

Healing and Therapeutic Garden

Funding Proposal for Associated Student, Incorporated
Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019

Applicant Information:

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In an effort to increase mental well-being on campus, Debbie Covino and the Mind Matters Initiative have proposed to build a Healing & Therapeutic Garden for students to relax and relieve stress and anxiety. After hearing of our work building gardens in the local community and our current on-campus project, the API Food Justice Service-Learning Program was invited to design and build the Mind Matters garden. This is a great opportunity to increase student participation in the Mind Matters initiative. We wanted to further increase student contribution to this project by requesting \$10,000 of funding from ASI.

We plan to create a calm and serene open outdoor space for students to relax in when they are feeling overworked or stressed. This space will be located in the walkway between the health center and the center for student involvement. The Healing & Therapeutic Garden will establish an environment that supports mental health. The garden is not sets of raised vegetable or simple flower beds like our previous gardens, but rather, an open and welcoming spaces in which the campus community can experience first-hand the healing properties of plants and a healthy environment. By creating these spaces, students, staff, faculty and visitors are able to enjoy a variety of activities within the areas for interacting, discoursing, meditating, reflecting, and most importantly, sustaining a mindful balance in everyday life. Learning will still be emphasized in this space. Visitors will be encouraged to feel and smell about the plants placed in the garden.

The plants will all be drought-tolerant California native so that the garden is easy to maintain, eco-friendly, and representative of the California landscape. We will include tactically interesting plants such as California native salvias, which have soft, fuzzy leaves, to encourage students to engage and learn more about California native plants while providing soothing tactile therapy for anxiety and stress. Plants such as lavender, which is abundant in the California landscape, will be used for aromatherapy; filling the garden with calming and pleasant scents. The garden will also include other elements that promote peacefulness and reflective thoughts such a water feature and zen sand garden.

Student mental health is a key issue the campus has been targeting since the beginning of the Mind Matters Initiative in 2014. In the past years, the campus has placed much of our focus towards counselors and the health center, which is a highly impacted service that has difficulty providing quick on-the-spot remedies for distressed students, while continuing to ignore the absence of an open for students to

depress. Creating the Healing & Therapeutic Garden will be an open space for the entire campus to access at any time of the day and may lift some burden off the Health Center and its counselors.

Miko Cho, the director of Cal State LA's Fine Arts Gallery and the Principal Investigator of this project stated:

“As reported in *Scientific American* (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/nature-that-nurtures/>), and in several other studies (<http://www.healinglandscapes.org/blog/2016/09/what-is-a-healing-garden/>), gardens have been shown to promote healing, health, and well-being. Research data and case studies prove that Eco-therapy is a simple, cost-effective means of improving people's social, spiritual, physical and emotional well-being (Mind 2007). According to Fieldhouse (2003) there are particular qualities of the plant-person relationship that promote people's interaction with their environment and hence their health, functional level and subjective well-being. Fieldhouse concluded this type of immersive interaction in a green space is beneficial as it focuses on skills and aspirations rather than symptoms and deficits. The experience of the garden provides cognitive benefits of enhanced mood, reduced stress and improved concentration. Though Cal State LA already maintains an attractive campus, there are no outdoor spaces specifically designed to provide a setting that contains both a therapeutic effect and serves to illuminate the importance of mental health and well-being. As an urban university with an environmental justice zone classification, Cal State LA would especially benefit from natural spaces that counteract the effects of the nearby I-10 and 710 Freeways on our surroundings including air quality and noise pollution.”

The Healing & Therapeutic Garden utilizes this concept of Eco-therapy mentioned by Cho. Interaction with the plants is not only a soothing practice but a learning experience for students as well. Furthermore, the garden is an effort to beautify the campus, which will not only promote mental well-being but improve the overall ambience of the university.

The idea of the Healing & Therapeutic Garden is also an intuitive one within our campus community. Given Cal State LA's First-Year Experience Town Halls have reached over 2,200 incoming students, we know from its Mind Matters module students have reported the having natural outdoor spaces as an important component of their success on campus. One of the groups I personally facilitated during the Mind Matters Town Halls wanted to address the lack of outdoor spaces and proposed a plan called “Rent a Chair” to simultaneously provide outdoor seating space and fund the creation of a permanent outdoor space. Though I appreciated the effort of the freshman, it is more practical for the university to come together to fund natural outdoor space to improve the students' school experience.

We are currently in the planning stages of the garden with the group of students, faculty, and administrators working on the Mind Matters initiative to create the final design of the project. This includes Debbie Covino, students and faculty from the API Food Justice Service-Learning Program, and the university architect, Warren Jacobs. Working with Warren Jacobs in the planning stages of the project will allow proper vetting of the project and prevent obstacles during the building stages. Students from the API Food Justice Service-Learning course will be building and putting together the garden in Fall 2018,

while studying environmental racism, which includes access to open space, and mental health in their course, furthering the learning aspect of the garden.

Since this project is still in its early stages, we are still unsure about our other sources of funding. If we do receive funding, the \$10,000, will be a large part, but only a part of the entire project budget. Unlike our previous project, the space we are working on is much larger and will require more resources to complete.

Budget:

Item	Cost
Fountain	\$5,000
Zen Garden	\$2,000
Planter	\$2,000
Plants	\$1,000
Total	\$10,000

