Yale University President’s Public Service Fellowship
Proposal for Fellowship Placement • Summer 2020

• Organization: Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, Inc.

• Full street address of organization (Fellows must be provided with a desk and computer at placement site and cannot work remotely):

311 Temple Street, New Haven

• Website: www.deskct.org

• Name and title of person who will be the Fellow’s direct supervisor (the supervisor must be available to supervise Fellow on a daily basis):

Steve Werlin, Executive Director

• Phone number and e-mail address of proposed direct supervisor:

(203) 624-6426, ext. 8557 swerlin@deskct.org

• Placement dates (8-11 weeks between Tuesday, May 26 and Friday, August 7, 2020):

May 26 – August 7

• Are placement dates flexible? If so, please describe:

Yes. Placement dates are flexible within two weeks.

• Proposed work schedule (placements should be equivalent to full-time and not more than 37.5 hours/week):

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 11:00 am - 7:00 pm
Tuesday, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Sunday, 11:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Placement Description

- Organization description (*mission statement, population served. 150 words or less.)*:

  **Mission:** To serve people experiencing homelessness or living in poverty by providing food assistance and services that promote health, community, and equity.

  **Vision:** A world in which people come to us not because they *have* to, but because they *want* to.

  **Values:** *Respect.* The basis of peaceful human interaction.  
  *Dignity.* The most basic of human rights.  
  *Community.* The resource that matters more than any other.  
  *Empathy.* The best tool for the job.  
  *Empowerment.* The lever that moves both us and the people we serve.

- Write a 1-2 sentence summary of the work that the Fellow would be conducting (*50 words or less. This will be used as your organization’s project description summary on the PPSF website, so be succinct)*:

  1. Make an impact on the lives of people who are most in need in *your* community in New Haven by overseeing a direct service food assistance programs.
  2. Gain an in-depth understanding of how grassroots nonprofits operate by working one-on-one with our Executive Director to develop programs and services.

- Write a more complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow. (*Suggested length: one to two pages.*)

  Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen (DESK) offers a work-learning experience in which the Fellow will have the opportunity to touch on every facet of a small, grassroots nonprofit, from program development and execution, to strategy and long-term planning.

  For over 30 years, DESK has served people experiencing homelessness and living in poverty in New Haven by providing a nightly meal. The landscape has changed
dramatically in that time, and so over the years, we have developed new programs and services to meet the changing needs. Today, we take a nuanced and deliberative approach to program development: identifying the need, researching best practices, laying out a strategy, recruiting partners, assessing resources, executing the work, and reviewing results to inform improvement. *Small steps, forward momentum.*

In more recent years, DESK has worked to help break down the silos in which so many small nonprofits operate, forging partnerships and coalitions to extend the region’s limited resources. We have explored new service models and administrative strategies that will ensure the long-term solvency of both our organization and the entire network of grassroots social services in New Haven, as well as continued improvement of programmatic offerings.

*So where does the President’s Public Service Fellow fit in?*

We invite you for eleven weeks to be part of an organization on the precipice of systemic change. DESK is an organization that is large enough to address broader issues in New Haven with far-reaching implications, but small enough to give every player in the organization a seat at the table.

Specifically: The President’s Public Service Fellow will oversee the execution of two self-contained programs—DESK’s weekly Food Pantry and our Summer Neighborhood Pantry program. The former is well-established, having been operating for over a decade, and with a core group of dedicated volunteers. But all programs and services need continual improvement and development. Whether it is coming up with new and creative ways to get the most nutritious food to our clients, or developing data infrastructure to give us the tools we need to serve the population most effectively—there is room for fresh ideas.

The Summer Neighborhood Pantry, on the other hand, is still very new, with only a few seasons under its belt. The program functions as a partnership with Elm City Communities (the housing authority in New Haven) and the United Way, as well as part of New Haven’s overall effort to fill in the gap left by the City’s School Meals program during summer months. While the first years were largely successful, there are still some kinks to work out in the overall operation, as well as in determining the standards by which we determine programmatic success.

Oversight of both programs will afford the Fellow the opportunity to get outside his/her comfort zone, interact with partner agencies, supporters, volunteers, and
clients of all stripes, and hone valuable skills, like creativity and independence. The position is best-suited for an eager and enthusiastic self-starter looking to uncover the messiness and complexities of civil service beyond the classroom.

- List specific skills/experience required for the project:

  1. Excellent communication skills: written, oral—with clarity and purpose.
  2. High-level of personal organization: how do you feel about Excel?
  3. Inquisitiveness: asking questions that are appropriate and useful.
  4. Independence: having the confidence to work without direct support, but knowing the limits of one’s abilities or knowledge.
  5. Passion and Sense of Purpose: there is little that is straightforward or easy about serving people experiencing homelessness; it requires enthusiasm and drive.

- Additional requirements (e.g. a car or weekend working hours). If a car is required, include information regarding parking arrangements and mileage reimbursement):

  DESK conducts all work in New Haven, so there’s no need for a car. There may be occasional weekend hours, but we’re flexible on that.

- Briefly describe the work that Yale PPSF Fellows have done with your organization in the past and present. If you have not worked with Yale Fellows, describe any work that Yale students have done with your organization.

  DESK has worked with Yale students directly for many years through the Yale Hunger & Homelessness Action Project (YHHAP, Kitchen-to-Kitchen, and Yale Community Kitchen (the coordinators of whom serve on our Board of Directors and Program Committee). Last year was our first year as a host-site for the Yale President’s Public Service Fellowship; it was, by all accounts, a resounding success and an incredible experience for the Fellow—who went on to be one of this year’s co-directors of YHHAP.