

The Evolution of AmeriCorps

By Dr. Alexander Pope, AmeriCorps Project Director and PACE Co-Director

The AmeriCorps program at SU is funded through a competitive grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps is designed to leverage the efforts of citizens interested in improving their communities through service. The program at SU, called ShoreCorps/PALS, recruits students and community members to serve at various nonprofits across the Eastern Shore. Members receive a stipend for their service, college credit through two interdisciplinary studies (IDIS) training courses and an education award (scholarship) at the end of their service.

An Exciting New Structure

As the new project director, I am pleased to report on changes to ShoreCorps/PALS. Founded by Dr. George Whitehead in 1994, ShoreCorps/PALS has consistently served as a hub for community outreach and service, recruiting and training AmeriCorps members from the University and city. The 2016-2017 service year has seen the beginnings of substantial revisions in the organization, integration, capacity and evaluation of our program.

Organizationally, we will bring ShoreCorps/PALS under the umbrella of PACE, SU's Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement. AmeriCorps and PACE both focus on community awareness and engagement. The restructuring will allow better information and resource sharing.

The New Nonprofit Leadership Alliance

We will integrate AmeriCorps with the new Nonprofit Leadership Alliance (NLA) program that begins in fall 2017. Students enrolled in the NLA program can use their AmeriCorps service and training course to complete a nonprofit leadership certificate. Students will still be eligible for the education award and other benefits of AmeriCorps service.

As part of the NLA integration, AmeriCorps will see its greatest growth since the program began. We anticipate adding 20 service slots to the current 17. This increase will mean more SU students can experience the benefits of structured community service while developing the habits of engaged democratic citizens.

Introducing Collaborative Process Mapping

Evaluation is shifting as well. AmeriCorps members build capacity through regular volunteer recruitment and management, program development and delivery, and assistance with important tasks such as creating policy and procedure handbooks. In a novel process called Collaborative Process Mapping, the AmeriCorps member(s) and a representative from the nonprofit work together to map the nonprofit's various activities and goals. The map is represented as a web labeled "current activities," "short-term goals" and "long-term goals." The map serves as a strategic tool for evaluating the nonprofit's current activities and needs and the contributions of the AmeriCorps member(s).

I am excited at the potential for these changes to expand our reach across the Eastern Shore while holding to our mission. Our members will continue to serve at-risk youth and senior citizens in public and private non-profit agencies. We will promote lasting change through collaborative work with area partners and the citizens they serve.

For more information, visit www.salisbury.edu/ameri-corps ❖



Member Sandra Handy was honored to meet Rosalyn Carter at a training event



Rebekah Barczak (right) served at an Alzheimer's Association meeting to reach out to caregivers in the community



The first ShoreCorps/PALS event of the year was Stand Down, providing support to over 50 veterans in the area

