



# 9/11 Weekend of Service 2014

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*Assessment Report*

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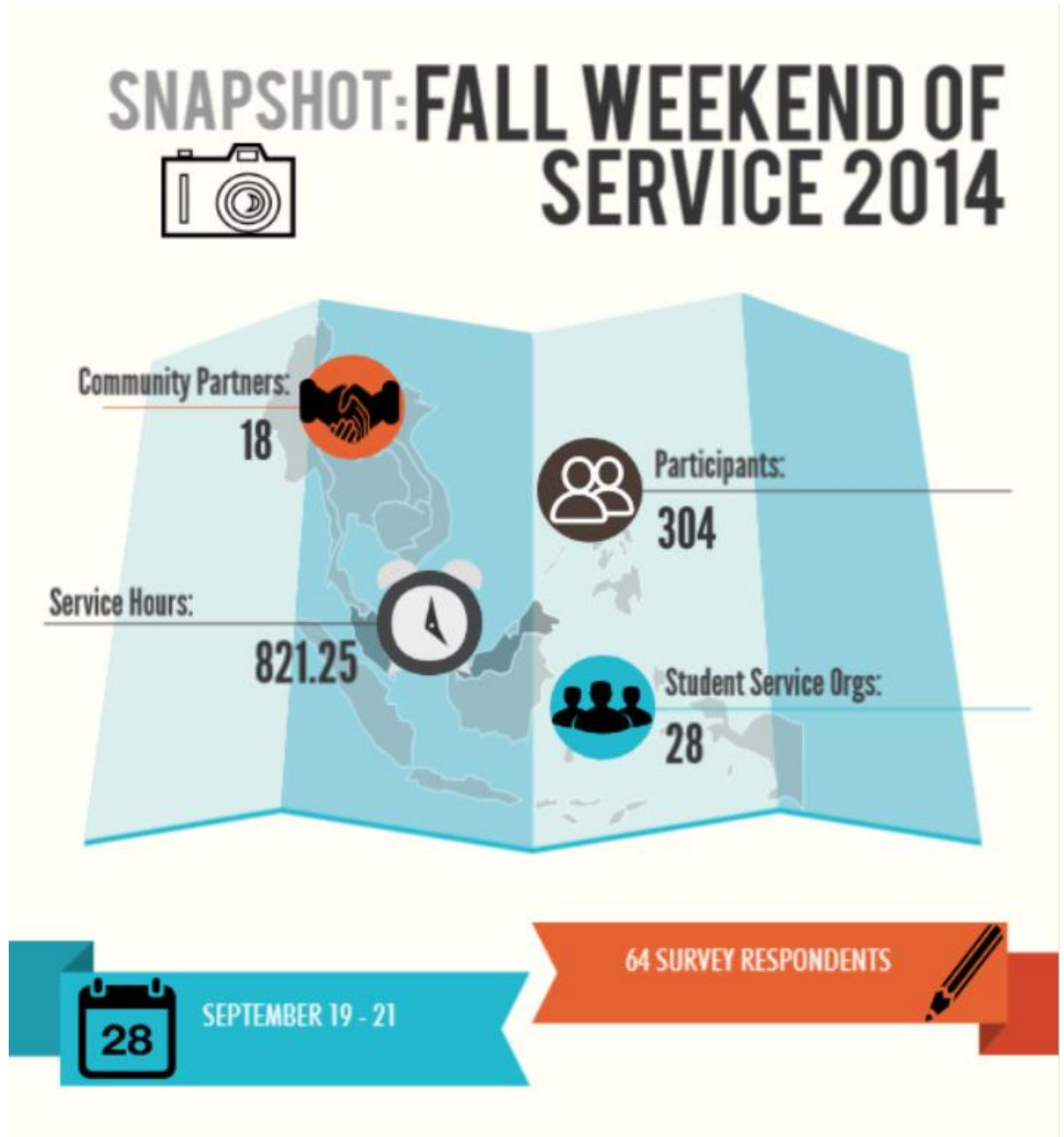
## Executive Summary

Over the weekend of September 19-21, 2014, more than 300 Vanderbilt students working with 28 student service organizations and 18 community partners came together in remembrance of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> by paying tribute to the victims of that day through more than 800 hours of compassionate and dedicated community service. The importance of The 9/11 Weekend of Service cannot be overstated, as it exemplifies the empathy and social consciousness of our student body as well as the fundamental link between Vanderbilt and the community of Nashville. The Office of Active Citizenship and Service seeks to strengthen the ties between our student service organizations and Tennessee's non-profit community; in so doing, we reinforce these mutually beneficial partnerships. As our Academic Strategic Plan directs, "our graduates must be active citizens who solve important problems that confront the world and seek opportunities for discovery." This report details how the crucial fellowship between university and city is at the core of our Weekend of Service, giving students the opportunity to recognize the important role they play as leaders not just on campus, but in the greater community. Our Strategic Plan succinctly and pointedly reminds us that "great research universities are defined not just by the disciplines in which they excel, but also by how they identify and respond to society's grand challenges and opportunities." We must therefore continue to encourage and enable our cohort to involve themselves as citizens, not just students.



Students volunteer with Girls on the Run, a physical activity based youth development program for girls in 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade

## Data at a Glance



## Strategic Objectives

To make a difference in the local Nashville community by encouraging students, faculty & staff to come together in a weekend of service in remembrance of 9/11.

To provide student service groups with the opportunity to work with local providers to build their membership.

To further build & develop relationships with local Nashville service partners.

## Background

The anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup> is our nation's largest engagement with volunteerism and service. In 2013, more than 47 million people from the United States and 150 other countries memorialized 9/11 through charitable works and good deeds (9/11 Day Website). Since 2010, The Office of Active Citizenship and Service has led Vanderbilt students, faculty, and staff by partnering with community organizations, working toward the goal of bringing Nashville closer together while remembering the tragedy of 2001 and honoring those who lost their lives. In 2014, more than 300 student participants worked with 18 community partners in the diverse areas of education, veterans' affairs, environmental stewardship and protection, poverty alleviation, and health care to purposefully address the challenges facing our city. This year, as we reflected on the meaning of community service through the lens of peace and unity, our office decided to culminate The Weekend of Service on September 21<sup>st</sup>, The International Day of Peace.

## Methodology

To properly understand and assess the 9/11 Weekend of Service and to analyze the impact on the Vanderbilt students and on the site leaders who participated, OACS staff created a paper assessment instrument composed of open-ended and Likert-scaled questions. These questions were designed to capture the opinions of students regarding their service as well as gain a clearer understanding of who composed our student cohort and how they became involved in the 9/11 Weekend of Service. OACS staff hosted a breakfast for site leaders on September 18<sup>th</sup>. The surveys were distributed to site leaders that morning and those who could not attend the breakfast were emailed the survey.

Site leaders were responsible for disseminating the surveys to their groups at the conclusion of their service events and were instructed to emphasize the importance of completing them. The surveys took approximately 5-10 minutes to finish, and site leaders were responsible for collecting and returning the surveys to OACS staff the following week. Site leaders were also reminded via email to hand in the surveys. 64 surveys were returned and a staff member manually entered the results into a Baseline aggregator that was created for the 9/11 Weekend of Service. Baseline presents a comprehensive visualization tool of the data, benefitting others in the university who might wish to see the results.

From a methodological perspective, paper surveys were utilized to maximize the response rate. It was felt that students would be most likely to respond to a survey given to them immediately after the service event, when the experience was fresh in their minds and they were together as a group.



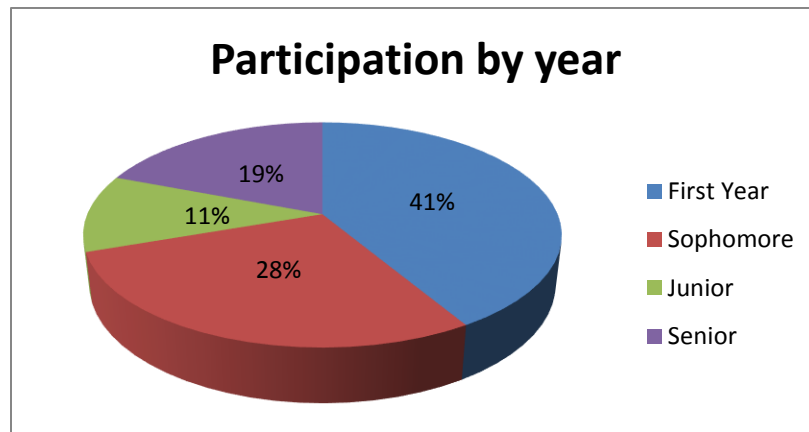
A volunteer picks corn at B.E.L.L. (Bellevue Edible Learning Laboratory) Garden

## Results & Analysis

Approximately 300 students were reported to have participated in the 9/11 Weekend of Service, however, we know this number is higher since seven site leaders did not report back on their groups' attendance numbers or hours worked. 28 student service organizations partnered with 18 community organizations (primarily non-profits) and logged more than 800 hours of work. 64 participants completed evaluations, yielding a 21 percent response rate. We feel paper surveys are useful, but a recommendation for next year is to create a Baseline survey two weeks prior to the 9/11 Weekend of Service, such that evaluations could be emailed to participants the day after their service.

## General & Demographic Information

*Current status at Vanderbilt:*



- It's evident that First Year students show an enthusiasm to connect with Vanderbilt and the larger Nashville community. We must therefore encourage this volunteer spirit and market in the Commons as much as possible.

*How did you learn about 9/11 Weekend of Service?*

- 47% from email/listserv and 45% from a student organization
- We see students connected primarily through either their student org or communication sent out by OACS or their site leaders. Next year OACS should be more active emailing prospective participants and making the event known via social media and our newsletter. Site leaders should be encouraged to publicize as much as possible with this data in mind.

*How many hours did you volunteer?*

- 41% reported volunteering for 2 hours
- Many people reported wanting to work longer hours. The feedback should be shared with site leaders next year that projects working 1-2 hours may be perceived as insufficient.

*Service areas addressed (note: respondents could mark more than one):*

- 34% poverty, 31% education, 30% health, 20% environment, 16% other, 3% veterans
- Poverty is a salient issue for our students, many of whom come from positions of privilege. Projects addressing poverty and homelessness should be encouraged next year.

## Opinions Regarding Service

*Satisfaction with the agency/non-profit partnered with:*

- 91% responded 'fairly satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

- Take note of our community partners and work with them again next year.

*Why did the majority of respondents participate? (note: fill in the blank responses)*

- ‘I wanted to help’ or ‘to have the opportunity to serve the community’
- ‘I think service and reflection are important’ or ‘I do this kind of thing often’

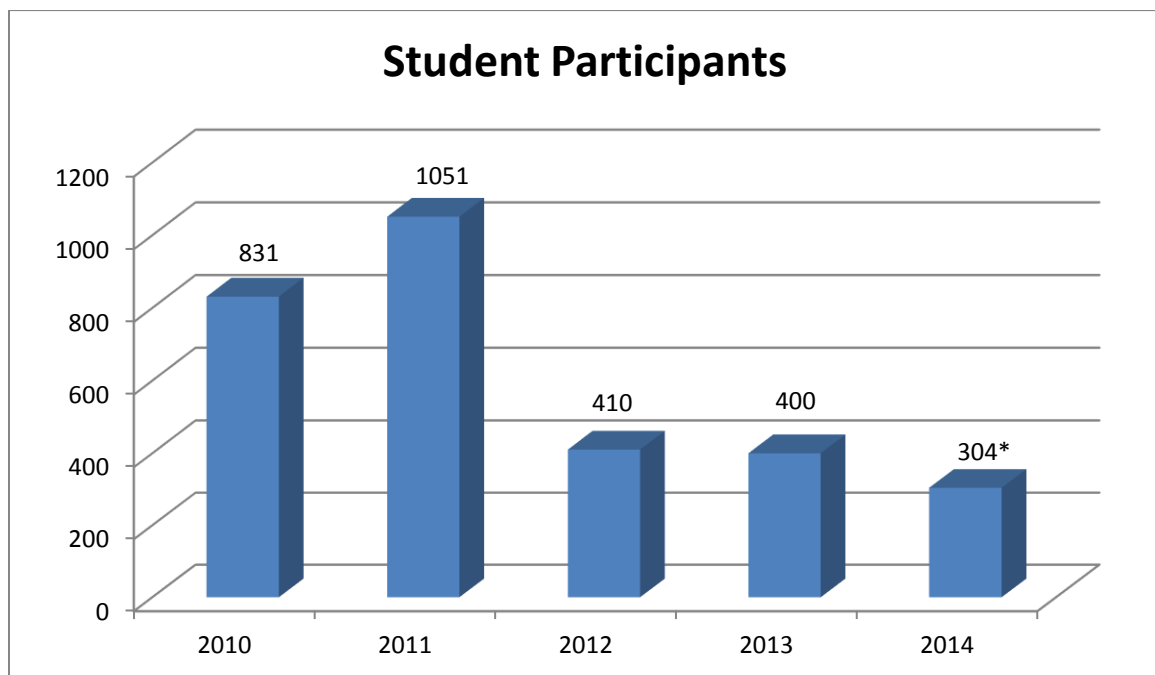
*Extent you developed a greater understanding of the issues addressed:*

- 69% responded ‘a fair amount’ or ‘very much’.
- This is an encouraging sign that our service projects are meaningfully connecting students to the issues they chose to address

*What could have been improved? (note: fill in the blank responses)*

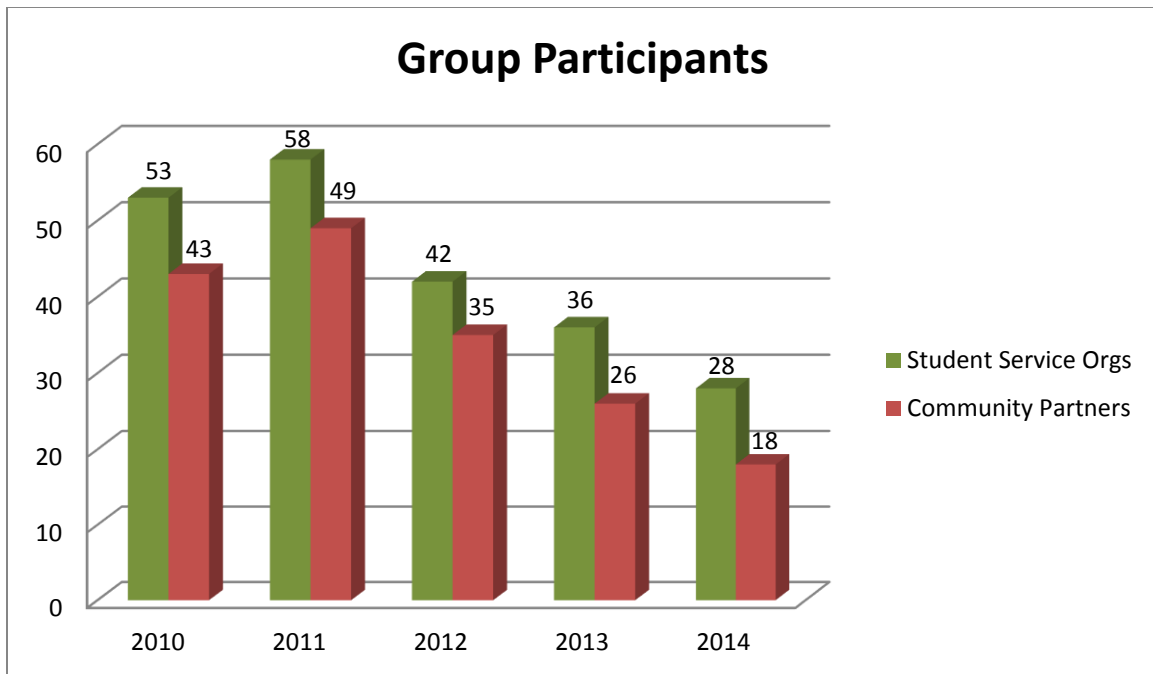
- Work longer hours and/or have varied tasks
- More background on the issues being addressed beforehand
- ‘Knowing about more opportunities’ or ‘better communication’

## Comparative Data & Analysis



\* OACS did not receive data back from 7 student service orgs regarding their number of participants in 2014





We see a decline in participation going forward from 2011, the 10 year anniversary of the attacks. As we move further in time from the events of September 11, 2001, this tragedy may feel less salient to Vanderbilt undergraduate students, most of whom would have been very young at the time. An incoming first year student in 2014 would have been approximately 5 years old in 2001 and may view 9/11 as a historical event more than a firsthand, personal loss. OACS must therefore invest additional efforts recruiting students for 2015, and our focus on The International Day of Peace is one strong strategy, as this day can be universally understood and has a timeless appeal to people of all backgrounds and ages.

## The International Day of Peace

Community member and peace advocate Linda Ragsdale inspired OACS to think more intentionally about the relationship between The 9/11 Weekend of Service and The International Day of Peace occurring on September 21<sup>st</sup>. For the first time, OACS extended Weekend of Service activities to visibly and proactively advocate for peace by requesting participation from various Vanderbilt offices and departments in a social media campaign. This campaign encouraged participants to make a conscious effort to adopt and promote a daily peace action in order to inspire Vanderbilt and the world.

After the social media campaign and The 9/11 Weekend of Service, OACS hosted an opportunity for participants to stand together and hold a moment of silence for peace on

September 21<sup>st</sup>. Participants gathered as a community on the Commons South Patio to reflect on our ability to promote peace within ourselves and our world. Linda Ragsdale and a poet from Southern Word, Constance Bynum, eloquently described their perception of peace through words and emotional expression.

The culmination of our 9/11 Weekend of Service with The International Day of Peace reminded everyone involved that service does not end when the volunteer project is over, and indeed, the work we strive to achieve as active citizens must extend far beyond a three day period if we are to enact meaningful change in our world. By asking our colleagues and students to reflect upon what they can do to make the world a kinder, safer place, we challenge them to proactively and consciously think about those in need.

To continue and expand our success next year, it is recommended that we begin advertising and advocating to our colleagues in DOS and elsewhere at least one month in advance of September 21<sup>st</sup> to increase awareness and participation. We should advertise the Day of Peace as a culmination of The Weekend of Service while gaining buy in from participants and site leaders. Creating and distributing marketing materials will also spread the word.



Participants in the International Day of Peace

## Recommendations

Regarding future 9/11 Weekends of Service, the following is recommended:

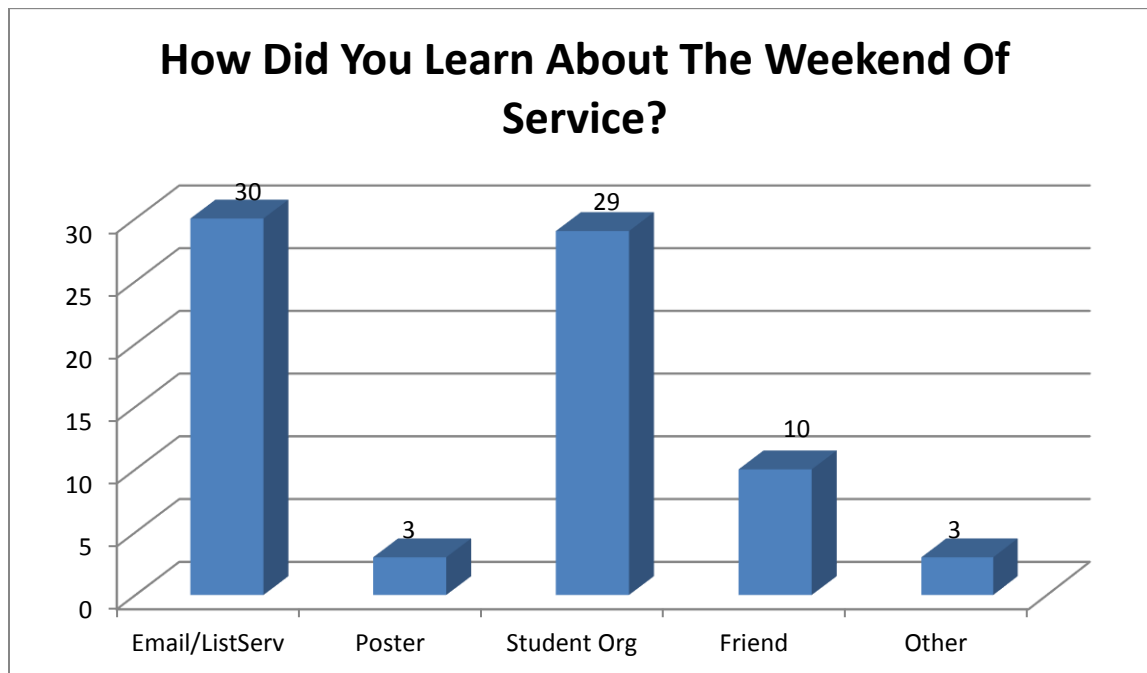
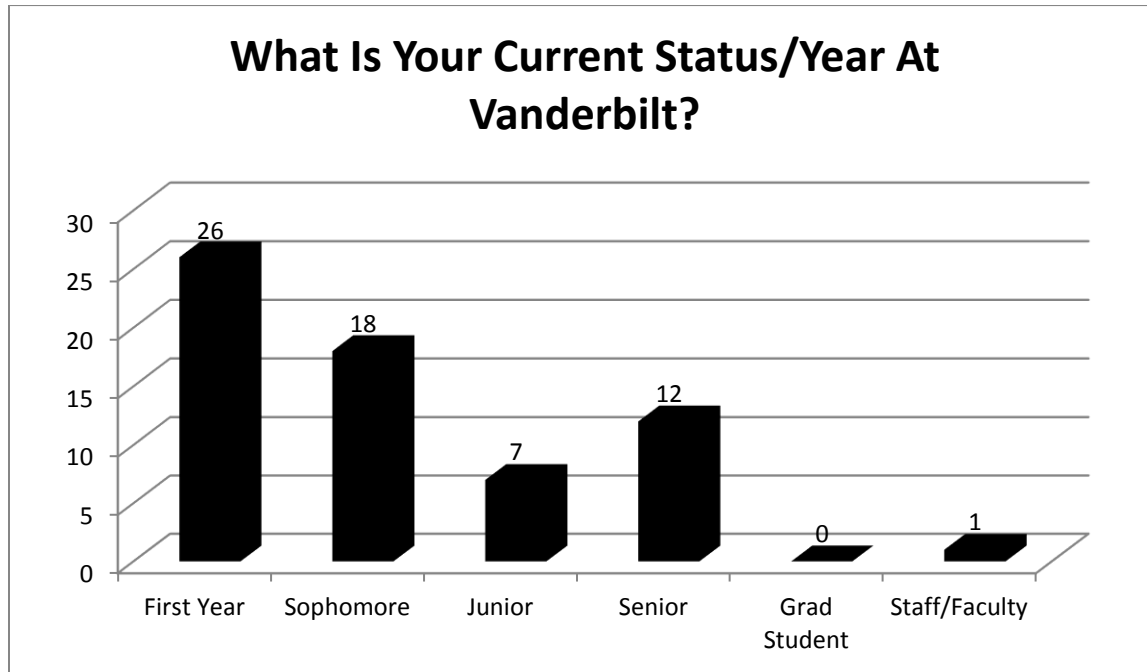
- Incorporate online surveys to be emailed to participants. These should be compiled on Baseline about 2 weeks prior to the event, noting that Baseline takes 4-5 business days to produce surveys. Surveys will be emailed to participants on the business day following the conclusion of the 9/11 Weekend of Service.
- Rather than focusing only on strategic outcomes for the assessment report, incorporate 4-5 learning outcomes as well. These can be measured using existing assessment instruments.
- Survey responses indicate students wanted to work longer hours in varied projects and have more preparatory information about their service areas and community partners.
- Survey the community partners and evaluate their responses to working with students.
- Conduct follow-up evaluations with students approximately 4-6 weeks after the 9/11 Weekend of Service. This will allow their thoughts and feelings to become clearer with time.
- Increase attendance at the preliminary site leader breakfast through better advertising. This will make surveying student participants much more likely to happen and will increase the efficacy of data and analysis tremendously. It will also allow OACS to better prepare site leaders for the Weekend of Service and help them organize their groups efficiently and strategically.
- Focus on receiving all data after the Weekend of Service regarding the numbers of student participants and hours served by following-up with site leaders via email and in-person, multiple times if necessary. This year we didn't receive information from seven groups, leaving us to speculate as to their involvement and how it contributed to our overall impact.



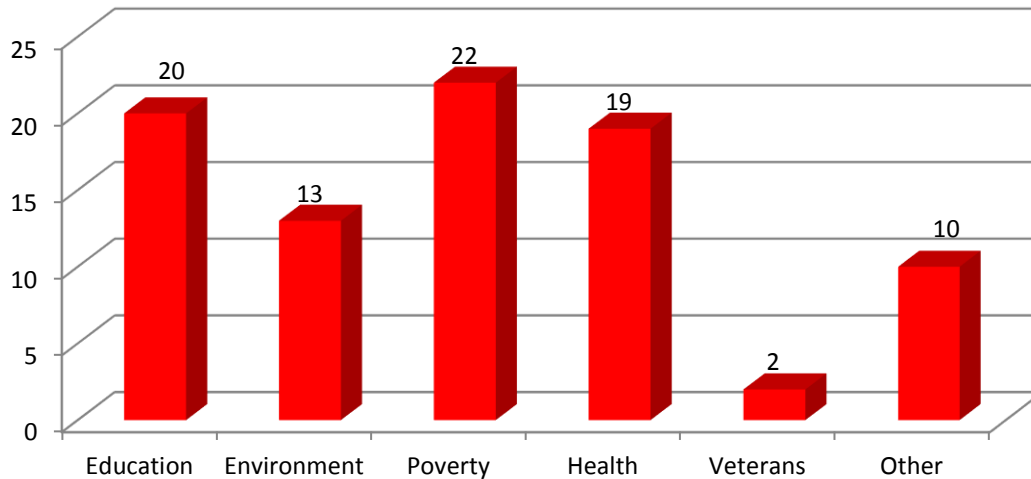
Student volunteers partnering in the community

## Appendix

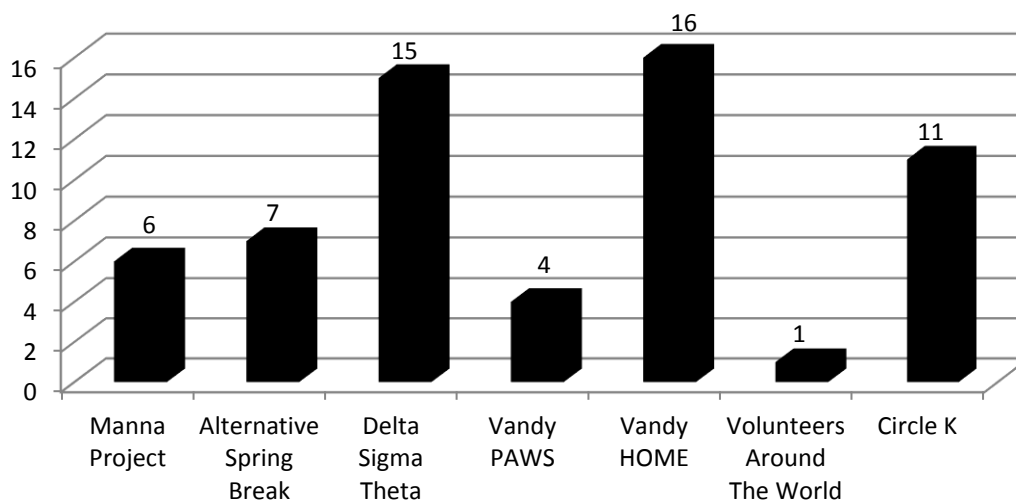
Results from paper surveys distributed to all 9/11 Weekend of Service participants (64 returned):



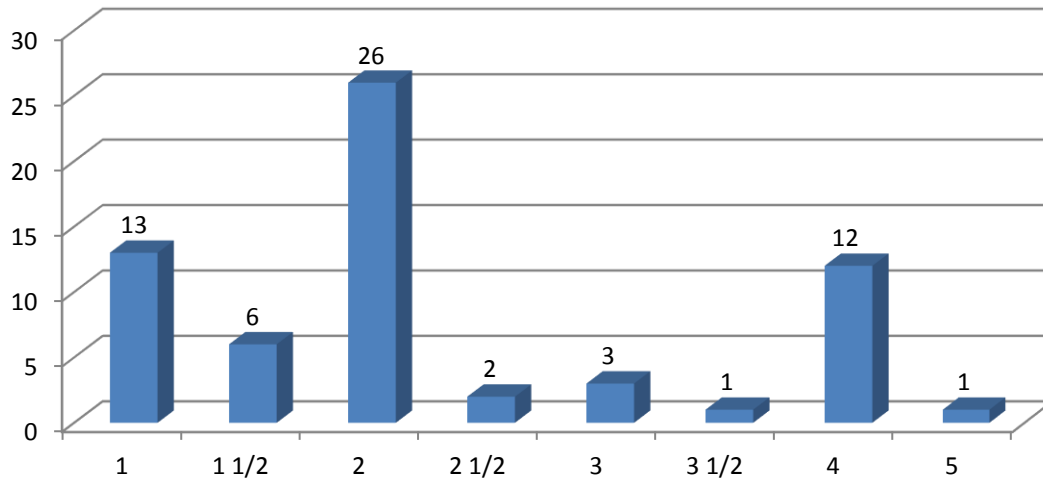
### What Service Areas Were Addressed In Your Project? (multiple responses possible)



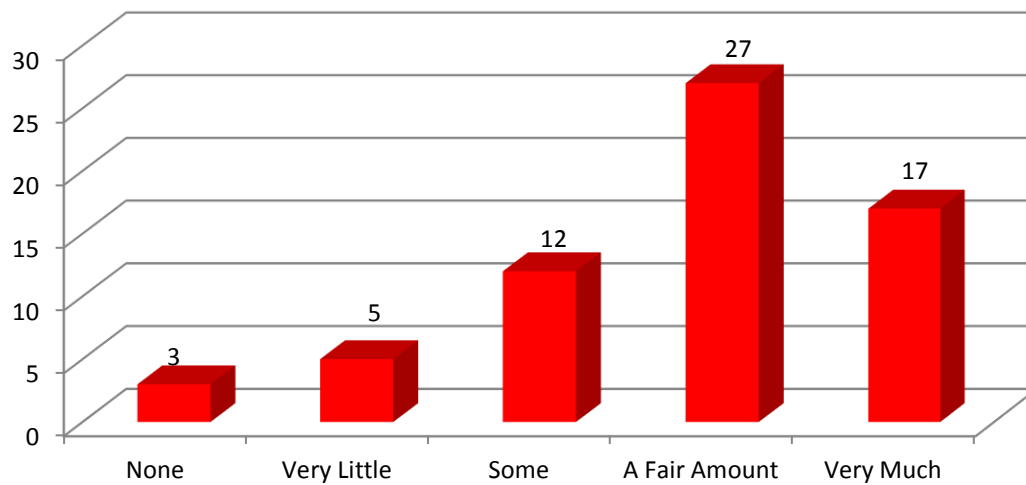
### Which VU Student Organization Did You Work With?



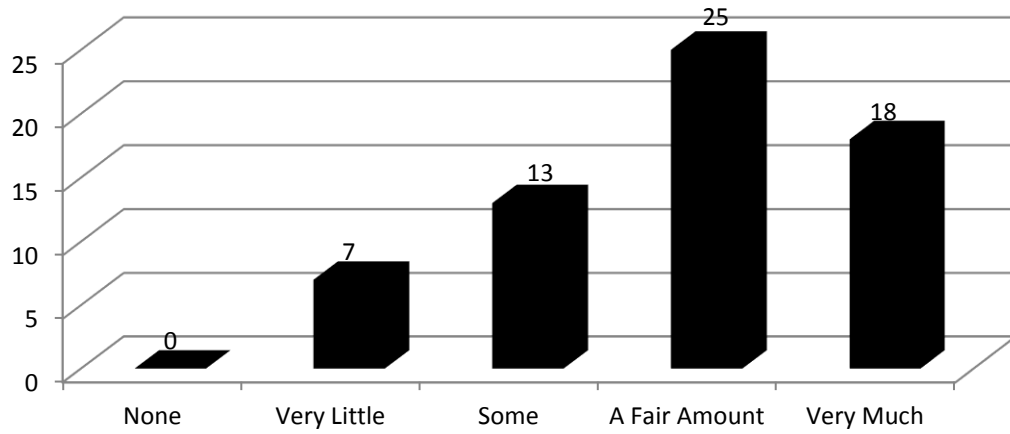
### How Many Hours Did You Volunteer For This Project?



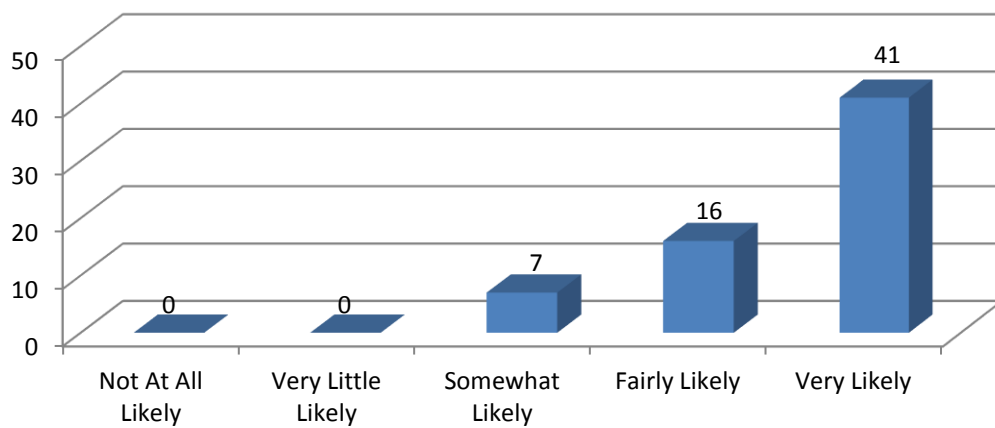
### To What Extent Did You Develop A Greater Understanding Of The Issues Addressed?



### To What Extent Were You Impacted By Working With Diverse Communities Or Cultures?



### How Likely Are You To Volunteer Again With This Student Organization Because Of This Project?



### How Satisfied Are You With The Agency/Non-Profit Your Organization Partnered With Today?

