Get Involved!
How to Find Meaningful Volunteer & Service Work

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Agenda

• Objectives
• Why volunteer?
• Identifying your cause(s)
• Finding opportunities (resources)
• Developing your own proposal
• Managing your time
• Contacting organizations to get started
• Maximize the value of your experience (personally & professionally)
Objectives

• Understand the benefits of volunteering

• Learn how to identify causes of interest to you

• Discover how to locate opportunities using various resources

• Learn how to initiate the volunteer process with an organization of interest

• Recognize how to reflect on your experiences and translate them into ones of professional value
Why Volunteer?

• Explore careers
• Develop skills
• Gain diverse experiences
• Develop your network/connections
• Discover yourself
• Develop your sense of purpose
• Improve your health (social, mental, physical, spiritual)
• Identify new opportunities (for personal life & career)
• Have positive impact on a community
Identifying Your Cause(s)

Ask yourself:

- What do I like to do? What are my hobbies?
  - Ex: sports, music, work with kids, etc.

- What causes(s) am I interested in?
  - Ex: education, the arts, cancer, autism, nutrition, etc.

- What population(s)/group(s) am I interested in working with?
  - Ex: children, seniors, individuals with disabilities, animals

- What skills do I wish to obtain/develop?
  - Ex: communication skills, leadership, language, etc.

- What are my goals?
  - Ex: learn more about a career, give back to a community, broaden experiences, gain new perspective
Finding Opportunities
(Key Resources)

• MIT Public Service Center
  – http://web.mit.edu/mitpsc/

• Volunteermatch
  – http://www.volunteermatch.org/

• Idealist
  – http://www.idealist.org/

• United Way
  – http://www.unitedway.org/

• Boston Cares
  – http://www.bostoncares.org/

• People Making a Difference
  – http://www.pmd.org/
MIT Public Service Center (PSC)

• Volunteer Resource Guides
  • http://web.mit.edu/mitpsc/whatwedo/volunteering/placement/volunteer-guides.html

• Binders of volunteer organizations
  • (available for your reference in Room 4-104)

• Weekly e-bulletin
  • http://web.mit.edu/mitpsc/wheretolook/bulletin/index.html

• Grants, internships, fellowships
  • http://web.mit.edu/mitpsc/whatwedo/grants/index.html
  • http://web.mit.edu/mitpsc/whatwedo/internshipsandfellowships/index.html

• IDEAS Global Challenge
  • http://globalchallenge.mit.edu/

• Contact/meet with the PSC staff
  • http://web.mit.edu/mitpsc/site/contact.html
International Opportunities

• Utilize MIT PSC Resources:

• Explore MIT Opportunities:
  • MISTI
    • http://web.mit.edu/misti/
  • MIT’s International Development Club
    • http://internationaldevelopmentclub.weebly.com/
  • D-Lab
    • http://d-lab.mit.edu/

• Consider your finances!
  • You may have to pay fees to volunteer abroad.
  • You may be able to make a greater impact volunteering in your local community, and staying within your financial means.
Developing Your Own Proposal

- Think outside of the box
- Listen to needs of organization/community
- Create project that is mutually beneficial and sustainable
- Idealist Do-It-Yourself Resource:
  - [http://www.idealist.org/info/Volunteer/DOITY](http://www.idealist.org/info/Volunteer/DIY)
Examples of MIT Volunteers

• Volunteer, MIT Best Buddies

• Volunteer, American Red Cross

• Volunteer, Local Hospice Care

• Co-Founder, MIT Camp Kesem

• High School Teacher in Italy, MISTI Global Teaching Lab

• Creator of solar-powered autoclave to reduce spread of infection in rural clinics in Nicaragua, D-Lab
Managing Your Time

• How much time do you have? Be realistic!
  – What days and times you are available to volunteer?
  – How will you balance volunteering with other activities?

• Don’t over-commit. Start small, and grow! Otherwise, it may be a disappointing experience for you and the organization.

• There is no magic number of hours. How much you time you dedicate will depend on your unique schedule and priorities!

• Complete Time Management exercises to assess your schedule.
Contacting Organizations to Get Started

• Do your research on the organization
  – Think of/suggest ways you can be helpful. Don’t create work for the organization to fit you into the picture.
• Follow instructions on org. website
  – Fill out volunteer form -OR-
  – Send email with “elevator pitch”
• Follow-up with a phone call
• Assess responsiveness of organization
• Consider timeframe
  – When do you want to get started?
  – How long it will take for the organization to have you up and running?
Maximize Your Experience
(Personally & Professionally)

• **Volunteer** not just because you think you “should” or because it is merely self-serving, but **because you have a sincere motivation to help others.**

• Ensure that your efforts meet the **community needs.**

• **Step outside of the MIT bubble** if you can, and engage with the surrounding community.

• **Create structure,** meaning track what you accomplish and take initiative, just like you would in an internship or job.

• **Take time to reflect** on your experience. Consider what you learned about yourself and how it might influence your future direction.
  – Keep a journal; log 2-3 things you learn each time.
  – These examples will help with job/grad. school interviews.
Thank you for your attention.

Questions?

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