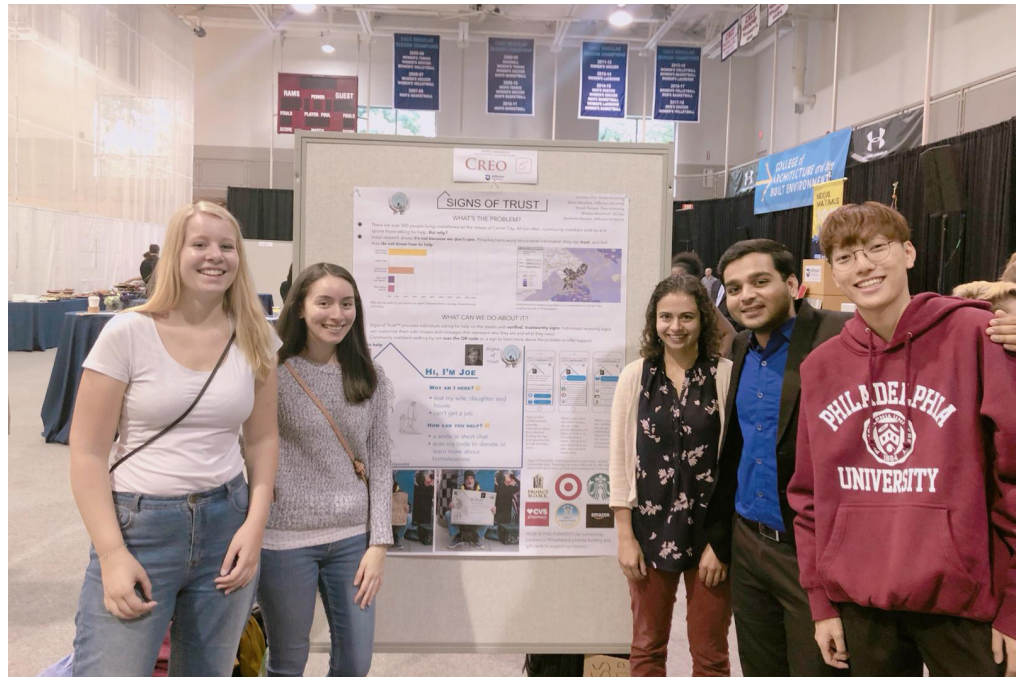


Nexus Maximus 2018: Multidisciplinary learning linking Community Health and Innovation

Nexus Maximus is a conference that gathers students from all over the globe for 4 days of "sprint-style" collaborative problem-solving. Students are put on multidisciplinary teams of 5-7 to create solutions to problems within a given theme. This year's theme was "Improving Lives through Healthy Communities," and each team was assigned a neighborhood within Philadelphia. Given my interests in creativity, design, and entrepreneurship in healthcare, Nexus Maximus sparked my interest. I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to develop my entrepreneurial problem solving skills while meeting like-minded peers and working on important problems within the community health space.

My team included students from Jefferson's Interior Design program, Pace University, HS Owl in Germany and Yansei University in South Korea. We were assigned the Center City area of Philadelphia which is the primary commercial district in the city. There is a lot of pedestrian traffic in Center City, and people in need migrate to this area in hopes of securing support. Many of the people we see on the street are struggling with housing insecurity, health issues, including addiction and of course poverty. I suggested we focus on homelessness. I had just attended Signs of Humanity event sponsored by SKMC and JCPH. At the event, artist Willie Baronet and MPH program director Dr. Rosemary Frasso shared their work exploring the experience of people asking for help on our cities streets. The topic was fresh on my mind. After the event, I had been thinking about barriers to supporting those asking for help on the streets, and had talked with some of my classmates to get a deeper understanding of their views and experiences. We explored questions such as: What's the best way to help someone on the street? Why do so many



Sylvie Abookire (3rd from right) and her team at Nexus Maximus.

people walk by and avert their eyes? Through discussions and survey data, my team and I came to an overriding response: there are many community members who would like to help, but either don't know how, or worry about who and what to trust. With this insight, my Nexus Maximus team set to work on strategies to solve these problems.

Working on an interdisciplinary team was exciting and we each brought something different to the table. Reflecting on the problem with students from different disciplines and countries added depth to the conversation about barriers community members face to supporting the homeless. My teammates from Germany and South Korea spoke about the culture around asking for help on the streets in their countries. In addition, each student on my team came from a different discipline. Combined, we had

backgrounds in public health, design, finance, and information technology. This allowed us to think about the problem from multiple angles. We brainstormed several ideas and were able to share some of them with a wider audience. The problem of poverty is complex.

When we weren't working on our project, we attended workshops on Innovation, Sustainability, GIS mapping tools, and Consumer Centricity and developed relationships with visiting faculty and students. The conference provided a well-rounded and exciting glimpse into the world of population health innovation.

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