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10 ordinary SUU students doing extraordinary things
This document showcases the EDGE projects of ten SUU students. They are just a small sample of the breadth and depth of the many projects being developed and undertaken at Southern Utah University.

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A key component of an SUU baccalaureate degree, the EDGE (Education Designed to Give Experience) program provides the opportunity for students to design and implement a portion of their own education. Individually designed and executed projects across a broad spectrum of interests are implemented through the guidance of five engagement centers: Community, Creativity, Global, Leadership, and Outdoor.

The EDGE graduation requirement helps students practically apply their studies in real-world settings that involve undergraduate research, academic service learning, internships and individualized learning. It also helps students develop creative problem-solving and leadership skills as engaged members of their communities.

The EDGE requirement maintains academic fidelity to the AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes. Fulfillment of the EDGE requirement results in graduates who have achieved these outcomes, which are:

* Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
* Intellectual and Practical Skills
* Personal and Social Responsibility
* Integrative and Applied Learning
Community

Cultural Immersion & Service on a Navajo Reservation

The Project

I organized a week-long trip to a Navajo reservation with field physicians and other SUU students. Part of the trip’s purpose was to learn more about the Navajo culture. The other part was to provide health services and A1C blood glucose testing for the people on the reservation.

The Inspiration

My future occupation in dentistry and my involvement with Rural Health Scholars drove my desire to complete this service project. My goal is to return to the Native American reservation in the future and improve the healthcare available to the people living there.

The Challenges

It was difficult to coordinate which physicians were going to be at which hospitals during each day of our trip with the Utah Navajo Health Systems Inc. It was also challenging to match students’ schedules with field physicians’ schedules because there were more students than were allowed to go to certain hospitals at a time. Another challenge was time and distance, since many of the clinics and hospitals were very far from one another.

The Benefit to Myself

This project helped me become a better leader, more organized, and more aware of health-related issues in rural populations. It also helped my resume. I have already been to dental school interviews where my project came up and was a positive note on my application.

The Benefit to Others

This project helped the people we served by giving them information about their blood-glucose levels and other physical conditions that needed medical attention. It also helped other pre-health students learn more about their future occupations and about the value of service, especially to underserved populations.

“I have already been to dental school interviews where my project came up and was a positive note on my application. Service is a major factor that is considered when applying to graduate schools in any medical field.”

Nate Einerson
Senior Nutrition Major from Blanding, UT
Creativity
Merging Poetry & Photography as the Artist-in-Residence at Zion National Park

The Project
Last spring I was the student artist-in-residence at Zion National Park. Later, I exhibited my completed work at the Zion National Park Human History museum. The camera I used is a Mamiya C220 twin lens reflex camera, manufactured in 1971, which takes square photos. I developed the film while residing in Zion, and then later scanned it.

“I found it quite affirming that, among all those that applied for the residency—painters, printmakers, illustrators, and ceramicists—I, a photographer, was granted the opportunity.”

The Benefit to Myself
The fact that my work was exhibited in a place that would draw thousands of tourists was a great benefit. Previous to this, I had only exhibited work at much smaller galleries, drawing only a couple hundred people maximum. Obviously, the kind of exposure I received in this case was unrivaled.

The Challenges
I was a little stressed because I participated in an honor only seasoned artists had previously done, plus I had to produce top-quality work with limited facilities within a week.

The Inspiration
In brainstorming for my project, when thinking of Zion, I immediately thought of the Virgin River. Also, before that time I had completed a couple of photo projects inspired by texts. Once those two notions started swirling together in my head, I began searching for poetry that would best represent the Virgin River. Knowing that Edgar Allan Poe came out of the Transcendental period, an era of reverence and awe for nature, I figured there would be a good chance he wrote those kinds of poems. I was right; he had written several, and I chose “To the river” because of its portrayal of dynamic and unstable waters, a perfect representation of the Virgin River.

The Benefit to Others
I feel my work has provided a new perspective of Zion National Park. Another benefit I perceive is the knowledge that photographers are seen, at least by some, as artists on par with those working in other mediums.
The Project
I went to Peru with an organization called The Hope Alliance to do dental and vision screenings for people in the communities we visited.

The Inspiration
My uncle, a dentist, has gone on multiple international humanitarian trips. He and his family have loved doing these, and I wanted to have the same experience.

*Most of the adults we helped have had bad eyes for years. Seeing their faces when they put on a pair of glasses and were able to see better was indescribable.*

The Challenges
The trip required a lot of preparation, including earning money and learning to use all of the equipment. The Hope Alliance would need me to help run. It was also a challenge finding money that I could take with me: in Peru they will only allow you to exchange or use dollar bills that are not folded or torn.

The Benefit to Others
While in the clinics, we had local eye doctors and dentists working alongside us. They were learning from the doctors and dentists from America that were volunteering with The Hope Alliance. The doctors in Peru can now use the procedures they were taught in the clinics in their everyday practices.

The Benefit to Myself
This project helped me figure out that I really do want to work in the medical field, and helped me realize how grateful I am that I live in America. This project also improved my Spanish. I only knew a little when I went to Peru, but by the end of my time there, I could carry on a conversation about eyes and glasses.
“Marked”: Day Camp for Children Who Have Lost a Parent

“I think that many of these children left the camp that day knowing that they weren’t alone and were better prepared to face the challenges they are going through.”

The Project
I set up a day camp for children who have lost a parent. The camp included group leaders, counselors, speakers, and games. We wanted to have a fun time while also addressing the issues that many of these kids were facing.

The Inspiration
My sister’s husband passed away two years ago and left behind five children. After he passed I stayed with their family, and that experience, as well as seeing other children in our family lose a parent, led me to want to help those children and others like them.

The Challenges
It seemed that at every single turn there was a challenge to face. How were we going to raise enough money? How were we going to feed over 100 people for three different meals? How would we split up the children and meet the needs of different age groups?

There was a lot of preparation that went into everything, but once the day camp started, it ran very smoothly because of the many volunteers and staff that went above and beyond.

The Benefit to Myself
It has already drawn me closer to a new community of individuals. I will cherish how the group of volunteers and staff became very close to one another. I also felt much closer to my family as we remembered the life and death of my brother-in-law Mark.

The Benefit to Others
I know from the feedback we have received from parents and kids that this will become an annual event. We already have about 80 to 100 that want to attend next year. I think that many of these children left the camp that day knowing that they weren’t alone and were better prepared to face the challenges they are going through.
The Project
I made multiple visits to Snow Canyon State Park during the summer to clean up the trash on Lava Flow Trail and in the lava tubes. I also collaborated with the Park Manager to bring awareness to the growing issue of littering in the park.

The Challenges
I had the hardest time when we wrapped up our work just in time to see groups coming into the caves with glow-sticks, knowing our work was about to be undone. It was this thought that frustrated me the most, because I knew simply cleaning the lava tubes would never solve the real problem.

The Inspiration
I've made countless trips to the State Park and the lava tubes with friends and family over the years, and began to notice more and more trash accumulating in the lava tubes. The tubes are the most popular attraction in the park. I realized someone had to take action against this littering, so I took it upon myself to help improve the experience for all who visit.

The Benefit to Myself
This project has drastically increased my understanding and appreciation of the work that goes into preserving the natural environment. I think that in itself is a benefit. But in addition, I've gained some valuable leadership and communication skills that I can use for the rest of my life, and I was able to put my experience and opinions out there for the public when I was asked to write an article for Snow Canyon's Newsletter. Many of the things I experienced taught me lessons that can't be learned in classes alone.

The Benefit to Others
This project was done for the community, tourists, State Park workers and Friends of Snow Canyon. Removing trash and decreasing the amount brought in by raising awareness leads to a safer, less hazardous, more beautiful and enjoyable place. I've been thanked by visitors for doing the work I was doing already, and know that short-term or long-term, my efforts made a difference in the experiences people have in the lava tubes.
Supporting Healthy Habits in Children

The Project
I instituted an exercise program for children at a family support center. During each week of my project I engaged the children I worked with in some kind of physical activity, which ranged from sports like soccer to games like “red light/green light.” My goal was to instill healthy lifestyle habits in these children that would benefit them throughout their lives.

The Benefit to Myself
I have learned how to better manage my time, interact with children of all ages to meet one common purpose, and have found what I am passionate about. I love working with children and helping others find ways to set and accomplish goals.

The Inspiration
I aspire to work with children in the future, so I wanted to do something with them for my EDGE project. Because of the increase in obesity rates and decrease in physical activity among youth, I decided I should do something with children that would emphasize physical health.

The Challenges
The most challenging part of my project was maintaining the focus of the children. I was working with a broad range of children in regards to age, which made it difficult to find games that all of the kids wanted to play. To counteract this problem I provided incentives through snacks and prizes at the end of each session.

The Benefit to Others
The main purpose of my project was to instill healthy living habits in the children I worked with. It was so rewarding to see how much the kids enjoyed participating in games and being physically active, and I hope this will stay with them the rest of their lives.

“I feel a lot of times people hear the word ‘exercise’ and automatically have a negative reaction. My main goal with this project was to demonstrate to the kids that exercise can be fun.”
Creativity

Using Poetry to Help Others Cope With Grief

"I really enjoyed hearing the poems and other literary forms that the members of the group had to share. It was an awesome experience."

The Project

For my project I attended and helped with a university bereavement group. Specifically, I taught the group about how poetry is beneficial in dealing with our emotions when a loved one has died. Each group member was able to share a form of poetry that had helped him or her, and they were asked to write a poem about the loved one they had lost.

The Inspiration

When I lost my first husband, I went to a grief group and benefited greatly from it. We were encouraged to journal our feelings. I wrote a lot of poems at that time, and it helped me tremendously.

The Challenges

It was challenging to find a bereavement group where I could present my project. It was also emotionally challenging to find and read through the poems from when my husband passed away.

The Benefit to Others

The feedback that I got from the members of the group was great. Many stated that the presentation was very beneficial to them in working through their grief, and I was told that my project would be continued in future bereavement groups on campus.

The Benefit to Myself

This project ties well into what I want to do in my career. I want to be a bereavement counselor, and this process is something I can use with my patients. It is a great little extra to add to my resume as well.
Global Helping Orphans in Cambodia

The Project

I created my Global Humanitarian EDGE project to help an orphanage in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, called the Cambodian and International Children Friend Organization (CICFO).

Before leaving for Cambodia, my husband and I gathered monetary, medical, and humanitarian donations from the community in Cedar City, Utah, and our family. We made the trip to Phnom Penh in July, 2012. Once in country, we delivered the donations and purchased additional supplies.

Many people say, 'Well I'm just one person.' But, one person can make a huge difference in the world and now I'm living proof.”

The Benefit to Myself

I benefited greatly from my project. About six months after completing it, I interviewed for a congressional internship in Washington D.C., and I was able to discuss my project in the interview. Being able to discuss a humanitarian aid project in South East Asia, where I was solely responsible for every aspect from start to finish, was impressive. I got the job! My EDGE project helped me have an amazing experience in Washington D.C., which has led to countless other opportunities.

The Challenges

I was really nervous during the phase of the project when I had to ask people and businesses for help. There’s a certain level of vulnerability when asking for money or supplies from strangers, and I struggled with my confidence. I think part of my motivation to complete this project successfully was knowing it all depended on me. If I didn’t go out and get donations, then there wouldn’t be any!

The Inspiration

My husband and I have always wanted to travel to Cambodia. When we realized we could make the trip in the summer of 2012, we wanted to do something special while we were there. We decided to dedicate a day of our trip to helping the CICFO orphanage. My husband knows the owners personally, which made this project very special to us.

The Benefit to Others

The money we raised was enough to feed all the children at the orphanage for one month. By helping CICFO with medical and dental supplies, toys, and food, the owners were able to have some monetary relief and allot some of their budget to areas that would normally be cut.
Leadership

Dominique’s Dream Comes True at Disney

Dominique Nichols
Sophomore Nutrition/Pre-Physical Therapy Major from Las Vegas, NV

The Project

I completed a four-month internship at a new Walt Disney World restaurant in Orlando, Florida as part of the Disney College Program. The restaurant uses cutting-edge technology in all aspects of the dining experience, and relies heavily on good communication between staff members to run smoothly.

The Inspiration

I have always loved Disney, and I’ve dreamed of working for “The Mouse” my entire life. I knew this was the perfect time to complete an internship so once applications opened up I applied, completed three interviews, and later accepted my role in food and beverage.

The Challenges

As excited as I was for this opportunity, I was terrified. The moment I landed though, I knew I had made the right decision.

Most of the days I worked were truly magical. However, since I worked at a brand new restaurant with cutting edge devices we suffered quite a bit of technological difficulties that I had to help work through. In the end, however, it was all worth it.

The Benefit to Myself

Not only have I received upper division credit for this, but I have also gained valuable leadership experience through my work with others and the challenges I overcame. This is something that I will include on my resume and I think that it is very unique. It definitely gives an extra edge for anyone applying for any position.

The Benefit to Others

I inspired several peers to apply by posting my adventures online and talking with them about my experience. Two of them were accepted into the Fall 2013 program and they are having the time of their lives!

“Completing this project has helped me see just how strong I am. I have gained many leadership qualities, and found some I didn’t realize I already had.”
Researching Seasonal Activity of Bat Populations

The Project

I worked with one of SUU’s Biology professors to evaluate and analyze the condition and activity of Southern Utah bat populations. Our research took us to several national parks, where we used nets to catch bats, identified the different species we caught, and measured their activities using acoustic monitors.

The Inspiration

When my professor told me about the research he was doing with bats, I wanted to be involved. It fits with my major and also gave me a real-world research experience.

The Challenges

The first challenge was learning to properly handle bats. The second was scheduling field research times around environmental conditions that would prohibit bats from coming out. There were nights that ended with a lot of frustration because we didn’t catch any bats.

The Benefit to Myself

The professional level of hands-on research I did for this project is one of the qualities medical schools look for in their applicants. It’s helped me learn better how to formulate hypotheses and analyze data, which are abilities I will need in medical school and as a physician. It has enhanced my critical thinking, leadership abilities, and relationship skills, which will help me in all aspects of my life.

The Benefit to Others

This research has given baseline data to the national parks from which they can create conservation plans to maintain their bat populations.

“The best part was being able to handle and catch bats in areas of national parks that people are not typically allowed to go. We hiked into beautiful areas, camped, caught bats, and all the while doing it as research.”