

THE MORGRIDGE CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

“Being awarded a Wisconsin Idea Undergraduate Fellowship for our project Diving Deeper: Venturing into Science with Rural Wisconsin was one of the greatest opportunities I have received as a student at UW-Madison. I am incredibly thankful for the impact that participating in our WIF has had on both my education and my personal life.”

-Allison Bichler, 2004-2005 WIF

The Morgridge Center for Public Service is an institution on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus that most have not heard of, but that has greatly impacted many lives. A University’s responsibility is not just to provide its students with an education, but also to shape them into valuable citizens. Since its conception in 1994, the Morgridge Center’s role at the UW has been to help guide students into becoming more civically minded individuals who play key roles in their communities.

The Wisconsin Idea Undergraduate Fellowship, or WIF, is one of the many programs that the Morgridge Center for Public Service provides for the students at UW-Madison. At this pivotal time in students’ lives, the Center uses programs like these to involve them in the surrounding communities. The continued development of service-learning and Campus Community Partnerships, along with the WIF’s are some of the most critical ways the Morgridge Center is enhancing the learning of UW students and improving the Madison community and beyond.

“In designing the project, I learned more about scientific concepts...and how scientists design experiments. While I probably could have learned this information in a lecture, pursuing these topics on my own was more challenging and rewarding. I think I gained a much deeper understanding of the subject matter than I would have if I was being lectured to.”

-Allison Bichler

The WIF Fellowship is not necessarily defined as a service-learning experience but it does get to the heart of service-learning—enhancing the academics of learning with community service. The Morgridge Center defines service-learning as:

“Service-learning is a credit bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflects on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.”

-Bringle and Hatcher (1995)

Service-learning classes can be found in several different departments at UW-Madison. In Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education 300: Individuals with Disabilities, students spend time with members of the community that have disabilities. In Curriculum and Instruction 375: SHAPE, students tutor at schools in Madison. Because service-learning classes tend to require more time and dedication from both the professor teaching and students enrolled in the course, there are not as many of these classes as the Morgridge Center would like to see.

In an effort to expand service-learning at the UW, Morgridge offers a library of service-learning literature, offers grants to service-learning faculty and employs five undergraduate service-learning fellows. The fellows assist professors of service-learning classes by leading class reflections, giving service-learning

orientations, reading student journals and acting as liaisons between the university and the community.

Not only is the Morgridge Center focusing on the proliferation of service-learning classes, but it is also integrating service-learning into new departments at the UW. One of the attempts to do this is the Center's partnership with the Institute for Cross Campus Biology Education (ICBE). Biology has the largest number of majors at the UW. A Morgridge Center service-learning fellow has worked this year on introducing biology students and faculty to service-learning through a Web site, presentations and brown bag lunches. Morgridge has similar partnerships with the School of Human Ecology, the department of Landscape Architecture and the Center for Humanities.

"I know when I was in high school, I had no clue what it would be like in college, so I believe we cleared up some preconceived notions of Madison and encouraged students to pursue college here."

-Annika Swenson 2004-2005 WIF

Morgridge is also the University's center for campus-community partnerships, which are important



Megan Cole Paustian, *Maizinha*, black and white photography, 2002

to maintain a strong relationship between the University and the Madison community. One of the most vital of these community partnerships is the Campus Community Partnerships Center in the Villager Mall on South Park Street. Working with South Madison residents, UW students and faculty have the opportunity to enhance the university's image. The university leased this space in 2001, and began offering different educational programs along with Edgewood College, MATC, and UW-Extension Dane County. Community members have the opportunity to take high school equivalency classes, ESL classes or get involved in the unique programs CCP has to offer. Every year, volunteers run the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA), providing assistance to South Madison residents with their taxes. The Morgridge Center hopes to help improve the economic situation in South Madison through programs like these.

"Carrying out our project was a great experience for me because it gave me something to be passionate about...The entire process of developing the project and carrying it out was incredibly fun and rewarding, and it was wonderful to feel that I was truly impacting the lives of others."

-Allison Bichler

The Wisconsin Idea Undergraduate Fellowship is one of the most involved and rewarding service-learning programs the Morgridge Center is involved in. Fellows get the chance to work with a faculty advisor and a community organization on a project to address a specific community need. Students can earn up to three academic credits, receive funding for their project and a personal stipend. Allison and Annika's project took them to the high schools of rural Wisconsin where they taught students new scientific research concepts that they would not normally be exposed to. Judging from their quotes, the experience of being a WIF was an extremely positive one, impacting their lives as well as the community's.

From its headquarters on the first floor of the Red Gym, the Morgridge Center and its staff have created a more positive and productive environment at UW-Madison. Along with the five academic staff and undergraduate service-learning fellows, ten student peer advisors and Wisconsin Union Directorate committee directors put in countless hours to improve the campus environment. And so, a visit to the Morgridge Center can literally become a life-changing experience. ❖