The University of Antelope Valley (UAV) recognizes the need for student engagement and interaction within the community. It is for this reason that the Learning Resource Center (formerly known as the University Library) is in the process of implementing a Community Engagement Center (CEC) within the LRC. The Community Engagement Center will be available to students during the same hours of operation of the LRC.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the creation of the Community Engagement Center is to support and assist students with common issues that may affect or hinder their ability to become successful students and members of society. College is often a difficult transition for students of all ages, and many students lack guidance or an adequate support system to encourage them to seek assistance with concerns, questions, or issues outside of their education.

The implementation of the CEC will offer starting and reference points for students:

- to engage themselves with various projects within the community
- for assistance with sensitive topics that some students may feel uncomfortable discussing with others
- to support themselves and their peers by acting as advocates for community engagement

**Goals**

The goals of the CEC are to:

- provide students with information on topics that may affect their mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing
- allow students to interact with the community and to engage in lifetime learning topics that will affect them both inside and outside of the classroom
- create a sense of belonging and togetherness with their community and peers
- support and encourage their individual interests within themselves and in the community

**Objectives**

The CEC has four initial programs that the LRC has planned to initiate. Although these programs will focus on the community needs of UAV students, the LRC will not exclude administration, faculty, or staff from assistance of information.
Mental Health

Mental health plays an extremely important role in student success. There is a growing concern in regards to the mental health of college students. Many college students have several other responsibilities that can often affect how well they perform academically. The stress of juggling multiple responsibilities in addition to worrying about homework, grades, and GPA can lead to anxiety and depression in students. Anxiety and depression can cause other mental health issues, such as drug and alcohol dependency, and even suicide.

The CEC will campaign in favor of encouraging students to be mindful of their mental health, and to seek mental health services when needed. One aspect of the mental health campaign is to bring in a representative from Mental Health America of Los Angeles (MHALA) to offer the Mental Health First Aid training program to faculty, staff, and student advocates. This training will give participants the necessary information needed to handle sensitive mental health topics, and to guide students with whom to contact for local, professional health services. The campaign will also provide students with adequate and updated information in regards to mental health initiatives within the community.

The LRC recognizes that some students may be reluctant to seek information or assistance in regards to mental health within the LRC, which is why we will also provide valuable resources and contact information that students can access on their own. These resources include, but are not limited to, displaying the Suicide Hotline Number both inside the LRC and within campus grounds, and displaying trustworthy information such as listing contact and group meeting (online and in person) information for several 12 Step Programs within the community. We will also provide literature about the warning signs of anxiety, depression, and suicide.

UAV’s Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, Anthony Marks, is trained and certified in suicide prevention, and plans to continue his training in order to become a certified in-house suicide prevention trainer. He will be an invaluable resource to the mental health support and suicide prevention aspect of the CEC.

LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, & Asexual) Safety and Support

The LRC values every student at UAV and aims to provide a safe and secure place for students to explore their own individuality regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. It is for this reason that the CEC will become a Safe Zone for members of the LGBTQIA community and their allies. Certain signs will be created to mark the LRC as a Safe Zone for LGBTQIA students to enter without fear of being judged.

The CEC plans to work with the OUTreach Center in order to provide information to LGBTQIA students about group meetings, finding and/or creating a support system, and other topics that affect those in the LGBTQIA community. The CEC also plans to receive training for faculty, staff, and student advocates in order to handle various sensitive situations in regards to LGBTQIA students and their needs.
Sexual Health

The LRC strives to inform and encourage students to take an active role in their sexual health and wellbeing. The CEC will collaborate with Los Angeles County Public Health department in order to provide students with information on Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) testing, preventative testing, health screenings, and other important health tests. The CEC will also campaign for safe sex practices.

Prevention of Sexual Assault & Bystander Intervention Procedures

Sexual assault is a frightening and traumatic experience for the person being assaulted, as well as bystanders who witness the assault taking place. With the CEC in effect, the LRC plans to provide students with information and procedures on how bystanders can safely and successfully intervene when they witness sexual assault taking place.

The CEC will also provide students will precautions to take in order to help protect themselves from sexual assault. Literature will be provided detailing the warning signs that potential assailters might exhibit, as well as warning signs for potential assailters to acknowledge within themselves, in hopes of changing their behavior before an assault takes place.

Other Aspects of Community Engagement

The LRC will make sure that the CEC will stay up to date with various events within the community that will allows students to volunteer and remain active. Taking part in community activities will give students a sense of belonging, and will help to motivate and encourage them to make a difference. When students see that their school is willing to take part in initiatives for the good of the community, they will more willing to do the same. Working with various projects within the community will help to shape students to become valuable members of society, and will allow them the ability to foster ideas that they can use both inside and outside of the classroom.

Resources

Collaboration and Involvement

In order to make the CEC successful, the LRC will enlist the support and cooperation of faculty, staff, administration, and students. Employees of UAV value the wellbeing of students, and will strive to guide and support them with their educational, mental, and emotional goals. The CEC will rely heavily on UAV employees and their willingness to be involved in student success projects and procedures.

Local organizations will also play a major role in providing students with necessary, relevant, and invaluable information. The Assistant Director of the Learning Resource Center has been tasked with communicating and collaborating with various organizations to provide a wealth of knowledge and support in regards to the previously listed objectives.