

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

As you probably know, Princeton's informal motto is: "In the nation's service and the service of humanity." What does service mean to you?

Student response #1 ([00:08](#)):

Service means giving back to the community in any way possible. If you're able to donate your time and your resources, then you should definitely have the urge to do so.

Student response #2 ([00:23](#)):

To me, service means doing things for the good of others out of the kindness of your heart and going out of your way to show that other people mean something to you.

Student response #3 ([00:32](#)):

Service means giving back to the community that gives to us constantly.

Student response #4 ([00:37](#)):

Just trying to make the world a better place in the ways you know how.

Student co-host: Christine Shin ([00:47](#)):

Welcome, everyone, to a special episode of Meet Princeton, a podcast to introduce prospective students and their families to Princeton University, brought to you from the Office of Admission at Princeton. I'm Christine Shin from Arizona and a member of the class of 2025.

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes ([01:03](#)):

And I'm Isabella Gomes from São Paulo, Brazil and class 2025 as well. We're both student correspondents with the John H. Pace Jr. Class of 1939 Center for Civic Engagement. And today, we're taking over Meet Princeton to introduce you to service and civic engagement at the university. Christine, we met when we started working at the Pace Center. How did you hear about Pace and what have you been involved in?

Student co-host: Christine Shin ([01:40](#)):

Yeah, I first became involved with the Pace Center when I joined the Civic Leadership Council. And in the beginning of freshman year, I was looking for a job. And on the job descriptions, I saw a student correspondent role for the Pace Center, and I thought that sounded really interesting. And in high school, I had experience; I started my high school's newspaper club. And I was also very interested in learning about the service opportunities at Princeton. And I felt like the student correspondent role was a great way to both learn about civic service for myself, and also share that with other students and my peers. So, that's how I applied for the student correspondent role. And I was really excited to hear that I was going to have a fellow student correspondent working with me. And yeah, that's how we met.

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes ([02:30](#)):

Yeah. My path is pretty similar to yours. I applied on the job portal. And then I came to the Pace Center office for the first time, and I was amazed at all the different posters and initiatives that were being

showcased. And so, I've just been learning more and more about all the service initiatives here at Princeton.

Student co-host: Christine Shin ([02:47](#)):

Yeah. Stepping into Gwen's office, it's just so bright. So many colors, so many ideas. It's amazing.

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes ([02:53](#)):

Yeah. I felt at home. So comfortable to be there. Anyway, we should get back to our listeners.

Student co-host: Christine Shin ([03:00](#)):

Princeton's informal motto is, "In the nation's service and the service of humanity." And the Pace Center for Civic Engagement helps make service and civic engagement part of the student experience. But what is service, and why is it such an important part of being a Princetonian? Today, we're going to hear from two seniors, Anna Blanco and Hannah Bein to find out.

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes ([03:23](#)):

Anna Blanco is a junior from Miami, Florida, concentrating in the School of Public and International Affairs with a certificate in Latin American Studies at Princeton. (singing)

Student guest #1: Ana Blanco ([03:42](#)):

I was born in Cuba. And my family, we all immigrated to Florida, Miami. And I was raised in Miami. It's been my home for forever. It's a really big part of my identity. The first time I actually left Miami permanently, to live somewhere else, was when I came to college. So, that was quite the shock for me because Miami's a very diverse place and a lot of Caribbean people. So, it was an interesting experience leaving and getting a newfound appreciation for back home.

([04:28](#)):

I knew from the start that I was going to do something related to service. Some of my interests include voter engagement, anti-gun violence activism. I also play basketball on campus; it's a really big passion of mine. But the big ones that I'm involved in are voting and anti-gun violence. And so, those two, while they might sound a little bit disparate, there was a very clear connection for me. When I was in middle school, the Newtown shooting occurred in Connecticut. And that one shook me, but I feel like I was still a little bit too young to really understand the full impact of it. I think I was in sixth grade. So, while I knew what was happening, I didn't understand all the congressional backfire, all the political anger surrounding that.

([05:25](#)):

And then, when I was in high school, summer of my freshman year, I was about to be a sophomore, Pulse nightclub, that shooting occurred. And at that time I was doing a summer research internship in public health. And so, I ended up doing my research on the potential effectiveness of policy introduced after that shooting in working to decrease the public health impact of gun violence. And so, that really was the first project that sparked my passion, specifically towards anti-gun violence.

([06:04](#)):

And then, junior year of high school was the Parkland shooting. And so, that was another moment of, okay, how do I turn my research into activism? And so, I worked in high school towards doing that. We have a health information project because Miami-Dade County doesn't have health classes. And so, I

worked with that team to introduce a module about the importance of taking care of mental health, but also about the staggering gun violence rates in our country and in Miami as well.

[\(06:46\)](#):

And I also worked on walkouts and other activist events. And then, when I came to Princeton, I knew Students Against Gun Violence was an organization, but it had been inactive for a while. So, I asked my friend to help me out, and we kind of reignited that. And then, for me, there's always been a very clear connection between voting and legislative action. And so, my passion for voting comes out of my desire to see legislative change. And then, summer 2020, I got really, really involved in voting. And that's been my biggest project since.

[\(07:28\)](#):

One of the Service Focus core groups, their work centered around preventing gun violence through a public health perspective, which was exactly like what I had researched, what I was interested in. It's this great program. Actually, I ended up doing it my sophomore year.

[\(07:49\)](#):

And so, when I did my [inaudible 00:07:52] year, it was on race, migration, and belonging, which is also a topic that I'm extremely interested in. And then, it's a year-long commitment, and you meet every other week to discuss some sort of service project that you're working on or just current events or just something related to that theme.

[\(08:17\)](#):

I had great Service Focus leaders. Shout out to Emma and Remi. We just have hangouts, and mine was over Zoom because this was 2020, '21. The other component of Service Focus is you have to take a process course, which basically just means that the course has to have a component of service. And so, for me, my fall semester last year, when I was a sophomore, I took a class called Generation Z: Voting Challenge. And so, we worked on implementing a voter intervention strategy to increase voter engagement.

[\(08:57\)](#):

But 100 happened to have this great fellowship program. And I was already interested in voting. And I was, "Okay, let me do this." And then I became obsessed with voting. I started summer of 2020. And so, that summer was the inaugural cohort of summer fellows. And we were really working on the 2020 general election; huge push around that. And Princeton had recently acquired a tool called [Turpa 00:09:28] Vote, which makes it super easy to register to vote; sends you reminders for all elections you're eligible for, which is extremely helpful. Because presidential elections, everyone knows when they are because they get so much media coverage. But oftentimes, people don't know when local elections are. And those are the ones that have the greatest impact on your daily life. And then we shut down for a little bit, after the election happened. But my really good friend and co-Vote 100 head fellow, Joe, and I were, "Okay, but we can't do this. We can't just disappear every two years."

[\(10:10\)](#):

Voting is something where we have to constantly be building up the culture, and we can't let it just slip behind, especially because there are other elections that happen in between. This year, was New Jersey gubernatorial election. And so, now we've moved into that framework of Vote 100 as something that doesn't disappear. But also build up a community because voting is something that's very socially influenced. It's peer pressure, really. And so, if you see your friends voting, you're going to be, "Okay, I'll vote too." And so, building that community and really encouraging people to go out and vote.

[\(10:54\)](#):

And we're also working with identity-based organizations to get out the vote for certain identities. I myself, I'm Latinx. So, I want to work with that group on campus. You can't go in trying to impose your ideas and trying to do something without first understanding A, what does the community want? What do they need? And on top of that, the importance of listening and really hearing and really understanding and trying to build that trust. And you can only do that through time and conversation. And so, that really taught me service is something you have to be patient with. It's a process, and it can't just be go in, go out, "Bye" kind of thing.

[\(11:56\)](#):

Princeton's motto is: "In the nation's service and the service of humanity." And so, that's something that I've tried really hard to do throughout my studies here just because, at the end of the day, whatever education you, get, whether you're B.S.E Or A.B., math major, we are being given a world-class education, and we should try and do something with that that positively benefits the people around us. And the Pace Center is a great place to go; the first step in really trying to figure out, I have all these interests. What can I do with them? And where can I go to put them into action and give them some purpose and meaning beyond the classroom?

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes ([12:48](#)):

Wow, Christine. It was amazing to hear all of her experiences. And it's cool that you are also considering SPIA, right?

Student co-host: Christine Shin ([13:04](#)):

Yeah. I'm also thinking of SPIA. Through all my courses, I've been looking at a lot of different policy areas. And som hearing her specific work with gun violence and voting and all the amazing initiatives that she's organized, I think, gives me more motivation and inspiration to try to find my interests as well. And-

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes ([13:25](#)):

Yeah, that's great.

Student co-host: Christine Shin ([13:26](#)):

Yeah.

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes ([13:26](#)):

It was great to see how she was able to continue with her experiences in high school here at Princeton, through Pace and through all of the different programs that we have and all the support. And it's very inspiring.

Student co-host: Christine Shin ([13:38](#)):

Yeah. I think Pace is an amazing center where all of the volunteer service, community service all just comes together at Princeton. And they provide a really good framework for supporting students in whatever service initiatives that they want to do.

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes ([13:53](#)):

For sure. And I think now we have another student with a completely different experience in service that also connects to Pace. Right?

Student co-host: Christine Shin ([14:00](#)):

Yeah. We have Hannah Bein, by who is a senior from Riverside, Connecticut, concentrating in history with a certificate in Vocal Performance at Princeton. (singing)

Student guest #2: Hannah Bein ([14:08](#)):

When I was a freshman, I had a chance to meet the organizer of a group called the Trenton Youth Orchestra who, at that time, was a senior at Princeton. And we were able to take a trip to one of the middle schools in Trenton because we were trying to start a youth singers program, an offshoot of the orchestra program. And so, we got to go into this library full of all these middle schoolers who were looking at us inquisitively, wondering what it was we were doing there.

([14:55](#)):

And we sang a couple of choral pieces for them; talked to them a little bit about what choral singing is like and why we love to do it. And it kind of ended there. I wasn't sure what was going to come next. But from there, we were able to start the Trenton Youth Singers branch of what became Trenton Arts at Princeton. And it really started as this fledgling little group with only a couple of students, but then really blossomed into the group that it is today.

([15:26](#)):

Okay. Who would like to go next? Great. Let's hear it.

Speaker 10 ([15:31](#)):

[inaudible 00:15:35].

Student guest #2: Hannah Bein ([15:39](#)):

Okay.

([15:39](#)):

(singing)

([15:47](#)):

Whoa! All right. In high school, most of the service that I did did revolve around music. And I taught a music class for students at the Boys and Girls Club. And I knew, always, that connecting with students and children through music was something that I really loved to do and was just a great way to bring people together and something I was really passionate about. But when I got to Princeton, I was really looking for opportunities to continue that work because it's just something that's really important to me and brings me a lot of joy.

([16:27](#)):

And so, the first couple months before this program started getting off the ground, I just felt that void. And I couldn't quite put a finger on what it was. But then, when this program got started and we started working with the students, I knew that that void had been filled.

([16:39](#)):

It started as just the Trenton Youth Orchestra, started by Lou Chen, who, as a sophomore, just had this idea and wanted to make it happen. And now, it is a program that's an umbrella organization, Trenton Arts at Princeton, which incorporates the youth singers, which is the program that I lead, as well as the dancers and theater program, which are new this year. Or, I guess, new in the last two years. And yeah, the program is really wonderful. It began with Princeton students going to Trenton to work with students. But now, it's a full Saturday morning arts program where the students who are part of the program, part of all of those branches, come on buses and get to Princeton's campus.

[\(17:23\)](#):

Right now, I'm the student leader of the Trenton Youth Singers. Each branch of the organization has a faculty leader and also a student leader, who's also a fellow for the Trenton Arts at Princeton program. And so, my role is really to support our faculty member in leading the group through the rehearsal. And so, my routine with it is that I wake up very excited, on Saturday mornings, to come down to the LCA. And we set everything up. We make sure that the space is ready to go for the kids. The students arrive. We all have pastries together. That's a really great bonding opportunity, both amongst the students... Some of them know each other from school; some of them don't.

[\(18:08\)](#):

We watch the guest performance, which is always super informative and exciting. Sometimes we've got a cappella groups, dance groups; a lot of music from different cultures and parts of the world, which is really great for the students and for us, of course, too, to get exposed to. And so, I also lead the coaches, who are made up of other Princeton students, most of whom sing in the glee club and other choirs on campus.

[\(18:36\)](#):

And then, the students arrive, and we lead them through a really fun rehearsal where we sing new pieces, teach them all sorts of musical skills. And one thing too, that I started with the Trenton Youth Singers was one-on-one voice lessons. We pair each student with their own coach who teaches them each week. They build that trusting relationship over time and can really grow as singers. And so, it's been really special, in my own lessons with my student, to encourage her and take what I've learned in my own vocal training through the years and apply it in a way that will make sense to her, who's new to singing but is so passionate about it. And to encourage her and see her own growth and say, "Wow, you've accomplished this. You started here, and now you're here. Let's celebrate that together;" that's been a really, really special part of my experience.

[\(19:32\)](#):

Let's try something else to get us into the song. Remember? Because what we were working on was trying not to slide and trying to get those big intervals. So, let's do the thing we were doing, but with the sliding from the top. Do you remember how we were working on that? So, (singing). Let me demonstrate one more time. We're going to slide from the top, get to this note, and then just do that interval. But the key is we don't want to go: (singing). We want to just hit each note. (singing) Do you hear the difference there?

Speaker 11 [\(20:14\)](#):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Student guest #2: Hannah Bein [\(20:14\)](#):

That's what we're going to try to do. Do you want to give it a go? Why don't we try the first one together?

Speaker 11 ([20:19](#)):

Yeah.

Student guest #2: Hannah Bein ([20:20](#)):

We're going to slide. (singing).

Speaker 11 ([20:27](#)):

All right.

Student guest #2: Hannah Bein ([20:27](#)):

Yeah? All right. Let's give it a try. I think one significant lesson is: meeting the students where they're at is really the most important thing, especially when you're working with students who might be shy, might take a second to open up. I think that trying to push them towards some arbitrary goal of, we want them to meet this musical goal right away or perform this particular piece because we want them to be at this level, in my experience, has not really been the way to cultivate growth in the students. I really learned this a lot during the year of the pandemic when we couldn't sing as a choir. That just wasn't possible, unfortunately, but we wanted to make sure that the program continued.

([21:17](#)):

And so, we talked a lot about, "We can make some kind of virtual performance at the end of the year and work towards that." And there were benefits to that because it's always good to have something to work towards. But we also thought about the fact that we don't want to feel like there needs to be some kind of end goal that we want them to reach. It's really about the process and all the little things that you learn along the way, of learning music, learning all these skills and music from different cultures and all these different things.

([21:46](#)):

It's been really, really meaningful and important to me that we are able to reach out to the communities who are really so nearby. I think we've got our orange bubble, and there's so many wonderful things about that. But these communities are just right next door, and there's so many possibilities for interaction and learning between these communities that I think are just really important to take advantage of.

([22:16](#)):

And as a fellow with the Trenton Arts at Princeton program, I've been able to meet with a lot of teachers in the district, learn about what the situation in the schools is like, and really have a more informed perspective on what these students are going through, what their experience has been.

([22:36](#)):

That's the relationship with Trenton. But right now, we bring the students to our campus. So, that's just an interesting kind of way to encounter the students in our space. Each week, we're able to work with the Pace Center to meet with these partners in Trenton, of different sorts, just to get more context and learn about just the whole, the place, the history of it all. And so, that's been wonderful to work with the Pace Center on those initiatives to work with the students in a more informed way. And they also

support the program in numerous ways, in its development, from the beginning. So, they're a really, really wonderful partner to have in this program.

[\(23:27\)](#):

If you feel the same way that I felt as a freshman, where you feel like there's a void in your life and that you want to fill it with service, whatever that might mean to you, whether it's working with children, working with older people, working in all sorts of communities that we've got right next door to us, I would say, try to seek them out places that already exist, people who are already doing projects that you're excited about.

[\(23:57\)](#):

But if you can't find them, or if you're not sure where to begin, advocating for yourself and saying, "This is a project that I want to start," that's always, I think, an amazing thing that Princeton is very happy to support with. And especially the Pace Center is an incredible resource in getting any of those kinds of projects started. That's how the Trenton Arts at Princeton program began, is because Lou had this idea that he was super passionate about; total go-getter and wanted to do it. And it's developed into this incredible program that it is today; this long-lasting, far beyond his four years at Princeton, and something that so many students have been able to get involved with.

[\(24:35\)](#):

(singing).

[\(24:41\)](#):

So I would say, if the opportunity that you're looking for doesn't seem to quite exist yet, just going for it and starting it yourself is totally a great thing to do and something that I'd really encourage. (Singing) [crosstalk 00:25:18]

Speaker 12 [\(25:17\)](#):

So, this is all going off one at a time, right? [crosstalk 00:25:26] So, yeah.

Student co-host: Christine Shin [\(25:32\)](#):

This episode's interviews were conducted by Christine Shin and Isabella Gomes, both class of 2025, with sound collected by Savannah Pobre, class of 2023, and [Gianna Malcionda 00:25:44], class of 2024, and project support from Gwen McNamara, Communications Specialists of the Pace Center. We'd also like to thank all the students who participated and allowed us to record our What Does Service Mean To You? Survey.

Student co-host: Isabella Gomes [\(25:57\)](#):

As we said earlier, this podcast was created with prospective students in mind. And so, with that, we'd like to direct all of our listeners to the office of admission website at admission.princeton.edu. There, you can watch, read, engage virtually, and learn more about Princeton University.

Student co-host: Christine Shin [\(26:19\)](#):

Meet Princeton's audio engineer is Nick Donnoli of Orange Box Pictures. Mary Buckley and Vivian Slee are producers, and Brian Blunt is a consultant for the show. And original music was composed by Molly Truman from the class 2024. We'd also like to give a special thanks to Trenton Arts at Princeton and Vote 100 for their support. Thanks for listening, and we hope you'll listen again soon.

Speaker 13 ([26:50](#)):

To me, service means something that is constructive to the community as a whole and the person who is conducting such service. And this can be represented in so many different ways. Really, I think anything that can improve someone's day can be considered an of service. So, this can be something as small as holding the door open for someone and also going out of your way to make a situation better.

Speaker 14 ([27:18](#)):

I feel like service, to me, means putting the world in order as best as you can. Because if you don't, then society breaks down. So, you have a moral duty or responsibility to help out other people or other living beings in the society.

Speaker 15 ([27:34](#)):

I think anything that you're doing to help others around you, regardless of what you want, I think, can be seen as service.

Speaker 16 ([27:44](#)):

I think service to me means... I can't say, "Serving people," but that's what it means to me. I think it means really seeing the needs of people around you and meeting them there.