

Teaching frontiers: Joint project gives INTO WSU students food for thought

That solving world problems will require different ways of thinking was brought home to a group of Academic English students at INTO Washington State University when they worked alongside domestic students in the University's College of Agricultural, Natural and Human Resource Science's (CANHRS) Global Citizenship Program to analyze and explore issues of global food insecurity

Students worked together to examine the many compounding factors that contribute to local and international food supply and demand. Relationships were built among the international and domestic students during conversations about climate change, food security, access to fresh foods, and how local and global connections are made.

The global issue of food insecurity provided a rich seam of knowledge and intellectual

stimulation for the students, due to its substantial impact on physical and psychological health, local and regional community, the global environment, and education. They also gained practical knowledge of this complex topic through participating in a garlic-planting project at the local Koppel Community Farm via WSU's Center for Civic Engagement.

"This project was an example of a best practice since it provided an opportunity for domestic and international students to build relationships while learning and, more importantly, led to food insecurity becoming embedded into the curricular and co-curricular activities for both groups," said INTO WSU Academic Director Dr Kate Hellmann, who worked alongside Dr Caitlin Bletscher from the College of Agricultural, Natural and Human Resource Sciences; Academic English faculty member Emily

Harmon; and INTO WSU Director of Student Experience, Alison LaRoza.

"This activity reminded of me the educational program in my elementary school, farming rice and sweet potato. And I understood how hard it is to make food all over again. I think if schools put such a program into education, a lot of students would think about food insecurity seriously. Experiencing this program with American students was impressive for me because it was a nice opportunity to improve my English skills," said INTO WSU Academic English student Tomoya Shimizu, who comes from Japan.

"Community service has made many impacts in my life and connected me with people that I never would have met otherwise. For me, the best part of doing the service project was that it brought all students to a common ground. It didn't matter that we grew up differently or that some kids knew how to garden and others didn't. It mattered that we were all tasked with the same goal and the only way to achieve that goal was to work together. Those experiences, of working face to face, are what develop true connection. To be able to learn about one another and do something to help the community is a win-win," added CANHRS student, KJ Fitzgerald, Agricultural Technology and Production Management major, Global Citizenship Program.

INTO WSU Executive Director, Tricia Fiscus, gave the project her full support and is hoping to see more, similar examples in the future. "A need for food is something we all share, and its availability globally should be concerning us all. This initiative was a practical way



for students to gather together and get to know each other while gaining valuable insights and study skills, and we are looking at how we can build similar schemes across other programs at INTO WSU," she said.

More details of how the project was facilitated and structured are available from Dr Kate Hellmann at khellmann@wsu.edu.

