



Expand Team Capacity Through **Student Talent**

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*Raise your hand if your unit has
more marketing, event, or
outreach ideas than staff hours to
execute them*

How It Started

- In 2013, I was a wide-eyed new employee at the UCR School of Public Policy
- I was hire #2 of 3
- We were a startup with **big** ambitions



The Pain Points

- We needed to raise brand awareness for our new school
- We needed to have a presence in the external community
- At the time, we were holding ~90 events per year
- Our students were yearning for student success programs they could be involved in
- *...But I was an army of one and I had a budget of zero*

The SPP External Engagement Office:

- *Raises brand awareness and external visibility for the SPP*
- *Fosters future partnerships and collaborations, beneficial media coverage, and financial support for the School*
- *Shares knowledge and wisdom with the general public about public policy from our faculty and students*

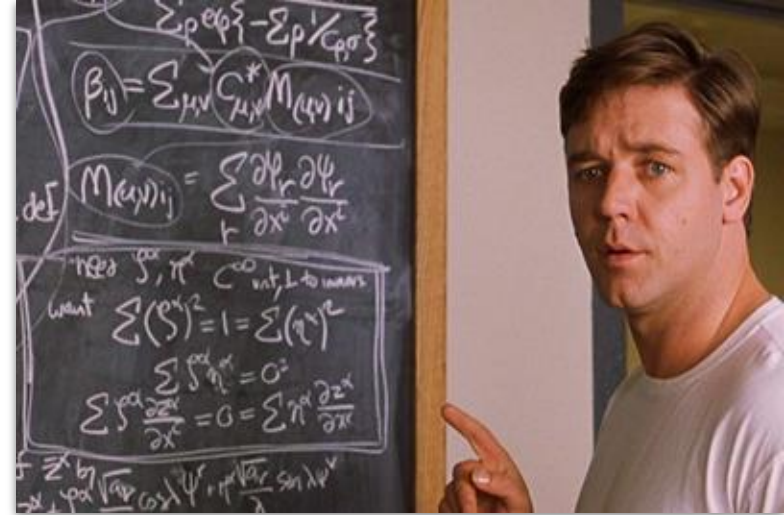
Mission of the UCR School of Public Policy:

We promote solutions to public policy and governance challenges by:

1. *Conducting research*
2. *Educating undergraduate and graduate students*
3. *Collaborating with community members and local, national, and international leaders*

Things Come Together

- All the converging pain points, especially...
 - Being under-staffed and under-resourced
 - Students thirsting for involvement
- Led to the creation of the...



A young man with dark hair, smiling, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light-colored shirt, and a patterned tie. He is standing in front of a large window with a view of a modern building. The text "Solutions for the Region" and "Solutions for the World" is overlaid on the image.

Solutions for the **Region**
Solutions for the **World**

The SPP Dean's Ambassador Program

- sppambassadors.ucr.edu
- 15-20 student volunteers per year
- The expectations:
 - ~4 hours per week
 - Undergo rigorous orientation trainings
 - Staff a minimum of 4 required external-facing events or activities per quarter
- ...As well as assist with...



1. Marketing & Outreach

- **Ambassadors assist with helping spread the word about the school and its events**
 - Email marketing
 - Word of mouth
 - Social media
- **They have been instrumental in our highest attended events**
 - **Example:** ~300 RSVPs & ~250 attendees *for the 2025 Persist Conference*



2. Events

- Ambassadors assist with various **external-facing events** hosted by the SPP
- Our students help with:
 - **Planning & logistics**
 - *Staffing charts*
 - *Cue books*
 - *Briefing documents*
 - **Day-of-event execution**
 - *Setup & Teardown*
 - *Tech & A/V*
 - *Emceeing*
 - *Staffing Guests*



2024 Persist Women's Political Engagement Conference



2024 Election Watch Session (here showing Eastvale Councilmember Jocelyn Yow)



3. Podcast

- Ambassadors helped establish and currently produce the SPP's official podcast series, *Policy Chats*, aimed at making public policy accessible to a wide audience
 - Interfacing with podcast guests
 - Conducting interviews, including A/V and tech
 - Editing and publishing
 - Podcast promotion
- spp.ucr.edu/podcast



CARE Act Podcast with Riverside County Superior Court Judge Magdalena Cohen



4. External Relations

- Ambassadors accompany the Dean & Director of External Engagement at meetings with special guests
- They also help with:
 - Conducting research on guests
 - Preparing briefing documents
 - Advocating for the school and keeping an eye out for potential partnerships in the community



Redlands Councilmember Denise Davis



Riverside Councilmember Philip Falcone

Benefits for Students

- **Practical learning opportunity for public policy students:**
 - Ambassadors represent the SPP & the Dean's Administration to the external community
 - *Analogue: U.S. Ambassadors under the Secretary of State in the President's Cabinet*
 - Executive branch vs. legislative branch
 - Elected vs. appointed official
- **Opportunities to interact with policy professionals (policy makers, practitioners, researchers)**
- **Trainings on information dissemination and community engagement useful for public affairs careers**
- **Qualifies for the PBPL 198i requirement**
- **Potential for letters of recommendation**



CA Governor Gavin Newsom



Congressman Mark Takano



Riverside Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson

Benefits for the School

- We get talented personnel who can help us fill in gaps in staffing for marketing, events, and external relations
- We forge lifelong bonds with alumni who feel invested in the school
- It helps with the student career outcomes metric used in rankings



2026-2027 Org Chart

SPP External Engagement Office

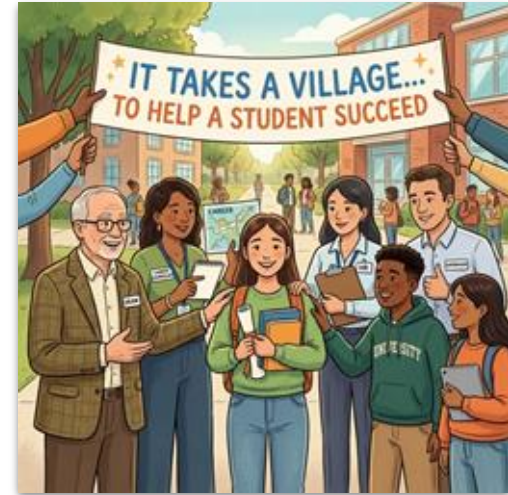
-  = Staff Members (Full-Time, 40 hrs/wk)
-  = Student Workers (Part-Time, 19 hrs/wk)
-  = Student Volunteers (Occasional, 4 hrs/wk)



Tips
Recruitment to Retention

Partner with Everyone

- **Your Supervisor**
 - Communicate the time, energy, and resources needed to succeed
- **Your HR Department**
 - Be knowledgeable of policies to follow, e.g.:
 - *19 hours per week max; 39-40 hours per week ok during summer*
 - *Onboard volunteers so they can get workers' compensation coverage*
- **Your Career Counselor & UCR Career Center**
 - Ask if students could potentially satisfy internship requirements
 - Be familiar with Handshake for hiring
 - For your search, be very clear about what your needs are to create a robust job description and so you ask the right questions during interviews



Partner with Everyone (*cont.*)

- **Your Advising Team**

- Ask the ones closest to students to keep an eye out for prospects

- **Colleagues at Other Departments**

- Ask if they could disseminate flyers about the job posting to their students, boost signals on social media, or post on their digital signage
- Ask colleagues about any lessons learned or tips they could pass on to you

- **Your Current Students**

- Involve them in the interview process to get their unique and valuable perspectives on potential recruits



Don't Balk at Training

- **The time and energy you put into training will deliver returns down the line**
 - It will limit rework - which will ultimately reduce your workload
 - There are brilliant 1st years out there in case you want to have longevity for a role
- **If limited on time, ask other colleagues if they could synergize efforts with you**
 - I've asked my boss and colleagues to help with various trainings
 - I've asked University Honors to help with public speaking trainings
 - I've helped SPP Advising, S2P, GSRs
- **Empower current students and/or alumni to help pass down their institutional knowledge to the next generation**
- **Pass down knowledge and wisdom you receive from professional development trainings you undergo yourself**



Invest in Your Students

- **Don't treat students like temp workers - integrate them into the team**
- **Build trust for team cohesion**
 - Connect through mutual interests, e.g. soccer, Minecraft, video games
 - Team building activities
 - Celebrate their special days and their accomplishments as you would staff
 - Gift cards or scholarships to recognize their efforts
- **Offer mentorship and coaching**
- **Help them expand their professional network**
- **Involve them in professional development opportunities**



Invest in Yourself as a Manager

- **Management, regardless of whether it's of a student team or not, requires an investment of your time**
 - Especially if you're a **working manager**
- **Understand management vs. leadership**
- **Seek ongoing professional development**
 - You'll make mistakes - and learn from them
 - UCR HR offers a "Successfully Supervising Students" training
- **Find mentors to learn from**



Dispelling a Myth

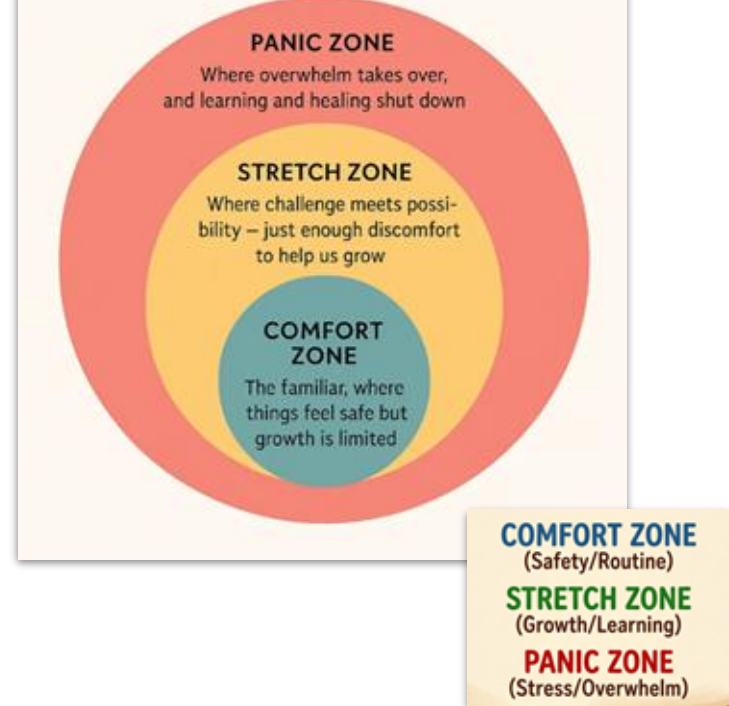
Myth: *Student workers can only handle menial tasks*

Truth: *Students thrive with ownership of high-impact work*

How to make it work:

- Instill purpose by connecting the work to the organization's goals
- View the work as stretch opportunities that match their intrinsic motivation and career goals
- Delegate with trust and hand off true ownership to avoid micromanagement

Karl Rohnke's Comfort-Stretch-Panic Model



Be Resourceful, Flexible, & OK With Change

- **Budgetary constraints will always be a thing**
 - ...If you can't get student workers, consider work studies or volunteers
- **Your students might not be available during traditional work hours due to classes**
 - ...But they might be available during evening and/or weekend events
- **There will be turnover due to students graduating**
 - ...But the yearly change can bring new perspectives to the team



Embrace Generation Gaps

- Each decade brings a new generation of students...
- Empathize - think back to when you were their age
 - This may be their first job and are still learning about professional expectations
- Students can give insights on their generation that could inform your work in marketing or events
- Welcome reverse mentors



At the End of the Day...

- Students can be the superheroes who can save the day
- They can be invaluable force multipliers for your team
- When you treat students as partners rather than extra hands...
- *...You don't just expand your team's capacity today*
- *...You build leaders and partners for your organization for the future*





Thank You

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