

F26.30 Evaluation of Student Success through Axe of Service - Youth Engagement Program

Overview

As background, the larger project is a collaboration with NAU's Center for Service and Volunteerism (CSV). Axe of Service, CSV's volunteer engagement platform, was launched in August 2024 to facilitate and promote volunteerism in Flagstaff. The launch was the culmination of information gathered from community partners and NAU and community volunteers which revealed that one of the biggest barriers across all groups was not knowing where to find volunteer opportunities. Since launch, Axe of Service has partnered with 58 agencies, enrolled 1,400 individual users, posted 120 volunteer needs, and reported 2,188 service hours. After initially focusing on promoting the tool on NAU campus, CSV have focused their efforts on broader volunteer recruitment. CSV's current expansion of the project will provide volunteer engagement opportunities for Flagstaff youth aged 13 – 21. I am partnering with CSV to evaluate outcomes of this launch. Currently, I lead a team of student researchers who are investigating the impact of NAU student participants in Axe of Service. Through that evaluation, we have created quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group protocol) data collection methods. We plan to adapt these tools to refine the survey and focus group scripts to collect similar information about the impact of volunteering of youth participants. Specifically, this evaluation will focus on how volunteering has impacted Flagstaff youth participants' mental well-being and resilience, sense of belonging and inclusion, youth leadership development, and college and career readiness.

What the student will DO and LEARN

The student researcher will learn all aspects of community-based evaluation research specifically how to design and conduct a qualitative focus group based study. The student will learn about the IRB process and participate in ethical research training. Moreover, through this experience, they will better understand how to conduct qualitative research, including procedures for consent, interviewing and focus group facilitation techniques, scheduling of focus groups, approach to analysis, and interfacing with community partners. The student will gain valuable hands-on experience conducting community-based research and evaluation.

Additional benefits

Additionally, the student researcher will have the opportunity to interact with community serving professionals by presenting at a national conference. Through working with CSV and the local school district they will gain valuable career readiness skills such as networking, professional conduct and working in collaboration with others.

Additional qualifications

No specific qualifications are required. However, an interest in community service, curiosity about the lived experience of youth and a fundamental understanding of research methods would be of benefit.

Time commitment

6 hrs/week for 30 weeks