

College Student SNAP-Ed Internship Program –Colusa County Noteworthy Initiative – Chico

Since 2003, the CSU, Chico Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) has provided approximately 100 university students each year with civic engagement and service learning opportunities across the north state through a structured internship program. These internship opportunities derive from various sources, primarily USDA SNAP-Ed funds. The center recruits students from all colleges and disciplines including nutrition, health education, kinesiology, business, technology, social work, liberal studies, math and statistics, graphic design and public administration. Classroom concepts are reinforced with these hands-on experiences. For example, students see the barriers and political ideologies that prevent improved health, food access or food security first hand. Students have the opportunity to lead teams to conduct school and community based nutrition education and develops para-professional skills needed for employment post-graduation. This internship model allows university students to be fully engaged in all aspects of partnership development, program design, implementation, and evaluation.

This structure is mutually beneficial to the SNAP-Ed programs, the students, and also the community being served. The SNAP-Ed programs benefit from greater cost efficiency and the youthful energy the unpaid college interns have to offer. The students benefit from the opportunity to implement concepts learned in the classroom while building their resumes with applicable skills. And the community benefits not only from the innovative SNAP-Ed programs, but also from the well-trained graduates who bring the SNAP-Ed messages to their future careers, many of which remain in California.

CHC has developed a streamlined application and approval process, coordinated training and cross training strategies, and tools to help guide interns throughout their experience. Supervisors are also trained on effective strategies to mentor the students and are given standardized tools to regularly monitor the student's performance and their progress toward performance objectives that are agreed upon by both student and supervisor at the beginning of each semester. All internship tools and resources are available with a brief how-to guide for getting started. Everything can be customized for other organizations to implement a scaled version of the internship program and CHC staff are available for questions if you're interested in exploring partnership possibilities with a nearby college or university. Please contact Emily Foxworthy at eafoxworthy@csuchico.edu for more information.