and your friends
 - a) applied for an honor house?
 - b) participated in a service-based off-campus program/trip (e.g. Ole Spring Relief)?
 - c) had more free time?

For Administrators:

- 1 What is your role/position at St. Olaf College?
- 2 In what capacity [does the ____] engage with student volunteering at St. Olaf?
- 3 In your opinion, do you think volunteering is central to the college's mission?
- 4 How do you think volunteering coincides with the future direction of the college (e.g. Main Street Initiative)?
- 5 Do you think St. Olaf attracts students who are involved with volunteering before college?
- 6 Do you think volunteering during one's college career can be an asset to their career-related goals?
- 7 Do you think volunteering contributes to the social, academic and personal well-being of a St. Olaf student? Please explain?
- 8 What do you see as some of the benefits to volunteering at St. Olaf College? Limitations?
- 9 Do you think the college actively encourages students to volunteer?
 - a Is there a sense of pressure/obligation? Is it perpetuated by the college?
- 10 Do you think the relationship between the college and the community is affected by the college students who volunteer in and around the Northfield area?