



# COLLEGE STUDENTS HELPING AMERICA

**Executive Summary**

Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** ★★ ★ ★

## BACKGROUND

Every day, colleges and universities provide college students—who represent a large and growing source of the nation's volunteers—with opportunities to deliver valuable services to communities across the country. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the nation has witnessed a significant upsurge in volunteers, particularly among this demographic. Both on campuses and in surrounding communities, millions of college students are participating in a wide range of volunteer service activities, from teaching and mentoring children from disadvantaged circumstances, to raising funds for worthy causes, to helping their fellow Americans recover from hurricanes and other disasters.

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. As part of that mission, the Corporation makes a significant investment in nurturing a culture of service on college campuses. Building on that support, the Corporation is working with other federal agencies, colleges and universities, higher education and student associations, and nonprofit organizations to encourage even greater levels of college student volunteering and to ensure that college graduates embark on a lifetime of service. Our goal is to increase the number of college students volunteering each year, reaching 5 million by 2010.

To identify key trends in college student volunteering and to understand their implications for growing volunteering among college students, the Corporation has produced a new report, titled *College Students Helping America*. The report analyzes data collected from 2002 to 2005 as part of the Current Population Survey (CPS), a comprehensive and scientifically rigorous survey of 60,000 American households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With the Corporation's support, the Census Bureau has administered a volunteer supplement to the CPS each September since 2002.<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, college students were defined as individuals between 16 and 24 years of age who, at the time of the survey, were enrolled in a post-secondary higher education institution.

**To read or download the full report, visit [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov).**

## KEY FINDINGS

### **The number of college students who volunteer is up by approximately 20 percent from 2002 to 2005**

- The number of college students volunteering grew by nearly 600,000 from 2.7 million in 2002 to 3.3 million in 2005.
- The growth rate of college student volunteers (approximately 20%) is more than double the growth rate of all adult volunteers (9%).
- In 2005, approximately 30.2 percent of college students volunteered, exceeding the volunteer rate for the general adult population of 28.8 percent.

### **The growth in college volunteering has primarily been generated by youth who attended high school or were first-year college students during the terrorist attacks of 9/11**

- The vast majority (84%) of current college student volunteers were of high-school age (between 14 to 18 years old) in 2001.
- Since September 2001, the overall percent of college students who volunteer has increased from 27.1 percent to 30.2 percent.
- The bulk of the increase in the college student volunteering rate comes from the difference in the volunteer rates of 18 to 24 year-old college students in 2005 (30.2%) and 18 to 24 year-old college students in 2002 (26.8%).

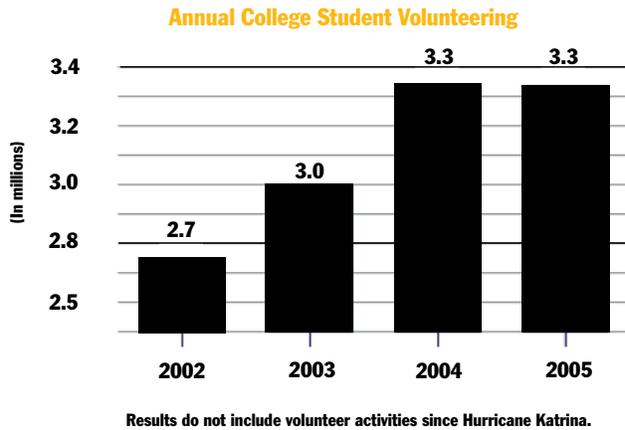
### **Tutoring and mentoring are the most popular volunteer activities among college students**

- Among college student volunteers, tutoring (26.6%) and mentoring (23.8%) are the most common volunteer activities.
- 39.2 percent of black college student volunteers engage in mentoring activities, compared to 22.3 percent of white college student volunteers.

### **Students who work part time volunteer more than students who do not work at all**

- Volunteer rates are highest among students who work 1-10 hours (46.4%) and 11-15 hours (35%) a week, while students who are not employed volunteer at a considerably lower rate (29.8%).

■ The volunteering rate declines substantially as college students work more hours each week. Students who work 31-35 hours and 36-40 hours volunteer at rates of 22.8 percent and 23.2 percent, respectively.



**PROFILE OF COLLEGE STUDENT VOLUNTEERS**

**Who Volunteers**

- College students follow the national trend in volunteering, with females (33%) volunteering at a higher rate than males (26.8%), and whites (32%) volunteering at a higher rate than students of other races and ethnicities (23.6%).
- College students are twice as likely to volunteer as individuals of the same age who are not enrolled in an institution of higher education (30.2% and 15.1%, respectively).

**Where They Volunteer**

- Nearly a third (31.6%) of college student volunteers serve with educational or youth services organizations, compared to about a quarter (26.3%) of the general adult volunteer population.
- Less than a quarter (23.4%) of college student volunteers serve with religious organizations, compared to more than a third (34.8%) of the general adult volunteer population.

**How They Volunteer**

- 44.1 percent of college student volunteers engage in “regular” volunteering (volunteering 12 or more weeks a year with their main organization).

■ College student volunteers are more likely than the general adult volunteer population (27% to 23.4%) to be “episodic” volunteers (volunteering fewer than two weeks per year with their main organization).

**State Rankings of College Student Volunteering**

As part of our 2006 report *Volunteering in America: State Trends and Rankings*, the Corporation produced the first-ever state volunteer rankings for the overall adult population and college students. Those results are reproduced in the full *College Students Helping America* report. Key findings include:

- Across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, college student volunteer rates ranged from 21.4 percent to 62.9 percent between 2003 and 2005.
- Six of the 10 states that rank in the top ten based on overall volunteering rates also rank in the top 10 for college student volunteering rates.

**BUILDING A CULTURE OF COLLEGE SERVICE**

The Corporation for National and Community Service applauds the growing number of higher education institutions that are embracing their civic mission and building strong community connections in new and creative ways. The Corporation believes that colleges and universities and the students that attend them are critical to building a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America.

Each year, the Corporation makes a significant investment in building a culture of service on college campuses through: Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps, VISTA, and Senior Corps grant programs; the provision of training and technical assistance; and Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards provided to AmeriCorps members who use their awards to pay for college tuition or to pay back student loans.

In addition, the Corporation is working closely with our various governmental, educational, and nonprofit partners to increase the number of college students who volunteer to 5 million a year by 2010. Key strategies include:

- Strengthening and expanding our network of intermediary organizations and institutions (Campus Compacts, higher education and student associations, Volunteer Centers, State Service Commissions, faith-based and other community-based organizations) that provide key support for service and service-learning.

- Ensuring that more college students have opportunities to serve as part of their academic studies through high-quality service-learning, and building the pipeline for future college student volunteers by expanding service-learning in K-12 schools.
- Encouraging campuses to develop more community service offices, offer more courses and degrees in nonprofit management, and take other steps to build connections with community organizations.
- Increasing the number of college students serving as tutors and mentors to youth from disadvantaged circumstances, particularly to prepare them for high school completion and college attendance.
- Supporting efforts to expand service opportunities through the Federal Work-Study program.
- Promoting the value and importance of service on campus and reducing barriers that inhibit students from engaging in service.

<sup>1</sup> The 2002 data include results from September 2001 to September 2002, thus including volunteering that occurred in the year immediately after the September 11 attacks. The September 2005 survey asks individuals not only if they volunteer, but also where they volunteer, how they volunteer and how often they volunteer. Results do not include data since Hurricane Katrina.

#### **Corporation for National and Community Service Authors**

*Lillian Dote*, Policy Analyst, Office of Research and Policy Development

*Kevin Cramer*, Deputy Director for Evaluation and Research, Office of Research and Policy Development

*Nathan Dietz*, Research Associate and Statistician, Office of Research and Policy Development

*Robert Grimm, Jr.*, Director, Office of Research and Policy Development

#### **The Office of Research & Policy Development**

The Office of Research & Policy Development (RPD) is part of the CEO's Office within the Corporation for National and Community Service. RPD's mission is to develop and cultivate knowledge that will enhance the mission of the Corporation and of volunteer and community service programs.

#### **Related Research Reports on Volunteering**

*Volunteering in America: State Trends and Rankings*, June 2006. Presents a national, regional, and state-by-state analysis of volunteering trends.

*Volunteers Mentoring Youth: Implications for Closing the Mentoring Gap*, May 2006. Provides a greater understanding of the characteristics and traits that distinguish individuals whose volunteering includes mentoring youth from volunteers who do not mentor.

*Youth Helping America Series. Educating for Active Citizens: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Youth Civic Engagement*, March 2006. Takes a closer look at participation in school-based service among middle school and high school aged youth, paying particular attention to the relationship between different service-learning experiences and civic attitudes and outcomes.

*Youth Helping America Series. Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering*, November 2005. Explores the state of youth volunteering and the connections between youth volunteering and the primary social institutions to which teenagers are exposed – family, schools, and religious congregations.



The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation provides opportunities for more than two million Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America.

**To read or download our reports, visit [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov).**

October 2006