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Joseph Allen, Faculty Spotlight

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Joseph Allen

Joe Allen, Ph.D., is an associate professor in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. As the director of the Center for Applied Psychological Services and the founding director of the Volunteer Program Assessment-UNO, Dr. Allen has served hundreds of nonprofits.

"Labor of Love"
Dr. Allen's community engagement efforts are motivated by altruism. "Community engagement is the labor of love. You do it without expecting anything in return."

Inspired by his religious background and the example given by his parents, Dr. Allen developed a pragmatic view on community engagement. "Here is a community need, I have a skill, and I'm going to help."

Dr. Allen's expertise in organizational psychology, specifically with workplace dynamics, allowed him to collaborate with over 250 community organizations - positively impacting thousands of individuals.

Volunteer Program Assessment

Volunteer Program Assessment (VPA) is an organization that partners with nonprofit organizations with the goal of building organizational capacity and improving volunteers' experiences.

VPA resulted out of a partnership between the University of North Carolina, where Dr. Allen obtained his doctoral degree, and The Humane Society of the United States. Currently, there are five VPA organizations across the country that collectively have served 370 nonprofits.

Although a VPA-UNO research study has a market value of $10,000, nonprofits are served free of charge. Benefits to the nonprofits include increased organizational capacity, and increased volunteer satisfaction and retention.
Center for Applied Psychological Services

The Center for Applied Psychological Services (CAPS) provides high quality consulting services to organizations. Under supervision of faculty members, students work directly with organizations.

Since Dr. Allen became the director of CAPS two years ago, his goal has been to grow the organization and increase its partnerships. One of the CAPS’ clients is the Autism Action Partnership where consulting is done relating to the preference rate of adults with autism.

CAPS allows students engage with community organizations and apply knowledge to real-life situations while organizations benefit from high quality consulting services at a fraction of the cost. This results in mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnerships.

Altruism

Dr. Allen explains the importance of altruism in community engagement. “You have to be motivated by altruism,” and not expect anything in return.

“Whenever I do community engagement, I’ve been blessed by great opportunities.”

Community engagement results in great opportunities, whether it is through the development of positive feelings, monetary rewards, resume building, or research opportunities. However, if individuals pursue community engagement efforts with a specific outcome in mind, their community engagement efforts might be short-lived. If community engagement is pursued for the right reasons, individuals will receive more benefits and continue to get satisfaction out of their engagement efforts.