

PROJECT PROPOSAL

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What broad activism issue area did you select for your project?

Health Literacy

What community did you choose for the project? This could be a school, local town, city, state, or other type of community.

College students in Rural Southwestern Pennsylvania

What problem are you hoping to address with this project?

It's no secret that medical jargon is a mouthful. From hard to understand prescriptions to numeric dense labwork, the inaccessibility of the medical world tied with the current health literacy crisis has caused patient nonadherence as well as an overall lack of trust in the health system.

The health literacy gap is severely exacerbated in rural areas, where Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services finds a link between literacy and the surrounding regions to struggle with hospital closures, doctor shortages, and long travel times for care¹. Additionally, a 2003 assessment of health literacy for individuals over the age of 16 finds that only 1 in 10 individuals are health literate, with this 10% experiencing decreased health processing skills in stressful situations.²

Some steps have been taken to improve health literacy with digital healthcare portals like PatientPortal and some university sponsored programs. **However, wellness centers on rural university campuses, particularly those not partnered with a local health network, leave the challenge of providing easy to understand medical information to its students.** The scope of this campaign is localized to address health literacy in students at Pennwest University California, a small four year sister university in rural Southwestern Pennsylvania³.

¹ <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/programs-services/healthcare/rural-health>

² <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006483.pdf>

³ <https://events.admissions.gmu.edu/product/california-university-of-pennsylvania/#:~:text=University%20of%20Pennsylvania-,CALIFORNIA%20UNIVERSITY%20OF%20PENNSYLVANIA,+%20programs%20delivered%20100%25%20online;Of%20the%20Three%20sister%20universities,Edinboro%20and%20Clarion,Pennwest%20California%20is%20the%20only%20university%20whose%20health%20center%20is%20not%20affiliated%20with%20a%20local%20health%20network.>

What specific goal are you hoping to achieve? Can you estimate the time frame for achieving this goal?

This project seeks to create a digital campaign through Instagram to:

- Improve health literacy and confidence among rural college students, in and out of preventative care settings.

By completing the following two subgoals:

- First, creating a “bite-sized” health series through the use of QR codes and Instagram posts as easy to understand guides for students before receiving treatment plans.
- Second, Working with the university to foster greater community between administration, young health advocates and students on campus
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This time frame is cognisant of the length process that may be taken to evaluate and create content both on social media platforms and through QR coding mechanisms. The roll out could take anywhere between 3 months - 6 months.

What are the intermediate steps/tasks involved?

This campaign serves to work in tandem with the Health Education Awareness Resource Team on the California Campus, also known as “HEART” team, which is dedicated to health education and runs the @pennwest_wellness instagram account. This student-led initiative, which serves as an open community club on campus would be the first point of contact. ⁴

Once approval is met, the next step would be to create a plan regarding which topics would be timely and important to address in the mini health series. This could be brainstormed at random, or could be based on prevalent illnesses or topics in the season.

Finally, content creation for the QR Codes as well as their corresponding Instagram posts would need to be created. All parties would need to give approval before the campaign starts and a secondary review of the content would need to be approved as well before posting.

⁴ Another alternative would be to message and meet with Pennwest California's Student Government, which works as an intermediary between student related affairs and the administration.

What are the necessary tools/resources? Does it require financial support, data or research, contact information for individuals or organizations?

This project will need the following:

- Contact information of individuals who are in charge of the HEART CLUB
- Content and Design Creation of
 - QR Codes⁵
 - Instagram Posts
- Potential outreach to students on campus who may be interested in
 - Student affairs
 - Health related activities
 - Graphics/Design Creation
 - Social Media

Provide at least a one paragraph description of your project. Make sure that it is a small, achievable, locally-focused project.

This digital campaign will create engaging QR posters that will be linked to a “bite-sized health” instagram post on the @pennwest_wellness Instagram, that works to break down confusing medical terms and healthcare processes. The content of these topics can include but isn’t limited to:

- *How* to ask health related questions
- Student Health Insurance policies
- Reading Prescription labels, and asking questions before getting them
- How to use Telehealth
- Tips for self-advocacy in medical settings

This campaign will use Instagram as an easier medium to absorb usually dense information to maintain the original goal of increasing health literacy while still remaining as engaging and accessible as possible. The QR code posters will be placed not only in high traffic areas of campus like dorms and dining halls, but additionally in the Wellness Center entrance / exits, so students have medical confidence before their appointments and after⁶. The use of QR codes in this printed way is to acknowledge that not everyone may follow the existing Instagram account.

⁵ *Printing of the QR codes may be of concern in terms of finances, however more research would need to be conducted to see if the university offers free or reduced printing services to their students. If so, QR codes could be printed out using University Services.*

⁶ *This is particularly important for students who must go to outside pharmacies to pick up their medications or are referred to outside facilities for the treatment plans. Having a pocketable info guide that can travel with students in the gap between the health center and their secondary location works toward the student confidence aspect of the campaign.*

Do you anticipate any challenges/risks arising with this project? How do you intend to address them?

- **Access to Instagram:**

While in a digital age, access to technology isn't widely available to all students, and the use of social media isn't something that all students partake in. In this scenario, it may be beneficial to launch a website with a free website creator like WIX, and place all the Instagram posts on this website. This way, individuals who may have missed out on earlier posts will have them all in one secure place and still at the touch of their fingertips.

More research needs to be conducted on how many students have access to technology in this university, if the rates are low the campaign may want to shift focus to be fully printed in a poster/pamphlet format.

- **The # of QR codes to print:**

With every health topic that needs to be addressed, a QR code and the distribution of this QR code would need to occur. This may incur additional expenses of printing services and may take some more time to place all the QR codes up with the work already going into the content creation. To work to address this problem, we could make a singular QR Code that goes to the collection of the entire bite-sized health series rather than each individual post when distributing in the high traffic area. And, focusing on individual QR code Posters in just the Health Centers. This would limit printing costs while still staying to the original mission. A trial run could be conducted with the initial formatting, but can be altered to this secondary framework if necessary.

What method(s) will you use to execute your project? For example, will you organize the project yourself, join a group, or work with members of the TurnUp community?

To execute this project, I would need to organize a meeting and engage with club affiliates the HEART Club first to gauge their interest and approval. However, once this is done, getting involvement in not only content creation but the distribution of posts from the TurnUp community and any other interested students would make the time frame much shorter (and, expand the second subgoal of community outreach!).