MOVE
Puts Pacific Students on a Path to SERVICE AND GROWTH

University of the Pacific’s award-winning program for first-year students, MOVE (Mountains, Ocean, Valley Experience), has expanded well beyond its freshman effort in 2007, when fewer than 100 students ventured to Yosemite. Today, every member of the entering class explores California’s mountains, valleys or ocean in an overnight excursion designed to acclimate them to the world of college and to the University’s core values.

Come along as the newest Pacificans take this transformational journey into community service, the outdoors and the next phase of their lives as members of the Pacific family.
By Christopher Heredia and Katie E. Ismael
Helping New Students MOVE into College

Last August, at university campuses throughout the United States, freshmen were gearing up for college life. But at University of the Pacific, that meant more than buying books and sorting out class schedules. The newest students were also busy removing non-native plants along the Pacific Coast, maintaining hiking trails among majestic redwoods and visiting bustling neighborhoods in need of tender loving care around the Central Valley.

At the end of their two-day journey to California’s mountains, valleys and ocean, the freshmen would experience much more than the satisfaction of beautifying treasured landmarks and an appreciation of nature. They would return bonded, a unified class of first-year Pacificans ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities — both inside and outside of the classroom — that lay ahead.

Now in its fifth year, the nationally recognized MOVE program put on by student life staff, faculty and student leaders, allows all incoming freshmen to explore firsthand the natural beauty and history of California.

"They roll up their sleeves, put on work gloves and get working in the weeds together," says Elizabeth Griego, vice president for Student Life. "They build relationships with fellow students, some of which will last a lifetime. As they learn about responsible leadership, sustainability and Pacific's core values, they will come to see themselves as part of the greater whole of our community."

Participation in MOVE has grown nearly tenfold since its inception, when 95 students went to Yosemite. This year, 900 freshmen spread out to 11 sites across Northern and Central California. Projects included cleanup along the American River, repairing trails in the El Dorado National Forest and building homes with Habitat for Humanity for needy families in the Central Valley.

The program’s benefits have been noticed not only by students, but also by a national association of student affairs professionals. In 2010, MOVE received a gold medal for excellence from the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), the highest award given by the association for first-year programs.

An Evolution

No doubt, the outdoor experiences involved hard work, but they were also lots of fun. The young Pacificans — some of whom had never pitched a tent and many of whom prefer to communicate via text or instant message — rafted down the American River, zip-lined through the Santa Cruz Mountains and slept under the stars in a redwood glen in mountains south of San Francisco.

A key objective of MOVE is to acquaint students with their new lives as young adults and students at Pacific, with all the trappings that come with their new living and learning environment. The program is meant to address some of the fears and questions that come with the first year of college.

“When we look at student success, retention and graduation, we know students have to have a sense of belonging. When they hear other people’s interests and excitement, when they hear other students’ aspirations, it makes theirs grow because the freshman year is such a tremendous time of learning and reinvention,” says Griego.

MOVE is not only an icebreaker; it's a teaching tool as well. The curriculum incorporates the concepts of social and emotional competence, responsible leadership, and the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental and social.

Students are also taught about conservationist John Muir, the Sierra Club founder who is widely considered to be the father of the U.S. National Parks system and whose papers are preserved at Pacific, home to the John Muir Center.

Much as the students may evolve during their MOVE experience, the program itself has grown and developed. “From that very first trip, we wanted it to be a service experience. We wanted University students to think about how to serve the environment in the place they are and how to preserve those places of wilderness for generations to come,” Griego says.

Eventually, an urban experience was added to the MOVE options, allowing students to work for Habitat for Humanity for the San Joaquin Valley and other regional service projects.

“In each of these experiences as we’ve expanded MOVE, we’ve intentionally centered it on the values of service and leadership,” she says. “It’s now at 11 sites, and we offer the experience to every entering student. You can imagine the level of detail in making that work.”

In the five years since Pacific students first embarked on an outdoor, overnight journey, the program has proven to be worth the effort. As Griego notes, “That’s the No. 1 piece of feedback we get: gratitude for the time-intensive, interpersonal experience we offer students. This is a student-centered university. Almost every private, small institution will say that, but Pacific lives it. And we live it from the moment students first arrive and experience MOVE.”
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— Elizabeth Griego
Vice President for Student Life
How MOVE has moved THEM:

**Louis Johnson, MOVE 2012, freshman, physics major**

The experience was very moving because we were building houses for people who are not very fortunate. It kind of hit close to home because where I come from, I see a lot of underprivileged people, from my closest family to those I see every day on the street. After MOVE I felt even better about college because I knew that there are kids out there just like me who are going to strive and struggle through college, and I will not be alone.

From this MOVE trip, I think I took away the skill to be humble and appreciate what you are given in life, because there is always going to be someone less fortunate than you. You should be happy that you are living and are going to a great college like University of the Pacific. I think this skill will keep me motivated and help me move forward in college when I am going through tough times.

**Palak Setia, MOVE 2011, sophomore, computer science major**

MOVE isn’t just a one-weekend thing, where you go for two days and go on a camping trip and come back and forget about it all. Personally for me, I made friends that I know I’ll be talking to and keeping in touch with for a long time. My favorite aspect of MOVE is being able to connect with people.

When you’re on MOVE, it forces you to take your first step to show people who you can be, and to let them show you who they are. So, you move—metaphorically, literally. In any sense you would think you move, you do.

**Kimberlina Gomez, MOVE 2011, sophomore, environmental science major**

MOVE shows that Pacific is focused on being sustainable and giving back to its community. During MOVE, I learned that sustainability is not necessarily trying to save the earth as much as it is working with what we have. We can’t fix the mistakes from the past, but we can protect the earth from further damage.

In MOVE, like with the water bottles they gave us, they’re showing us that the little things we do add up to a big difference.

Really getting out there and getting hands-on with being sustainable is what makes MOVE such a great program. And we get to do it with people our age.

**Elizabeth Griego, MOVE 2007–2012, vice president for Student Life**

I’ll tell you a story that encapsulates MOVE: The first year after the campfire, the group was walking back to Curry Village. We crossed the boardwalk in the middle of Yosemite Valley and said “Stop everybody.” We lay down on the boardwalk, and the whole group of 50 of us looked up at the stars. We stayed there for an hour talking about what stories people knew about the constellations, and the experiences students have had outdoors with family. It was a moment of connection in the dark with all of us seeing the stars at the same time.

We know the experience has a powerful effect because so many students want to come back and be leaders during MOVE. It’s been so gratifying to see the Pacific faculty and staff give their time so students can have these experiences. It is very touching, and it speaks more powerfully to the Pacific experience than almost any example I can give.
First-Year Dental Students Moved by Community Service

The newest DDS and IDS students at the Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry also ventured into the world of volunteering when they joined forces with several San Francisco nonprofit organizations as part of a first-year retreat August 2–3.

Students chose a variety of ways to serve, including preparing meals for the hungry and homeless; cleaning streambeds at the San Francisco Zoo; removing nonnative plants from a local beach; planting trees and bushes in a city park; and packaging bulk food for distribution by a local food bank.

They volunteered at nonprofits such as the Golden Gate Conservancy, Friends of the Urban Forest, GLIDE, San Francisco Botanical Garden Society, San Francisco Food Bank, San Francisco Parks and Recreation, and San Francisco Zoological Society.

“The service portion of the retreat connected us to the community that we are living in,” said Kim Butler ’15. “Taking time to get away from school and do some physical work to benefit others was a reminder that we exist as a part of a greater world. We were able to pitch in and help out organizations that do amazing work while also bonding with our classmates.”

Representatives from the MOVE (Mountains Ocean Valley Experience) program in Stockton also attended the retreat to help organize the activities.

“Our first-year retreat has always been a team-building and bonding experience for new students, but this year we also wanted to incorporate an aspect of giving back to the local community,” said Eddie Hayashida, associate dean for administration. “Students were able to give back to the community while learning a little more about San Francisco and each other.”

— Dan Soine

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