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The University of Southern California's (USC) University Park campus is located on the traditional land of the Tongva People. You can visit <https://mila.ss.ucla.edu/> to learn about the history of Indigenous peoples in Los Angeles and read stories shared by the Tongva community. To learn about the Indigenous land on which your learning location resides, you can visit <https://native-land.ca>.

Course Description:

This course examines media and social change at the intersection of theory and practice. We will investigate and analyze the way social change is catalyzed and communicated through various media platforms. We will gain an historical and multi-media perspective on a variety of design and communication strategies tied to a range of social and cultural issues (including the environment, the arts, medicine and science, education, identity politics, social justice, etc.). We will also look at and hear from organizations and their leaders to gain a real-world perspective on these issues. Throughout the semester, we will also learn the basics for designing a communication campaign. We will discuss social marketing, audience research, modes of storytelling and campaign design, and the significance of outreach and evaluation. Over the course of the semester, we will work in teams to create strategic communications for topics and areas that tie into current political and social discourse (e.g., environment/climate crisis, immigration rights, policing, criminal justice reform, workers' rights, gender equity, health reform, gentrification, etc.). The course will be divided into **three sections**:

THEORIZING SOCIAL CHANGE & STRATEGY: In this first part of the course, we will explore how social change is defined and has been theorized in a number of arenas—from government to nonprofits, NGOs, and advocacy organizations to business/industry and their use of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to individuals, grassroots communities and activism. We will establish a foundational understanding of the various institutional structures, models (issue specific change, individual change, systems change), and policies that create barriers and/or avenues toward social change.

MEDIA AS SOCIAL CHANGE TOOL: Equipped with foundational theories, the next section of the course will explore various media institutions, practices and sites of social change, looking at case studies to understand how narratives get constructed for particular target audiences. We will consider the value of different genres of media and visual culture used for social change (from poster art to documentary to street art to transmedia and social media) storytelling, and counter-narratives specifically in the context of local and disenfranchised communities.

PRACTICE & IMPACT: In this section of the course, we will combine the theoretical, storytelling and visual skills from the first two sections in order to apply them to the praxis of social change and campaign building. The focus in this section will be on media practice, where students will apply some of the strategies used in creating a social change campaign as well as other advocacy-based media. Students will research, develop and pitch a campaign that is engaging, relevant, and has potential impact in relation to a specific social problem.

Student Learning Outcomes

Every student comes into our class with different abilities, passions, priorities, lived experiences, and ways of learning. I invite you to begin where you are—to listen and learn from course content and discussions, to critically contemplate, question, and critique. To that end, the learning outcomes below are fluid, and work in collaboration and dialogue with my teaching (as well as that of your Teaching Assistants), course content, and class discussions. What students take away will depend on where they start, how they engage, and how they tap into their capacities to learn and grow. It is my hope that this course provides an opportunity for you to:

- **Analyze** social change theories and their impact on social, cultural, political problems
- **Evaluate** media's role and impact as a tool for social change (specifically looking at assigned case studies).
- **Assess** the role and value of different media in shaping and instigating social change
- **Synthesize and integrate** media, communication, and social change theory in the context of a specific social/political/cultural problem
- **Research and develop** the building blocks of a social change campaign that will address and potentially impact a specific systemic social/political problem

Course Requirements, Attendance and Participation:

Students are required to do all course reading, attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate actively in this course. Please note: simply showing up to class does not guarantee a perfect attendance/participation score. Participation can encompass many things, including speaking in class, emails to your professor and/or TA, sharing media or other examples relevant to class with your professor and/or TA, office hours, attentive listening during class, engaged group collaborative work. Groups will have Padlets where they will share materials and gather resources/research for the class project as part of both participation and group work grades. Participation grades will start at 85—the threshold—and then move up or down based on the factors above.

Attendance is important: you will be periodically working/collaborating in groups during class time. Missing class time may impact the progress of your group. However, if circumstances prevent you from attending class or actively participating, please inform me (and/or your TA) by email ASAP. Regardless of the reason for missing, you should always keep us informed. If you need to miss class for a religious or university-sanctioned activity, please let us know at the beginning of the term. You are responsible for accessing and staying abreast of course content in cases where you miss class, and for communicating with me in a timely manner if you have any obstacles impacting your work and successful completion of the course. I will make every attempt to listen and understand what is going on in your academic and personal life that may be impacting your progress in this class; however, it is up to you to **be proactive in your communication**.

COVID-19 Allocations:

Given the current circumstances, I recognize that attending class might prove difficult or that life events might preclude class attendance. In these circumstances, you are responsible for content presented in missed classes. If you find yourself experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19, please let me know via e-mail ASAP, get tested, and **STAY HOME**. Nothing that takes place in this class is worth risking your health, my health, or the health of our community.

Potential Changes to Course Modality: This course has been designed to transition to fully online, should the need arise due to local, state or federal guidelines. In the event that the delivery method is altered, please be assured that the learning goals and outcomes of the course will not change; however, some aspects of the course will change in terms of the mode of delivery, participation and assessment.

Masks and COVID safety protocols: Per official University policy, **you are required to wear a mask** when indoors. This applies to all indoor spaces, including **our classroom and office meetings**. This means the mask must cover your nose and mouth when you are in class. There is no food or drink allowed in class. Anyone without a mask will be asked to put one on or leave. Of course, the nature of our class is one where talking and oral communication is important, so please speak up, ask for clarification, and be patient with our shared COVID reality.

Our Classroom and Shared Learning Experience:

All students are encouraged to use the classroom as a safe (and brave) space in which to speak and voice their opinions. We all come to the classroom with different backgrounds and experiences—defined by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, class, ideology, even personality. This diversity can be our greatest strength and an asset as we learn together. My expectation is that you respect not only me and any guests that may visit, but also your classmates/peers when they participate in discussion. We may not truly understand another person’s perspective, but we can/should listen with acceptance and empathy. Every student should feel comfortable participating and being part of a productive, engaging dialogue. Given the course content, this class and the discussions we have may make you feel some discomfort. You may not always agree with me or your peers. This is normal, and part of the learning. If you ever feel that I’ve misspoken or misrepresented something or you have an emotional response to the material or to something someone in class has said, please reach out to me to discuss. You may also use this [google form](#) to anonymously address your concerns. Above all, please be flexible (and forgiving) with me, your peers and yourself as we navigate the topics and course content together.

Communication:

You may reach me by email (trope@usc.edu), and I will respond typically within 24 hours. If I don’t respond, feel free to nudge me. I receive many emails and sometimes things do fall through the cracks. It’s nothing personal. If you want to chat with me informally, you are welcome to catch me before or after class, or you may set up a time for a one-on-one appointment. For questions, concerns, or constructive criticism of class at any time during the semester, you may use this anonymous [google form](#). We also will do course evaluations at the end of the term.

Classroom Technology:

I recommend that notetaking be done by hand to maintain attention and engagement during the course, and enhance your learning. To that end, **we will NOT have laptops during lectures**, though you may use them for small group work. During class, you should **avoid** multitasking on mobile phones or web surfing. This is especially true when we have guests! [To understand the reasons for this guidance, you may want to read “[Why you should take notes by hand – not on a laptop](#)” and “[The Myth of Multitasking.](#)”] Being present and focused on our collective learning can help create a sense of community. Please remember that USC policy **prohibits sharing** of any course content outside of the learning environment. As a student, you are responsible for the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction. If there are reasons you need to use your laptop, please let me know.

Course Readings/Required Texts:

All readings will be posted on Blackboard as PDFs or weblinks. In addition to articles and chapters from books, we will regularly draw from the [interactive study guide](#) from *Beautiful Rising: A Global Toolbox for Change Makers* (referenced as **BR** in schedule below). If you have trouble opening or reading any of the articles, let me know ASAP.

Course Grading

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Participation/engagement (including group meetings)*	10%
Theory of Change Paper tied to a case study (individual, 1800-2400 words)	25%
Group check in reports/worksheets (group)	15%
Formative research assignment (group)	15%
Vision statement + strategic plan (group)	15%
Final project/deliverable (group)	20%

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and insightful work and analysis, showing an ability to think beyond the basic course material. <A grade of A+ (97-100) <i>may</i> be given to <i>individual</i> assignments in <i>rare</i> instances where expectations are exceeded.>
A-/B+	above average work, demonstrating effort and keen understanding of conceptual ideas and their relation to work in the community site
B/B-	average work, needs improvement on ideas and argument
C+/C	shows little effort, lacks clarity and/or argument
C- and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Every effort will be made to return assignments within two weeks from due date (or date received).

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade as per the scale shown below:

A+	= 97-100 (only possible on individual assignments, NOT final course grade)		
A	= 96-94	C	= 76-74
A-	= 93-90	C-	= 73-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-84	D	= 66-64
B-	= 83-80	D-	= 63-60
C+	= 79-77	F	= 59-00

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must first wait 24 hours (cooling off period) before appealing it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate. All concerns should be addressed within 10 days of receiving the graded assignment. After that, no appeals will be accepted for review and the grade will be considered final.

Course Schedule

Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, events, and/or guest speaker availability. Students should consult the Registration Calendar for dates regarding add/drop deadlines, fees, grading options, etc.

Topics/Key Questions In-Class Work/Guests	Readings	Deliverables/ Due Dates
<p>Week 1 Defining Change</p> <p><i>How do we understand how change happens? What is a theory of change? And how does it help?</i></p>	<p>8/24: course introduction</p> <p>8/26: Robert Hornick, “Why Can’t We Sell Human Rights Like We Sell Soap?”</p> <p>Oxfam blog, “What Is a Theory of Change and How Do We Use It?”</p> <p>Wesley Morris, “The Reconciliation Must Be Televised”</p> <p>Beautiful Rising (BR)/Theory: EXPLORE the site structure: principles, theories, methodologies Cultural Hegemony, The Commons, Anti-Oppression</p>	
<p>Week 2 Social Movements & Social Change—Thinking About the Power of the Collective</p> <p><i>How does change operate at an individual vs. collective level? How can (should) we situate our discussion of change in the context of broader social movements? Why is the collective frame valuable? Why is change an ongoing struggle?</i></p> <p>Guest: Jessica Hatrick, Annenberg PhD program (9/2)</p>	<p>8/31:</p> <p>Deana Rohlinger, Christian Vaccaro, “Media and Social Movements”</p> <p>Julia Shipley, “You Strike a Match: Why Two Women Sacrificed Everything to Stop the Dakota Access Pipeline”</p> <p>LISTEN: “I Want to Report a Theft” (Resistance podcast)</p> <p>EXPLORE: Four Quadrants of Change</p> <p>Beautiful Rising (BR) Principles: Choose Tactics That Support Your Strategy; Anyone Can Act.</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy (report)</p> <p>9/2:</p> <p>Robin D.G. Kelley, “Black Study, Black Struggle”</p> <p>Klee Benally, “Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex”</p>	<p>Student survey (skills, interests)</p>

	EXPLORE: Walkout	
<p>Week 3 The Power of Systems Change</p> <p><i>How does change operate in different contexts: individual, organizational, systems change etc.? What are the strategic + structural elements of social change campaign planning?</i></p>	<p>9/7 David Peter Stroh, excerpt from <i>Systems Thinking for Social Change</i> (pp. 13-43)</p> <p>9/9 Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts</p> <p>Fledgling Fund, "Creative Media Dimension of Impact"</p>	<p>Groups/Topics assigned by or before 9/12</p>
<p>Week 4 Framing the "Problem": Creating Emotional Resonance & Amplification</p> <p><i>How do problems get articulated and framed? Who/what does the framing? Which ideas/perspectives get amplified? How are emotional responses elicited? What are the pitfalls and ethical considerations in eliciting emotion or working to change behavior?</i></p>	<p>9/14 Charlotte Ryan & William Gamson, "The Art of Reframing Political Debates"</p> <p>D.M. McLeod & James Hertog, "Social Control, Social Change and the Mass Media's Role in the Regulation of Protest Groups"</p> <p>Review: Frameworks Institute</p> <p>9/16 Jen Schradie, "Bringing the Organization Back In: Social Media and Social Movements"</p> <p>LISTEN: Sharon Faulkner & Sex Discrimination at the Citadel (You're Wrong About podcast)</p> <p>BR Principles: Consensus, Is a Means Not An End; Don't Mistake Your Group for Society; Choose Your Target Wisely.</p>	
<p>Week 5 Visual Culture, Art & Social Change</p> <p>Why are visuals so powerful as mechanisms for social change? What visual and design elements are effective and why?</p>	<p>9/21 T.V. Reed, "ACTing UP against AIDS: The (Very) Graphic Arts in a Moment of Crisis"</p> <p>9/23 Nicolas Lambert, "Liberation Graphics" from <i>A People's Art History of the United States</i></p> <p>Tim Lewis, "Ai Weiwei, 'An Artist Must Be An Activist'"</p> <p>BR Principles: Balance Art and Message.</p>	<p>Group check in (topic/preliminary research worksheet)</p> <p>Create and share Group Padlet.</p>

<p>Week 6 Public Space and Occupation</p> <p>How are public spaces used in the context of social change? What types of sites? What types of actions? Why is occupation of space an effective tactic?</p>	<p>9/28 W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Violence of Public Art: <i>Do The Right Thing</i>"</p> <p>Erica Doss, "Contemporary Public Art Controversy: An Introduction"</p> <p>9/30 Nicolas Lambert, "The Battleground Over Public Memory" + "No Apologies: Asco, Performance Art, and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement"</p> <p>Jesikah Maria Ross, "Pop-Up Public: Participatory Design for Civic Storytelling"</p> <p>BR Tactics: Occupation; Public Filibuster; Challenge Patriarchy as You Organize; Mass Street Action.</p>	<p>Theory of change (INDIVIDUAL) paper due by or before 11:59pm 10/3</p>
<p>Week 7 Reporting for/on Social Change</p> <p>How do journalists report on/about social change? What is the line between journalism and advocacy? How is "witnessing" a part of journalistic practice? What is "citizens' media"?</p>	<p>10/5 Wesley Lowry, "A Reckoning Over Objectivity Led by Black Journalists"</p> <p>Allissa Richardson, excerpt from <i>Bearing Witness While Black</i></p> <p>LISTEN: Nicole Hannah-Jones and Ta-Nehisi Coates on the Fight Over US History (The Ezra Klein Show)</p> <p>10/7 "Hold Up! Time for An Explanatory Comma," (Code Switch)</p> <p>BR Principle: Do The Media's Work For Them</p>	<p>Group check in research worksheet #2</p>
<p>Week 8 Ethics of Representation</p> <p>How is representation and positionality taken into account? How do we ethically handle the representation of the problem, the oppressed/victims, and the solution?</p> <p>Guest: Maytha Alhassen (10/12) Producer + Writer, Hulu's "Ramy"</p>	<p>10/12 Maytha Alhassen, Zaheer Ali, "By Any Memes Necessary: A Case for Critical Media Literacy"</p> <p>Clemencia Rodriguez, "From Alternative Media to Citizens' Media"</p> <p>EXPLORE: Color of Change and BLD PWR</p> <p>BR Principles: Lead with Sympathetic Characters; Think Narratively</p>	

	<p>10/14 Fall Break</p>	
<p>Week 9 Formative Research</p> <p>Why is formative research the first step in developing a campaign? What are the elements of research? How do you narrow the scope of your problem and let strategy guide you?</p>	<p>10/19 Charles Atkin & Ronald Rice, "Theory and Principles of Public Communication Campaigns"</p> <p>Charles Atkin & Vicki Freimuth, "Guidelines for formative evaluation research in campaign design"</p> <p>10/21 Group research meeting (revisit/revise initial research plan)</p>	<p>Formative research (Group) due 10/24 by or before 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 10 Media Channels & Target Audiences</p> <p>How do you distribute your campaign and messaging? How do you identify and narrow your target audience? Which media channels are the best fit for your campaign? Why?</p> <p>Guest: Cleo Barnett/Amplifier Foundation (10/26)</p>	<p>10/26 "From the Sofa to the Streets: Strategies to Ignite Social Action Through Documentary Media" (Media Impact Project Report)</p> <p>REVIEW: <i>Disclosure</i> Discussion Guide</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Paula J. Massood "Spike Lee's 4 Little Girls: The Politics of the Documentary Interview"</p> <p>10/28 Excerpt from <i>#Hashtag Activism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice</i></p> <p>John Herrman, "Tik Tok is Shaping Politics, But How?"</p> <p>Yarimar Bonilla, Jonathan Rosa, "#Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States"</p> <p>OPTIONAL: <i>Zeynep Tufekci, #Kony2012, Understanding Networked Symbolic Action & Why Slacktivism is Conceptually Misleading</i></p> <p>BR Principles: Consider Your Audience; Play To The Audience That Isn't There.</p>	<p>Group check in media channels</p>
<p>Week 11 Power of Narrative, Storytelling, and Character</p>	<p>11/2 "Kiva and the Power of Story," Stanford Business Case</p>	<p>Vision/Strategic Plan due by or before 11:59pm 11/7</p>

<p>What is the power of story and character in developing and executing a social change campaign? What makes a “good”/effective story?</p> <p>Guest: Holly Gordon/Participant Media (11/4)</p>	<p>Ella Saltmarshe, “Using Story to Change Systems”</p> <p>Annie Neimand, “How to Tell Stories About Complex Issues”</p> <p>Review: Center for Story-Based Strategy</p> <p>11/4 Andy Goodman, “Storytelling as Best Practice” video (58 min)</p> <p>The Science of Story-building (Medium Collection)</p>	
<p>Week 12 Networking, Partnerships & Calls to Action</p> <p>Why are partners important in developing a social change campaign? How do you choose the “right” partner? How can partners supplement and enhance your work?</p>	<p>11/9 David Peter Stroh, “Building a Foundation for Change”</p> <p>11/11 Samantha Wright & Annie Neimand, “The Secret to Better Storytelling for Social Change: Better Partnerships”</p> <p>Annie Neimand, Samantha Wright, Max Steinman & Ann Christiano, “How to Build Better Calls to Action”</p> <p>Michael Allen, “Breakdown of Contagious: Why Things Catch On by Jonah Berger” Partnerships: Frameworks for Working Together</p>	<p>Group check in (partners/tactics)</p>
<p>Week 13 Measuring Evaluation & Impact</p> <p>What are the tools to evaluate the impact of a social change campaign? How can we measure social change?</p> <p>Guest: Johanna Blakely/Norman Lear Center (11/18)</p>	<p>11/16 Measuring Impact from The Impact Field Guide</p> <p>Fledgling Fund, “Impact paper abridged”</p> <p>Review: Media Impact Project (Norman Lear Center)</p> <p>11/18 Beth Kanter & Katie Delahaye Paine, Measuring the Networked Nonprofit</p> <p>Beth Karlin, John Johnson, “Measuring Impact: The Importance of Evaluation for Documentary Film Campaigns”</p>	

<p>Week 14</p>	<p>11/23 Group work: finalize presentations</p> <p>11/25 Thanksgiving</p>	
<p>Week 15</p> <p>Study Days 12/4-12/7</p> <p>Designated Exam Time 12/9 2-4pm</p>	<p>11/30 ALL FINAL PROJECTS DUE 11/30 Final presentations</p> <p>12/2 Final presentations</p>	<p>ALL FINAL PROJECTS DUE 11/30</p> <p>FINAL PRESENTATIONS BY GROUP</p> <p>Presentations will be by lottery</p> <p>11/30 (3 groups) 12/2 (3 groups) 12/9, 2-4 pm (remaining groups) in lieu of final exam</p>

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “[Behavior Violating University Standards](#).” Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school’s policy.

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)- (213) 740-0776

<https://osas.usc.edu/>

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscса.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.