

HOPE Building Block Series #2: Social and Civic Engagement

Last month we highlighted the Relationship Building Block of HOPE. We explored the importance of relationships and the ways they influence a person's health and well-being. In this second edition of the **HOPE Building Blocks Series**, in which we highlight one building block and discuss its application to university students, we will cover the power of Social and Civic Engagement to increase feelings of connectedness.

Social and civic engagement involves *active participation and collaboration* within one's community. This is a crucial aspect of a thriving community, strengthening its resilience and reflecting its collective identity.

Social engagement yields several benefits.

1. It strengthens relationships and builds **social capital**—a network of trust and support benefiting both individuals and the community.
2. It fosters **inclusivity and diversity** by promoting understanding and respect through interactions with people from diverse backgrounds.
3. It enhances **mental well-being** by reducing isolation and fostering a sense of belonging and purpose through social interaction.

Civic engagement strengthens democracy by holding officials accountable and promoting values like equality. Political participation, from voting to running for office, ensures citizens' voices shape policy. Civic engagement also empowers communities to advocate for social change. These engagements foster belonging, connectedness, purpose, and bring valuable contributions to their communities and society.

Why does this matter to a school like San Diego State University (SDSU)?

Universities, like SDSU, have a pivotal role in fostering active and engaged citizens. By participating in social and civic engagement activities, students gain valuable skills like **leadership, communication, and critical thinking**, all while enriching their own lives and contributing meaningfully to their communities. These skills allow for **experiential learning, which** fosters **social responsibility** and prepares students to become informed and engaged citizens who can **contribute positively to society** upon graduation.

- ◆ SDSU has many [Student Organizations and groups](#) that are free to join and would offer opportunities for social and civic engagement.
- ◆ SDSU [Associated Students \(AS\)](#) is an independent student-directed corporation that provides a wide range of services and programs. Students are able to vote for their AS representatives and are able to provide input into AS campus projects.

How can you promote this Building Block?

As an individual you can:

- Volunteer for a cause you are passionate about
- Attend public meetings
- Join a club
- Vote in elections

As an organization you can:

- Utilize the [Parent and Caregiver Engagement Toolkit](#) developed by United Parents that is beneficial to organizations who serve their communities. Read the toolkit to learn about the engagement continuum and ways you can foster engagement in your organization;
- Allocate resources to support community-driven projects and initiatives;
- Provide educational and volunteer opportunities.

Blog post written by Yvonne Epps, SPI Wellness Project Manager