

# CENTER FOR THE COMMON GOOD

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024





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# ABOUT THE CENTER

## CENTER HISTORY

The Center for the Common Good (CCG) emerged from the Catholic-inspired Community Engagement task force, one of eight committees comprised of faculty, staff, students, and external partners charged with carrying out key university priorities identified in the university's 2020 strategic plan. After two years of engaging internal and external stakeholders in a dialogue defining how the university would live its mission to advance the common good in partnership with community priorities, the Center for the Common Good was launched in July 2017.



## OUR APPROACH

We promote collaborative initiatives to address community challenges, encouraging St. Thomas members to advance the common good locally and globally. Our aim is to cultivate a lifelong commitment to civic engagement among students.

# Community Impact Numbers

Our students, staff, and faculty actively contribute to our community through academic classes, co-curricular volunteerism, and through their dedication to advancing the common good.

Each year, our commitment to our community has seen substantial growth, resulting in an exponential increase in the number of hours dedicated. According to the Independent Sector, the value of a Minnesota volunteer hour is estimated at **\$36.31**, which for academic year translates to over **\$5,335,500** contributed to our communities via community engaged hours.

# 146,943 COMMUNITY ENGAGED HOURS

**AN INCREASE OF 36% FROM  
2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR.**



# 4,259 UNIQUE STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

**CONTRIBUTING THEIR UNIQUE TALENTS AND  
TIME TO OUR COMMUNITY**

**AN INCREASE OF 22% FROM  
2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR.**





# Community Collaborations & Partnerships by the Numbers

We rigorously evaluate every organization we collaborate with to ensure alignment with our mission. We work to develop mutually beneficial partnerships and take pride in being the university choice of many of our Twin Cities' organizations. We thank our many excellent partners whose mission it is to contribute to the common good.



**316 D1 ATHLETES  
CONTRIBUTED  
2,425  
HOURS**

**AN INCREASE OF 56.5%  
FROM 2022-2023  
ACADEMIC YEAR.**

---

*“I was a little afraid, especially since it was a men's shelter, and it was uncomfortable, but to me that just showed how privileged I have been and why it is important for us to volunteer at homeless shelters. I think it is a harder sell to convince people to volunteer at a homeless shelter rather than make cards, but I think it is a really important and powerful experience, and participants said they did learn a lot.*

*-Student in Orchestra Club*

**105 STUDENT CLUBS COMPLETED THEIR  
VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT BY CONTRIBUTING**

**3,498 HOURS**

# OUR ENGAGED STUDENTS

## CELESTE CONTEH, '26



### SELECTED FOR THE NATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

Celeste's nominator noted:  
"Her steadfast commitment to community engagement, civic responsibility, and leadership at the University of St. Thomas is commendable."

Most of Celeste's community service has been through Second Year Tommies, where her volunteer work shines. During the recent J-term, she conducted over 30 service hours of mediation and restorative services, assuming diverse responsibilities on and off-site. Her involvement with the Black Empowerment Student Alliance, mainly through mentoring AVID students in local high schools, is noteworthy." -Kenneth Cooper

## 46 National Presidential Volunteer Service Awards

Our students' commitment is commendable!

We take pride in the many students honored with the National President's Volunteer Service Award, which means they dedicated a minimum of 100 hours to our community.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERS



At the Center for the Common Good, we hold dear the principle of mutually beneficial partnerships, which serves as the bedrock for informed, community-driven change. Inclusivity is paramount in our endeavors, and we are committed to amplifying the voices of diverse and underrepresented populations.

## 421 COMMUNITY PARTNERS ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD

Some of our distinguished partners include:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Catholic Charities
- C.L.U.E.S. (Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio)
- Habitat for Humanity
- Humanitarian Respite Center, TX
- Junior Achievement
- Keystone Community Services
- League of Woman Voters Saint Paul
- Neighborhood House
- Rondo Center of Diverse Expression
- Second Harvest Heartland
- St. Paul Public Libraries

# TOMMIES TOGETHER VOLUNTEER CENTER

The Tommies Together Volunteer Center provides our campus community with a range of co-curricular opportunities to invest their time, talent, and skills in the community. Whether students want to participate in one of our established programs like Shelter Crew or Tutor Mentor or find a specific opportunity related to their field of study, we can help volunteers get started.



Our staff offers opportunities to student-athletes and student clubs, providing one-on-one personalized coaching to students exploring volunteer opportunities.



# Shelter Crew: Working toward Housing Justice

Shelter Crew empowers students to learn about housing insecurity in the Twin Cities through volunteering with our community partners Catholic Charities and Habitat for Humanity. Students volunteer off-campus during the semester and engage in educational and advocacy efforts to explore systemic housing barriers.



Thanks to our semester-based programs, like Shelter Crew, we have substantially reduced episodic volunteerism.

Over 25% of engaged Shelter Crew students are now immersed in a culture of genuine connection as they engage with people in our community, fostering meaningful relationships and understanding by volunteering for three or more shifts.

**481**

NUMBER OF  
ENGAGED  
STUDENTS

*AN INCREASE OF 43%  
FROM 2022-2023  
ACADEMIC YEAR.*

**16**

ACE  
Courses

SUPPORTED BY  
SHELTER CREW  
PROGRAM

**3,694**

VOLUNTEER  
HOURS  
COMPLETED BY  
STUDENTS

*AN INCREASE OF 51%  
FROM 2022-2023  
ACADEMIC YEAR.*



# Tutor Mentor Program: Closing the Opportunity Gap

Our Tutor Mentors make a commitment to work in historically underinvested schools and educational programs once a week for the semester, shrinking the opportunity gap.

More than 180 students pledged their commitment by offering tutoring and mentorship to K-12 students.

These dedicated students worked diligently on a weekly basis, steadfast in their mission to alleviate the impacts of systemic and structural inequalities in education.

*"I wanted to share the experiences that introduced me to science and my love for science with the next generation of hopeful scientists. I want them to be creative and explore questions"*

-Undergraduate Student Mentor



**196**

NUMBER OF UST  
MENTORS

**AN INCREASE OF 19% FROM  
2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR.**

**3,329**

COMPLETED  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

**AN INCREASE OF 11% FROM  
2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR.**

**7**

ACE  
Courses

SUPPORTED BY  
TUTOR MENTOR  
PROGRAM



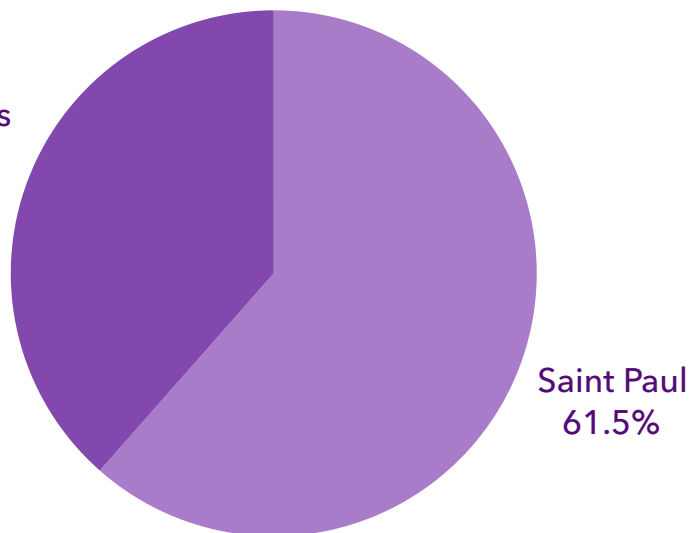


# Tommie Shelf

Tommie Shelf is a St. Thomas initiative that aims to eradicate food insecurity on our campus and in our community. Our mutually beneficial partnerships with Keystone Community Services, Good in the 'Hood, and Second Harvest Heartland provide opportunities for our community to receive groceries every month.



Minneapolis  
38.5%



**Households Served (n=995)**

\*Households represent the number of people who physically picked up/received groceries on Tommie Shelf Days.

Tommie Shelf partners with Keystone Community Services to distribute shelf-stable food and fresh produce on the first Tuesday of every month on the St. Paul Campus. On the third Wednesday of each month, we partner with Good in the 'Hood to do the same on the Minneapolis Campus.

Tommie Shelf strives to maintain mutually beneficial partnerships with the program's community partners. As part of Tommie Shelf St. Paul's partnership with Keystone Community Services, **1813 lbs.** of food, a percentage increase of 104% from 2022-2023 academic year, and **\$4,796** were donated back to Keystone through campus collection campaigns during the 2023-2024 academic year.

# ACADEMIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our goal is to integrate community engagement into every aspect of a student's experience at St. Thomas, going beyond a single volunteering opportunity. Through our Common Good Community-Engaged courses, we weave community involvement into the essence of St. Thomas education, collaborating with faculty and community partners as part of the Academic Community Engagement (ACE) initiative.

Our objective is to seamlessly integrate community impact and changemaking into the academic experience at St. Thomas. We aspire to create an environment where our students collaborate with local organizations, forming lasting partnerships that collectively work toward the common good.



Number of  
ACE Courses

**112**

***AN INCREASE OF 11% FROM  
2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR.***

Number of  
ACE Faculty

**59**

Number of ACE  
Community  
Partners

**99**



# Academic Community Engagement Faculty

Our ACE faculty actively apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, partnering with organizations dedicated to enhancing community well-being.

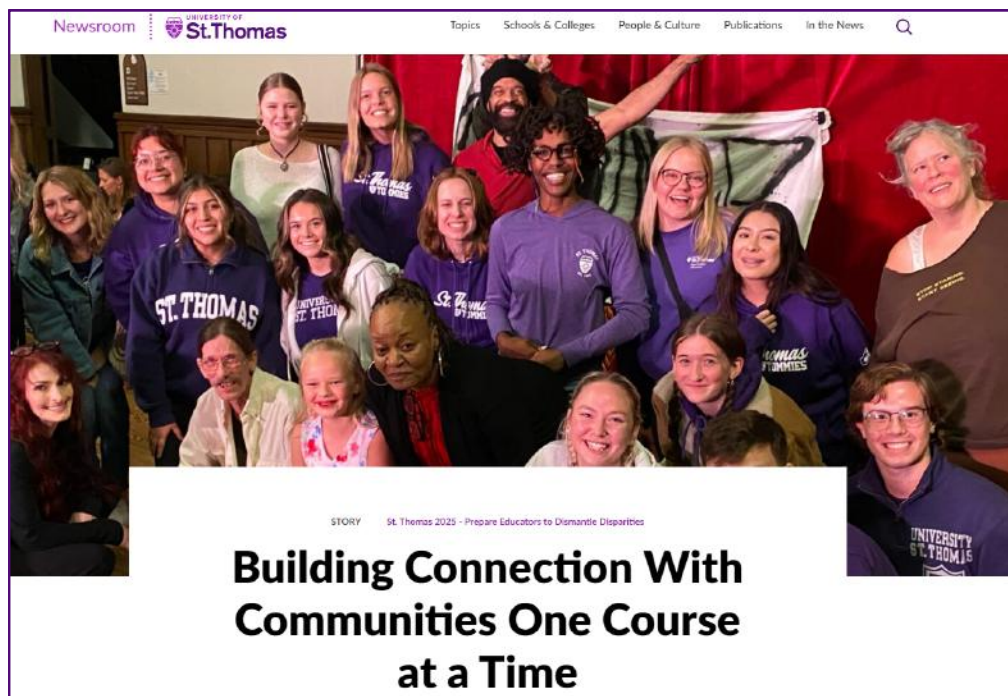
St. Thomas students, through ACE courses, team up with community organizations to comprehend complex issues and collaboratively seek solutions.

Community-engaged courses

span across diverse programs and disciplines at St. Thomas, addressing a wide range of social challenges, such as food and housing insecurity, inequitable access to education, and environmental sustainability.

*"I think it's a really awesome component to add to classes. I wish that I had a chance to take more of these types of classes in my time at St. Thomas."*

-ACE Student



[Read about Dr. Chelda Smith's Community Engaged Course.](#)

# Academic Community Engagement Partnerships & Collaborations

In collaboration with community organizations, students engage in immersive learning experiences by directly interacting with community leaders. These experiences enable them to grasp society's complex systemic and organizational issues. This hands-on approach is an integral part of their academic curriculum.

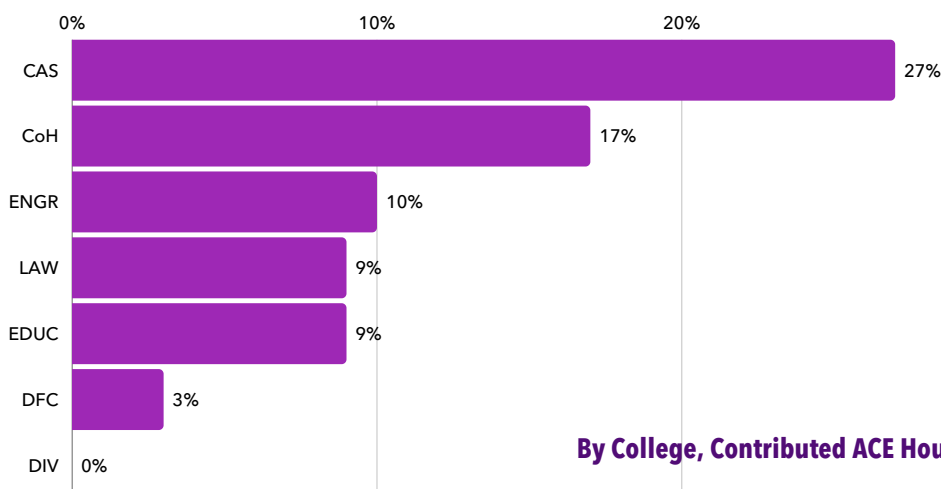
Within the classroom, students delve into in-depth examinations of intricate civic and community issues, examining various systems, theories, and policies that underpin these challenges. These discussions serve as a platform for students to encounter diverse perspectives, fostering a comprehensive understanding of contemporary societal dilemmas.

**39,721**  
**HOURS INVESTED THROUGH**  
**ACADEMIC COMMUNITY**  
**ENGAGEMENT**

**AN INCREASE OF 6% FROM 2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR.**

As part of their community-engaged coursework, students embark on a journey to envision collective solutions.

They explore the potential for communities and networks to collaborate effectively, addressing problems together and effecting enduring positive change.



**By College, Contributed ACE Hours Invested in the Community**



# CHANGEMAKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Creating a positive social impact is at the heart of changemaking. It's a powerful way to inspire positive social change through our community partnerships with students, faculty, and staff all playing a significant role in making this happen.

The Center for the Common Good sponsors three programmatic co-curricular weeks: Spark Week, Voter Education Week, and Changemaking Days. Each programmatic week focuses on supporting the student journey to activate their changemaking practice. Events focus on the four changemaking levels: Personal, Local, National and Global.

**282** CO-CURRICULAR  
CHANGEMAKING  
COMMUNITY EVENTS,  
WITH OVER 20 BY THE  
CENTER SPONSORED

**CHANGEMAKING FELLOWS**



France Aravena '25



Laura Murr '25



Skye Schultz '24



Hannah  
Samuelson '25



Aidan Schaefer '25



Olivia Kramer '24

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, VOTER EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

Civic Engagement is a campus-wide collaborative effort that brings together our community to strengthen our democracy. The purpose of the Civic Engagement, Voter Education & Advocacy taskforce (CEVEA) is to educate the campus community about nonpartisan advocacy and voter education.



Maggie Sutton '24 is one of 137 college students recognized for their nonpartisan democratic engagement. The ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll not only recognizes her efforts but also underscores the importance of encouraging students to be active citizens.

St. Thomas has been recognized by ALL IN's inaugural list of Top Campuses by 2022 Voter Turnout for 4-year private institutions and has also earned a Platinum Seal from ALL IN based on its 2022 campus voting rate.

CEVEA launched a pioneering initiative which aimed to enhance student engagement with the 2023 local elections. Leveraging the influential role of faculty in the classroom, 14 faculty members enthusiastically participated in this pilot program.



ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Recognitions & Awards

# ADVOCACY

The Global Justice Movement (GJM) is a partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) a student-led movement that connects national changemaking to global impact through awareness-building and advocacy. Students learn how to talk to elected representatives in St. Paul and in Washington D.C.

This year the GJM hosted **six** events and collaborations, welcoming CRS staffer Jessica Howell to campus in the spring of 2024.



## Partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

St. Thomas Global Justice Movement student leader, Maddy Orr '26, attended the Day of the Poor Conference in New York City, hosted by Caritas Internationalis and Catholic Relief Services. Maddy engaged in discussions with members of the CRS community and the United Nations to learn more about the Fordham University Poverty Index.

[Read more](#) about her experience.



# DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE

The "Reduce the Rancor" initiative, in partnership with Braver Angels Minnesota, featured a series of events on campus in the Spring of 2024. Events included a state-wide campaign kick-off, two fireside chats, and two workshops aimed at fostering skills in listening and engaging respectfully with differing opinions. President Rob Vischer emphasized that the current toxic environment of our society not only discourages students from engaging in political activities but also hinders open and constructive discussions within classrooms. These events drew remarkable participation from students, faculty, and community members, indicating a strong collective desire for positive change. Key figures from various political affiliations, as well as leaders from civic organizations, added depth and diversity to the discussions, underscoring the initiative's wide-reaching impact.



# Reduce the Rancor Pilot by the Numbers

**2 BRAVER ANGEL WORKSHOPS**

**3 COLLABORATIVE EVENTS**

**5 CROSS-CAMPUS PARTNERS**

**AQUINAS**

Involvement-Intellect-Impact



UNDERGRADUATE  
STUDENT  
GOVERNMENT

“

Student Claire Mitchell said how impactful Reduce the Rancor had been to her, “pushing her to think more deeply about issues.”

”

**OVER**

**190**  
**TOMMIES ENGAGED**

# 2024 NEW CENTER PROGRAM



The VISION program, a new Center for the Common Good initiative, offers immersive volunteer experiences that deeply resonate with the University of St. Thomas's commitment to social justice and community engagement. Community and reflection are also essential components of the VISION experience. Students form close-knit communities, building lasting relationships with each other and the community in which they serve.

## VISION

Designed for Tommies who seek to make a tangible impact, VISION fosters a sense of simplicity and presence, encouraging participants to live and work alongside communities both nationally and globally. Through these experiences, students gain a profound understanding of diverse cultures and perspectives, enriching their educational journey and personal growth.

By prioritizing the dignity of every individual, VISION nurtures a deep respect for human rights and fosters a compassionate approach to community engagement and action.

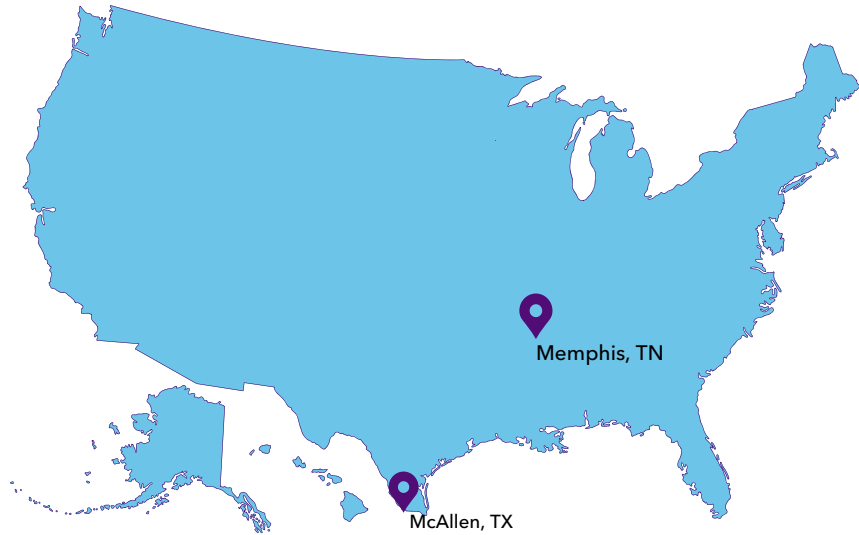




# VISION Program by the Numbers

**2** VISION EXPERIENCES

**2** MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Central to the VISION program are the core values of justice, solidarity, and dignity. Participants engage in projects that address pressing social issues, such as poverty, education, and migration, working collaboratively with local organizations to support sustainable development. These experiences not only enhance students' awareness of national and global injustices but also empower them to advocate for change and contribute to the common good.

“I learned so much about what it takes to commit to a need and serve it wholeheartedly.”  
Camila Barecenas '26



**OVER 730**  
**HOURS**  
**OF IMMERSION VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT**

# UNDER-TOLD STORIES

The Under-Told Stories Project's global reporting consistently showcases real-life stories of morally responsible leaders who exhibit critical thinking, wise actions, and skilled efforts to reduce human suffering and promote the common good. Through our storytelling, hundreds of first-year St. Thomas students encounter our narratives early in their higher education journey through our collaboration with the First-Year Experience Foundations for College Success (FYEX-150) course. Each story featured on the PBS News Hour enhances the university's national recognition by mentioning the University of St. Thomas to a vast audience of millions of viewers.



# Undertold Stories by the Numbers

**19** STORIES  
ON THE  
 **PBS NEWSHOUR**  
during the 2023-2024 academic year

**2.7** NIGHTLY VIEWERS ON  
**MILLION** THE PBS NEWS HOUR

**971K** ONLINE VIEWS ON  
YOUTUBE

**485** FIRST-YEAR TOMMIES ENGAGED  
DIRECTLY WITH UNDER-TOLD  
STORIES CONTENT THROUGH FYEX-  
150 COURSE

**424** STORIES AVAILABLE TO  
EDUCATORS GLOBALLY



# CENTER NEWS, SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

The Center for the Common Good provides awareness, engagement, connection and information to our constituents through social media.

The Center utilizes different social media platforms by showcasing the Changemaking, Community Engagement and Civic Action student experiences on campus and in the community.



Center for the Common Good

## Vischer and Inazu Discuss Civil Discourse

President Robert Vischer of the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota and author John Inazu recently discussed Inazu's new book, *Learning to Disagree*, as part of the university's *Reduce the Rancor* initiative. This project aims to promote civility and reduce political polarization. Inazu, a constitutional lawyer and professor at Washington University in St. Louis, has...



Center for the Common Good

## University of St. Thomas Student Recognized on ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll

Maggie Sullivan '24 is one of 117 college students recognized for their nonpartisan democratic engagement work during the 2023 election cycle. "Maggie is a shining example of nonpartisan democratic engagement, demonstrated through her exceptional dedication to advocacy, voter education, and voter registration initiatives at the University of St. Thomas," said Mariela HED-Murphy, director of social...



St. Thomas 2024 - Class Financial Expo For Students

## St. Thomas Students Advocate for Financial Aid Parity at Minnesota Capitol

Dave Altemus '24 is just weeks from walking across the graduation stage at the University of St. Thomas. But before officially throwing his cap in the air, the senior is delivering a personal message to the Minnesota Legislature: their vote can make it possible for more students like him to succeed in college. A Minnesota...

## NEWSROOM

The St. Thomas Newsroom supports our Center by publishing stories, accomplishments, and accolades that support our work and showcase the impact in the community.

This year we published **14** impact stories. Many of the stories actively contribute to High Impact Learning opportunities for our interns, offering them practical experiences and a published portfolio. [Read our stories.](#)



# CENTER STUDENT LEADERS



**Augie Stewart &  
Claire Mitchell**  
Shelter Crew  
Interns



**Tyler Johnson &  
Natalie Mumm**  
Tutor Mentor  
Interns



**Claire Blum &  
Morgan Whiting**  
CEVEA Interns



**Maria  
Bloomendal &  
Elizabeth  
Gregory**  
VISION Interns



**Maddy Orr &  
Maggie Sutton**  
GJM Interns



**Montgomery  
Longtin**  
TTVC Intern



**Ana Ware**  
Tommie Shelf  
Intern



**Meghan Green**  
TTVC Graduate  
Student



**Grace Thuringer**  
ACE Graduate  
Student

# CENTER STAFF & FACULTY



**Manuela Hill-Muñoz**  
Director Social Justice  
& Changemaking



**Dustin Killpack**  
Associate Director



**Teri Mueller Dorn**  
Senior Program Manager



**Kelly Sardon-Garrity**  
Associate Director



**Roberto Aspholm**  
Faculty Liaison CEVEA



**Ann Johnson**  
Faculty Director



**Erika Scheurer**  
Faculty Liaison Project for Mindfulness  
and Contemplation



**Simeon Lancaster**  
Associate Producer  
Undertold Stories



**Fred de Sam Lazaro**  
Executive Director  
Undertold Stories



**Mel Gray**  
Senior Fellow



**David Philip**  
Senior Fellow

[Learn more about our Staff and Faculty.](#)





# OUR ASPIRATIONS

We strive to:

- Respect and listen to our partners, collaborators, and communities, recognizing that partners bring talent and knowledge that enrich the relationship
- Foster equity and respect differences by living in solidarity and practicing subsidiarity in decision-making
- Act with integrity and transparency in planning and implementation of common good activities
- Do no harm by enacting processes that support and protect vulnerable populations
- Construct sustainable, long-term, and mutually beneficial relationships
- Commit to learning and reflection that promotes social action, systematic change, social equity, and justice

# IN GRATITUDE

Our efforts are not solitary; we thrive through invaluable partnerships with our university allies. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your indispensable role in shaping student growth, development, and formation.



# **Center - for the - Common Good**



**Support the Center  
Make a Gift**

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[LinkedIn](#)-[Instagram](#)-[Facebook](#)**