

SPIIn/SSA Report

Siena College
Center for Academic
Community Engagement
Summer 2023



ABOUT ACE

Siena College's Center for Academic Community Engagement (ACE) focuses on the development and success of our members by fostering transformative and impactful experiential learning opportunities through equity centered community engagement.

During the summer, we offer two programs - Summer Project Incubator (SPIn) and Summer Service Associates (SSA) - in collaboration with campus and community partners. The following report includes summaries of, and highlights from, the summer 2023 programs to share the impact that our members' service had on the Capital District.

SPIn Overview

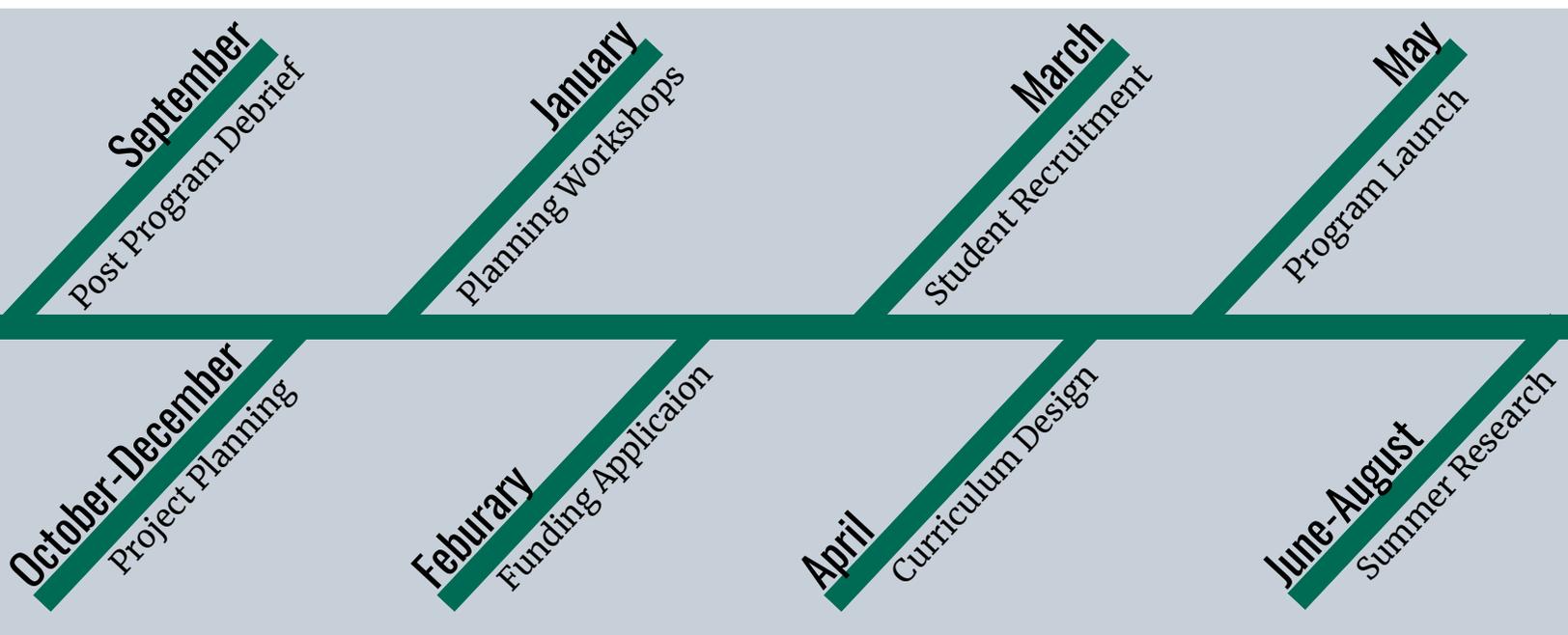
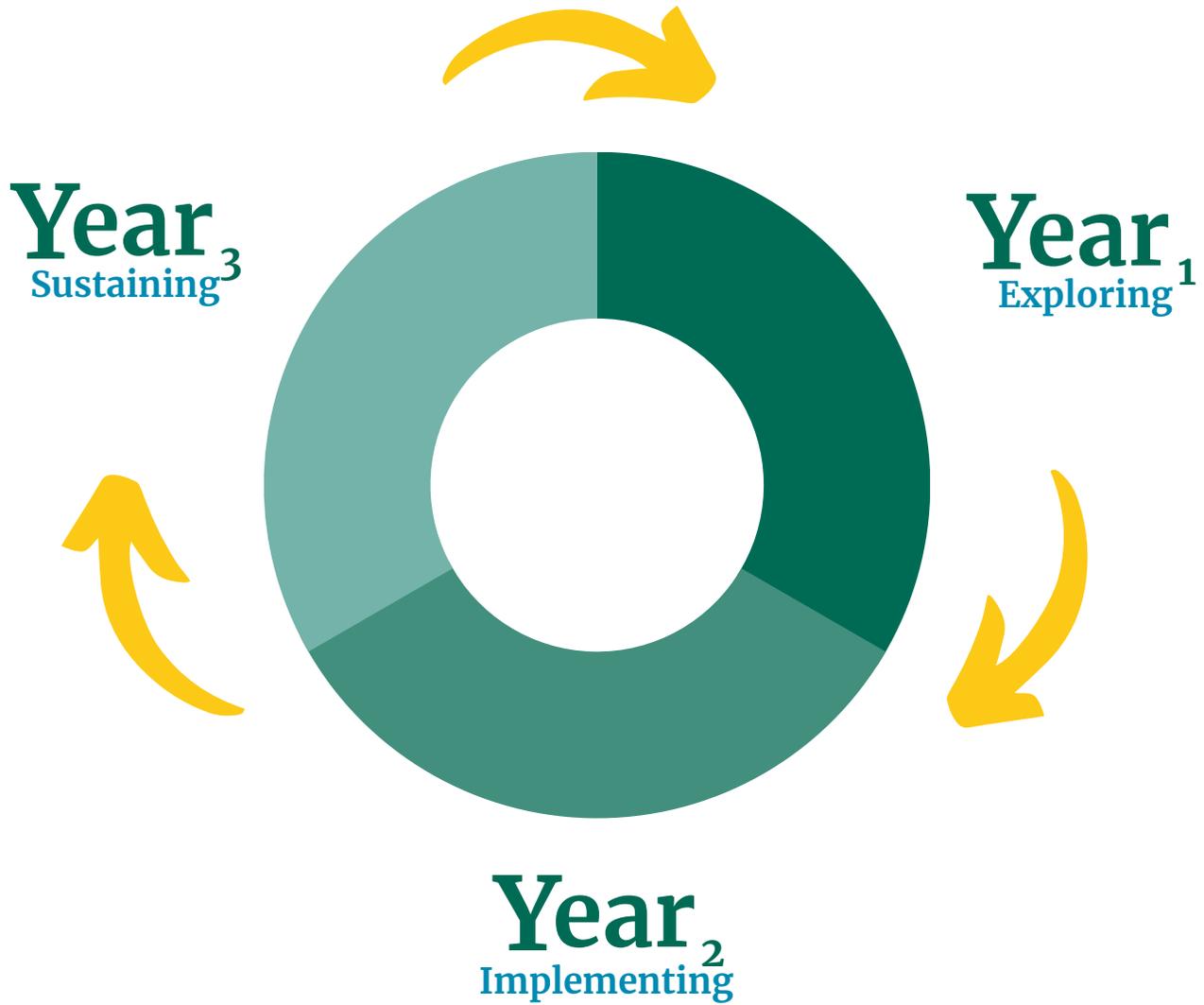
SPIn is an intensive program that connects faculty, students, and community organizations in multi-year interdisciplinary community-engaged research projects. Our three-year model allows for projects to grow over time. In year one we explore issues, develop relationships, and celebrate small wins; in year two, we develop and support student and community leadership to implement a targeted intervention; and in year three, we work collaboratively to ensure sustainable action.



We are very proud of the partnerships and collaborative work in which our members, faculty, and partners participated over the summer. In fact, our Americorps VISTA Summer Associates completed 5647.5 hours of service this summer toward these three SPIn projects!

In the following section, we highlight the SPIn 2023 projects. While we focus on the summer here, each project continues throughout the rest of the year as members, faculty, and community partners publish results, develop research, and plan for the following summer. This year-round program is fueled by focused summer work.

SPI by the Year(s)



SPIIn by the Numbers

21

Members engaged in community projects, including 3 Siena students

3

Team-based community projects

17

Majors represented

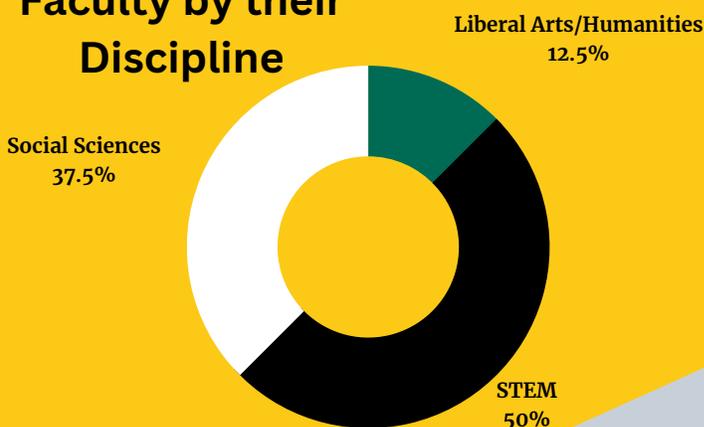
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Faculty mentors and community liaisons

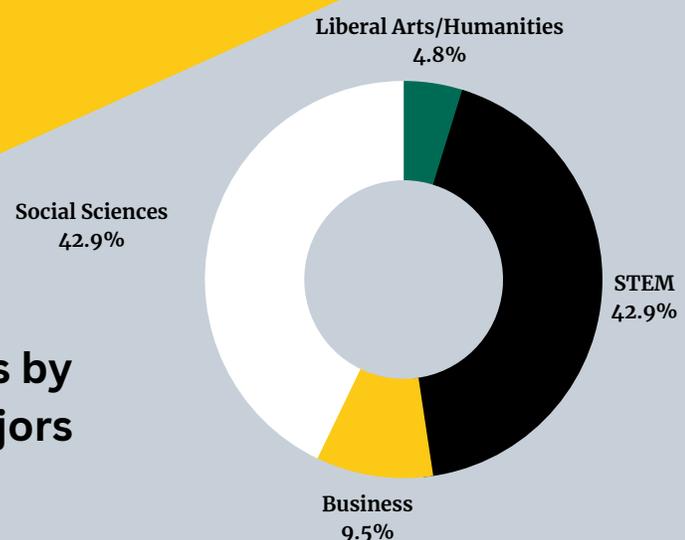
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Community partner organizations

Faculty by their Discipline



Students by their Majors



Urban Ecosystem Justice

Y₁ Community Partner

The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center

The team began learning about the Radix space and surrounding South End neighborhood in June. They focused specifically on the complex social and environmental dynamics there and how we could be of service to the local community. Days were spent with activities such as gardening, composting, and street tree watering, with the last hour of the day spent doing discussions organized around relevant scholarly articles.

Special highlights included launching artificial floating wetlands in the Hudson, gardening at Ezra Prentice Homes, the Normanskill preserve, and the Trinity Alliance, inoculating mushroom logs, environmental sampling at the Norlite plant, learning about honey bees, and leading tours for visiting kindergarten classes.

In the last two weeks of the program, the AmeriCorps team was joined by the EcoJustice Summer Youth Employment team, made up of local high school students, whom the AmeriCorps members passed on their knowledge to. Field trips with the youth included kayaking at Peebles Island and hiking at the Tivoli preserve. The program culminated with an evening open house and dinner at Radix where fellows discussed their work and led tours of the Center to the public.

PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Scott Kellogg, Ph.D. (University at Albany - SUNY)

Brandon Costellow-Kuehn, Ph.D. (Rensselaer
Polytechnic Institute)

Stacy Pettigrew, Ph.D. (Albany College of Pharmacy)

Urban Ecosystem Justice

Summer 2023 Accomplishments:

- Organized applied activities including urban gardening, composting, food distribution, beekeeping, agroforestry management, construction, and street tree watering.
- Conducted community-based research, environmental sampling, youth engagement and education, and group reading and discussion.
- Held an open-house event where the public was invited into the Radix space to learn about the activities and accomplishments of the group.

Next Steps:

- Host weekly open houses that draw upon visitors to Radix.
- Continue the community-based interviews related to the Innovation Blocks Program.
- Advance the urban heat island and air quality monitoring study.



“The Radix program checked the box for so many of my interests and was an amazing immersive learning experience. Having a hands-on, feet-on-the-ground approach to social justice and environmental science is a much more engaging application of my college education, and I was able to connect my passion for food and agriculture with environmental social justice.” – Zale Piepho, 2023 AmeriCorps Summer Associate with Urban Ecosystem Justice

Care-A-Van

Y₁ Community Partners

Unity House

Summary

The goal of the Care-A-Van is to bring services normally offered by Unity House to remote or underserved areas in Albany and Rensselaer County. For this 3-year SPIn project/partnership, year one's aim was to determine key locations for the Care-A-Van to visit, based on a community needs assessment and publicly available data.

In addition to identifying locations for the van, the team facilitated a conversation with Unity House about how to evaluate the impact of this initiative and recommended baseline measures that could be used in the evaluation. The student team consisted of 3 AmeriCorps volunteers, one of whom is a current Siena student who will continue to support this project over the next year through his involvement with the Siena Complex Care (Hotspotting) team.

PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Jenna Thate, PhD, RN, CNE (Siena College)

Sarah Toledano, M.S. (Siena College)

Dan White, Ph.D. (Siena College)

Care-A-Van

Summer 2022 Accomplishments:

- Our SPIn team completed a community assessment, SWOT analysis, and Logic model to address the aims outlined above. A logic model is a tool that is used in public health to help programs focus on their critical outcomes and the measurement of those outcomes. For this project, the team categorized outcomes into process and impact measures.
- The team summarized their insights to date, shared these with the leaders from Unity House at a final meeting, continuing the conversation with our partner about the basic guidelines for where to locate Care-a-van. They also outlined questions that Unity House may consider as they launch the Care-a-Van this fall.

Next Steps:

- We plan to work with Unity House to finalize initial locations for the van and provide support in the continuing evaluation of the project.



“In this program, students have a chance for hands-on research of the surrounding areas, and they will learn to implement social skills, while gaining knowledge on some of the issues within our communities. I expected to be part of a project that helped others- and I was - so the program lived up to my expectations.” - Victoria Fiorelli, 2023 Summer Associate with Care-A-Van

Summer Meals

Y₂ Community Partner

United Way of the Greater Capital Region

This year, we expanded our research team, had new food vendors, added nutrition education interventions, expanded our activity offerings, and expanded our research to rural sites.

We deployed a variety of methods including surveying parents, staff, and children. From these, we were able to identify participants' favorite and least favorite food options. We also asked questions about food security in addition to evaluating the summer meals program. Additionally, we investigated how people learned about the summer meals program as well as staff barriers to executing the programs to help us inform our recommendations.

We concluded the summer with a presentation to stakeholders about the project. We provided several evidence-based recommendations such as improving access for those with allergies, intolerances, or cultural/religious dietary restrictions. We also suggest more creative menu options such as cycling a menu and including food options that reflect the cultural diversity of those who attend the program and the continued use of activities to encourage participation.

PROJECT SUPERVISORS:

Heather Senecal (United Way of the Greater
Capital Region)

Sonya Hauser, Ph.D. (Russell Sage College)

Summer Meals

Summer 2023 Accomplishments:

- Given our expanded research team this year, we were able to visit 59 out of our 71 total sites.
- We were able to offer a nutrition education program this summer, and 53% of children stated that they would eat more fruits and vegetables after participating in the intervention.
- We both improved our understanding of nutrition security and evaluated the summer meals program through research.

Next Steps:

- Future research should consider nutrition interventions and an expansion around food vendor partnership.
- Identify ways for more community outreach to increase knowledge and participation in the program.
- Increase social media reach of those in the collaborative, including a possible mascot and logo change.



“It was amazing to return for year 2 of Summer Meals and see the impact we had in year 1. Being able to witness the recommendations we provided last year be implemented this year was amazing and so rewarding. While doing research this summer, members of the community shared their personal stories with me and expressed how much they value the work we did. My summer of service also exposed me to a different area of nutrition which has influenced my career goals moving forward!” Sam Monks, 2022 and 2023 AmeriCorps Summer Associate with Summer Meals

SSA Overview

Summer Service Associates is a program that is run through a collaboration between Siena ACE and United Way of the Greater Capital Region. Each summer, students from around the region are placed with nonprofit organizations around the region who support youth development, address food insecurity, or another anti-poverty initiative. Members in the program have the ability to participate in either direct, hands-on service or indirect, capacity-building service.



Each year, we are impressed by our community organizations' commitment to the personal and professional development of our members. Through their dedication to support the growth of our members, we are able to ensure that service-minded people can contribute meaningfully to poverty-alleviation projects in the Capital Region. Below is a summary of our SSA program this year, which ran for 8 weeks. Our members served on projects as wide-ranging as summer educational programs for youth, social media content creation and management, event creation and management, and volunteer recruitment!

SSA by the Numbers

13

Members engaged in community service

10

Majors represented

11

Community partners

4

Personal and professional development workshops for members



“I saw the impact that I had on the community because I was able to provide children with school supplies to prepare for the new school year. This is an excellent program for college students to gain experience for future careers while making connections at the same time. ” Anonymous 2023 Summer Service Associate

SSA - Summer Summary

Summer 2023 Highlights:

- Over 8 weeks, our Summer Associates completed 3703.75 hours of community service.
- Amber Chandler, a 2023 Summer Associate at Schenectady Community Ministries (SiCM), was hired by SiCM to continue on as their Communications Associate!
- Eva Murphy, a 2023 Summer Associate at Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York (JFS), is now serving at JFS as an AmeriCorps VISTA through ACE's program for the 23-24 year.

Summer 2023 Community Partners:

Schenectady City School District

SiCM

Mom Starts Here

C.R.E.A.T.E. Community Studios

YWCA

JFS of Northeastern New York

Girls on the Run

IPH

Connect Center

Unity House

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the
Capital Region

“I learned that I love to work on a team, especially a team that is fair, understanding and motivated. I learned I really love working with the older population (which is something I wouldn't have known otherwise). I learned that I am capable of things I wouldn't have thought of before this experience.” - Eva Murphy, 2023 Summer Associate with JFS of Northeastern NY

Summer Learning through SSA

Monday Workshops

Summer Associates attended professional training sessions throughout the program, including a workshop on elevator speeches and one on radical self-care. In addition, members attended a webinar by the United Way on Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE).

Final Reflection

Each Summer Associate presented on their service and accomplishments at Siena College to the other members in the program, community partners, supervisors, and ACE administrators. Members were able to celebrate their service together and leave knowing they made an impact this summer.



“I really enjoyed my summer service and found the work to be incredibly meaningful. It is a great program and I am very appreciative to Siena, my partner organization, and AmeriCorps for this opportunity! I feel like my work helped me to reevaluate systems (the food systems in place in public schools, school gardens) that I had never really thought about before, consider my own positionality within those systems, and interest me even more in food justice and how to incorporate agriculture and food justice into my future career.” -

Anonymous 2023 Summer Service Associate

Thank You to Our Funders

SPIn (Summer Project Incubator) is a partnership between The Center for Academic Community Engagement and The Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity (CURCA).

Summer Service Associates (SSA) is made possible through partnership with the United Way of the Greater Capital Region.

Member support is made possible by AmeriCorps VISTA.



United Way
of the Greater Capital Region



AmeriCorps



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WANT TO PARTICIPATE? INTERESTED IN CREATING A COMMUNITY-ENGAGED PROJECT?

We would love to hear from you! Please email us at
aceinfo@siena.edu.

We welcome interest from all Capital Region non-profits, faculty
from Capital Region colleges and universities, and non-Siena
students and community members.



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