

POLITIS
CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT
PROGRAM

Annual Report

2024 - 2025

 Hellenic American University

“Civic engagement encompasses actions wherein individuals participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community.”

- American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

The Politis Civic Engagement Program Annual Report for the academic year 2024-2025 is a celebration of student service across a broad range of organizations. The program aspires to instill a life-long motivation to serve the public good, with a principled approach to civic affairs. This year’s programming was marked by strong student turnout and renewed purpose, following years of thoughtful leadership by Dr. Stamatina Stathopoulou. The HAU community warmly thanks Tina for all she has done.

Collectively and individually, on-campus and outside Athens and beyond, students this year showed enthusiasm towards the pillars of civic engagement: service learning, social impact, and global citizenship – an appreciation of common values and shared responsibilities, and a recognition of core challenges that can unite us across borders.

These pillars were addressed through service opportunities, site visits, themed days, civic conferences, coursework, international field studies, and an annual service trip. The Politis office introduced students to new opportunities and welcomed independent initiatives.

HAU faculty and staff congratulate all seniors graduating with Politis distinction and warmly invite the student body to inquire about further ways to get involved and make a difference together. On behalf of Politis program partners and host organizations, please accept my sincere thanks for your hard work and commitment to serving the community.

With gratitude,



Cameron Bell

Director of Civic Engagement

By the Numbers

17

NEW PARTNER
ORGANIZATIONS

94%

OF SENIORS GRADUATING
WITH POLITIS DISTINCTION

1667

TOTAL SERVICE HOURS
(GRADUATING SENIORS)

3

POLITIS-INTEGRATED
COURSES

2

INTERNATIONAL
FIELD STUDIES

5

CIVIC
CONFERENCES

1

ANNUAL
SERVICE TRIP

3

SOLIDARITY
DAYS

Year in Review: Activities & Engagement

This year's program touched upon a range of thematic areas, including:



HUMAN
RIGHTS

ARTS &
HERITAGE

CLIMATE
CHANGE

SOCIAL
IMPACT

ECONOMIC
DEVELOP-
MENT

HEALTH
SERVICES

Highlights



HAU's student volunteers Angelos Varotsis, Ilektra Fragkaki, Xinyi Yin, Kriselle Vida, and Theodora Potsi helping Boruome at the Panormou farmer's market.



A Politis program site visit to the Hellenic Parliament, Syntagma Square.



HAU's Ioulios Iliadis and Theodoros Mexis hard at work, moving boxes of food items for Odyssea.



HAU's internationally-minded students were welcomed by the Italian Embassy in Greece for an insider's view on contemporary politics and regional diplomacy.

Service Opportunities

From local organizations to leading international NGOs, HAU students volunteered in a variety of nonprofits, gaining hands-on experience and making meaningful contributions.

Odyssea

An upskilling and employment focused-NGO, Odyssea received visits from students to their social kitchen, a meal preparation and packaging event to benefit vulnerable and affected families in the Port of Piraeus.

Humanity Greece

Students regularly joined the high-energy group of volunteers at Humanity Greece to cook alongside celebrity chefs, such as Gogo Deligianni, and offer meal support for vulnerable and affected families. Work involved food preparation and meal packaging, in addition to logistical support and supply chain administrative duties.

Boroume

On several occasions, groups of students went to Athens farmer's markets to collect and package unsold food items for delivery to needy families.

The efforts not only recovered otherwise spoiled produce but also helped reduce CO2 emissions.

Make-A-Wish

During Christmas and Easter holidays, students supported Make-A-Wish preparations at the office headquarters, preparing visual materials for fundraising campaigns in public areas, and in May, the Politis program represented the university at the Make-A-Wish annual Gratitude Gala with national philanthropic and foundation leaders. Make-A-Wish grants wishes that have the power to transform the lives of children with critical illnesses.

Global Brigades

Bridging both medical and commercial needs in society, Global Brigades works with vulnerable populations, improving lives through increased access to healthcare and more sustainable business models. This semester, a student created a marketing campaign and engagement strategy for a small business owner from Nigeria in the textiles industry.

Faros

A student with hands-on construction experience volunteered in the renovation and furnishing of housing for unaccompanied refugee minors, beneficiaries of the Christian non-profit organization Faros.

BestBuddies

BestBuddies is one of the oldest Politis program partners, and each year, students support the mission of the organization by offering companionship to the beneficiaries as well as event management services.

Greek Council for Refugees - Pyxida Center

Honoring an annual tradition, music majors utilized their gifts with instruments to offer festive live performances during the refugee center's end-of-year holiday party and gift exchange.

The Hellenic Initiative

A group of environmentally-minded students supported the tree-planting campaign of The Hellenic Initiative, the leading philanthropic institution of the Greek diaspora. With gardening supplies on hand, students joined a community team to plant 500 trees in wildfire-ravaged areas of Mt. Penteli, helping restore the natural landscape.

Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC)

Students responded to calls by Greece's leading private charitable foundation to support a blood drive during the Christmas festivities at the center and to support the Open Agora in April, a large fundraising and enlistment event for Greek humanitarian organizations.

Tandem

A student inspired by the completion of her internship at Tandem – an organization that supports families with special needs – continued on as a volunteer, leading a range of stimulating activities for disabled children.

Kypseli Mundial

Organized by the Greek Forum of Migrants, Kypseli Mundial hosted a vibrant multi-day neighborhood event in the spirit of social integration and deepening ties within the community. A student supported the event by offering logistical support for the activities.

Let's Do it Greece

A group of student volunteers joined forces with other civil society organizations to support Let's Do it Greece, a panhellenic initiative to remove trash from Greek mountains. The students spent the day cleaning up an area of Mt. Hymettus.

Solidarity Days

World Cancer Day

Several students served as health and prevention ambassadors for Fairlife Lung Cancer Care, a non-profit dedicated to raising public awareness regarding early detection of lung cancer and to supporting lung cancer patients. To coincide with World Cancer Day on February 4, students developed a digital “Breath of Life for All” public health campaign focused on preventing smoking and vaping in adolescents. Students also volunteered to translate complex medical texts for the organization.

International Women’s Day

A student was selected to volunteer at the “Celebrate Her 2025” event and workshop held at the Four Seasons Astir Palace on March 9 to coincide with International Women's Day. The program was a partnership between Celebrate Her, a global community to support networking and visibility for women in the hospitality sector, and the Melissa Network, a leading organization for migrant women in Greece that promotes empowerment and active citizenship.

World Heritage Day and the International Day for Monuments

To celebrate World Heritage Day and the International Day for Monuments on April 18, students participated in the Open House Athens weekend, an exploration of architectural heritage for one weekend during which private buildings open their doors for free and the city is transformed into an urban museum. Open House is a global non-profit with the aim of promoting architecture and cultural preservation.



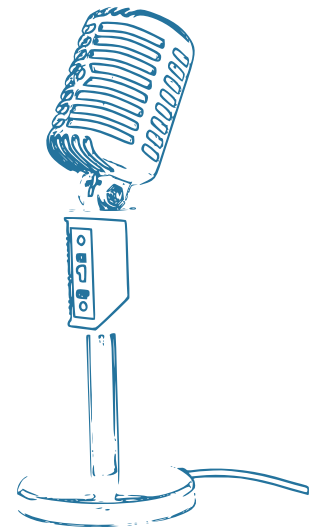
Civic Conferences

Athens Democracy Forum

Students were selected to volunteer at the Athens Democracy Forum to bolster the communications team with on and off-camera production assistance and editorial support. Under the auspices of the New York Times, the high-profile gathering of business leaders, academics, policymakers, and activists addressed the most pressing global threats to democracy.

Women On Top “inc.lude” Forum

The Women on Top’s annual “inc.lude” Forum, entitled “Compliance in practice: How EU legislation is changing equality, diversity & inclusion in the corporate environment,” invited students to attend panels and networking sessions. This year’s program highlighted new initiatives and tools that institutions can use to promote equality, diversity and inclusion based on the European directives concerning accessibility, equal pay, ESG standards, work-life balance, violence and harassment at work precautions, and gender balancing.



Synergia Institute

Student volunteers lent a helping hand with event logistics and operations for the launch of the Synergia Institute in Greece, a new research and policy think-tank focused on offering solutions for good governance across multiple domains, including economic, energy, defense, and social affairs. In so doing, students gained a new appreciation for the policymaking process.

diaNEOsis

To mark the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the restoration of democracy in Greece in 1974, the think-tank diaNEOsis held an event to analyze key challenges ahead, such as climate change, declining demographics, low public engagement, and advanced technologies. Students enjoyed the opportunity to hear directly from scholars, politicians, and civic leaders, including the President of the Hellenic Republic.

Mediterranean Forum: Circle the Med

The 8th Circle the Med took place June 3-4 at the Acropolis Museum, where a distinguished array of regional policymakers convened to address climate and regional challenges, including sustainable tourism and development, renewable energy, and public-private partnerships. A group of HAU students supported the conference organizing team in program preparations and on-site logistics, while also attending the plenary sessions.



HAU Study Abroad student Grace O'Mara and undergraduate Mohammed Alabdali with Politis director Cameron Bell at the Athens Democracy Forum.

Site Visits

Groups of students attended seminar-style discussions at select institutions around the capital, accompanied by private tours and Q&A sessions. These opportunities were designed to introduce students to civic traditions, such as speaking with an elected representative, visiting museum collections, engaging with public exhibitions, and developing community initiatives.

National Gallery

Students visited a marquee exhibition entitled “Democracy” at the National Gallery, commemorating fifty years since the end of military junta rule in Greece. The show adopted a transnational approach, looking at transitions from authoritarian rule to democratic governance in Greece, Spain, and Portugal, through paintings, posters, video projections, and performances.

Italian Embassy, Greece

The Italian Mission to Greece hosted a delegation of students for an Embassy tour and insightful discussion on just what a diplomatic mission does, why diplomacy in the 21st century matters, and what tools diplomats use to find common ground and manage differences.

Hellenic Parliament

The Hellenic Parliament Foundation for Parliamentarism and Democracy offered a unique English-language educational tour of the official chamber, followed by a faculty-led discussion on ways students can engage in the legislative process and volunteer in campaign work.

NEON Art Foundation

Students confronted the legacies of the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus and its impact on Hellenism in a moving multi-media exhibition entitled “Cyprus 1974: Memory is the Only Homeland of Humanity,” presented in the former Public Tobacco Factory. Key topics addressed included migration, displacement and missing persons, transitional justice, and historiography.

Field Studies

The field study initiative underscores the institutional mission of the university to develop global citizens and embrace experiential learning alongside formal classroom instruction. Through strategic partnerships and travel, the university pursued new educational opportunities in the region.

Cairo and Alexandria

A mix of study abroad and Greek students embarked on an immersive five-day study program to Egypt alongside the Art D'Egypte exhibition openings at the Giza Plateau and Library of Alexandria (Bibliotheca Alexandrina). During the field study, students were tasked with exploring Hellenism in Egypt in all its forms, classical and contemporary, through visits to relevant Greek sites of social, religious, and artistic importance and organized reflections on history, politics, and identity. Art D'Egypte is a cultural platform that curates annual exhibitions showcasing art in heritage sites, linking Egypt's rich past to its dynamic present.



Istanbul

Select students participated in a co-curricular five-day field study trip to Türkiye in cooperation with Koç University. The program underscored transnational issue-areas connecting Greece and Türkiye, including the historical and recent impact of migration, and debates on the preservation of ethno-religious heritage.

Athens

In the context of the university's study abroad offerings, campus leaders were invited to serve as student ambassadors of the city and university to visiting faculty-led groups. A multi-day Athens field study for an undergraduate group from Stanford University explored cultural heritage, the migration crisis, and economic renewal with the help of volunteer student guides for urban walks and social activities.

Annual Service Trip

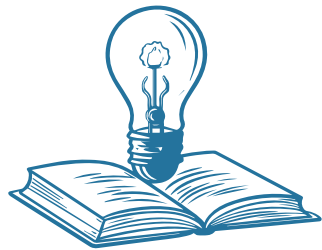
World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Greece

The WWF was this year's partner and host for the annual Politis service trip. Regarded as the world's leading conservation organization, WWF works in nearly 100 countries to develop and deliver innovative solutions that protect communities and wildlife.

A large cohort of students spent a day in the sun at the Sounion National Park, a conservation plot under the management of the WWF, to support ongoing reforestation.



Course Work



The following courses offered students out-of-classroom faculty-led experiences in service of Politis program objectives.

GE 103 Developing the Global Citizen

Students visited the National Archeological Museum for a discussion on the politics of cultural management, the role of patronage, and volunteering with museums.

GE 155 Sustainable Planet

Following the service trip, students in Sustainable Planet visited the World Wildlife Fund Greece headquarters to learn how the organization prioritizes initiatives and manages data.

GE 220 Politics and Society: Comparative Democracy

Students in this elective expanded their study of Turkish democracy and government institutions by joining the Istanbul field study and engaging with Koç University students and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Remote

Off-campus students pursued several site-specific or online opportunities within the Politis program, including:

The **United Nations World Food Programme's "Freerice"** educational initiative to address food insecurity and poverty with donations of rice in line with participation levels;

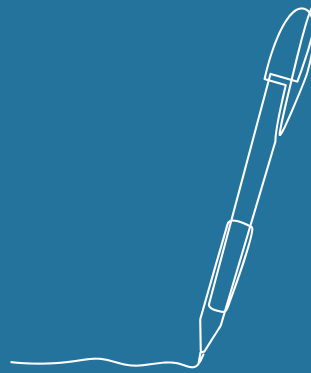
The **Argosaronic Environment Foundation**, a private foundation dedicated to improving the biodiversity, marine ecosystem, resources, and tourism of the Argolic and Saronic Gulf;

The **House of Europe-Rhodes**, an EU-administered good governance hub for research and policy incubation.

Campus Activities

On-campus activities, such as the Europe in Discourse IV academic conference, the Research Institute's end-of-year presentations, Debate Club, and Artificial Intelligence initiative, added to the range of opportunities for Politis hours.

Student Reflections



“Collaborative, fulfilling and empowering... I got to learn how to be in a team and have a great time at the same time, knowing we are making a positive impact on the planet.”

- Nermin Gazi, supporting the *World Wildlife Fund (WWF)*

“Professionally in the future, I hope to help potential students of mine get more informed about the importance of having our green spaces clean.”

- Katerina Lathoura, supporting *Let's Do It Greece*

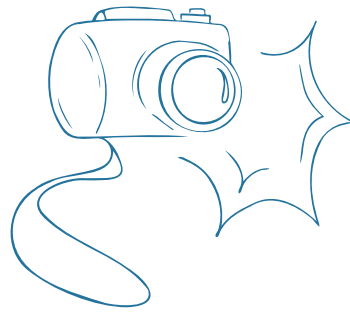
“The blood drive on campus was the project which I am the proudest of. It was my first time donating and a great opportunity to begin my civic volunteer work!”

- Smaragda Tsoulou, supporting the *Hellenic American Union*

“This trip was very eye-opening, as I got to explore my heritage and my religious beliefs like I never have in the past.”

- Gerasimos Manesis, on the Istanbul Field Study

In the Spotlight:



*Alexandra
Papatheodorou,
Psychology Major '25*

Describe your relationship with the Politis program. When and why did you join it? What do you do as student coordinator?

I entered the Politis program as a work-study student in October 2022. Back then, students were participating mostly in university events, and external volunteerism was perceived to be more of a chore. With the new emphasis on external volunteerism, I help students with the logistics of opportunities with host organizations. I was always interested in volunteerism, so it was natural for me to help more students get involved and learn about the benefits from service work.

What was your favorite service activity?

I am most proud of an event that we did for the International Diabetes Day. It was an event that attracted the biggest number of students that has ever been recorded—around 30 participants.

It was an event that we came up with independent from the university, and it turned out to be a great leadership experience – mobilizing students, creating pamphlets on diabetes to improve health literacy, distributing the pamphlets. It took a lot of effort and proved successful.

Was there another particularly memorable activity?

The holiday period is always busy. During Christmas last year, we prepared food ourselves and distributed it to the homeless population here in Athens, downtown. We invited students to cook food and then gathered at the university to deliver it, starting from Korai Square and heading to Monastiraki. We also collected clothes and blankets and gave it to people that needed those. It was memorable. We all felt we made a difference and enjoyed the Christmas spirit.

What other organizations have you worked with directly?

Make-A-Wish Greece; Best Buddies; a vaccination center in Lamia Hospital during COVID-19; Doctors of the World; and a chess team where we teach chess to elderly people to promote neuroplasticity.

How have you seen the Politis program change over the years?

What I've noticed this year is that there was a more student-oriented character, because we created more group activities. In the past the activities were more individualized. Students would just contact an organization. Now we guide the student, communicate with the NGOs, and the student has a more, let's say, friendly introduction to service, which is really important because they get more connected to the program. So the difference that I've seen this year is that there is more collaboration between the program and the students. We've also gotten to know each other better, and made some friendships! For example, when we visited the Parliament, I met a new classmate and now we are regularly in touch, and I was introduced to others. It feels like a more united community.

Has the program helped you professionally?

The Politis program has helped me immensely with my soft skills because I've learned to be more professional in my emails. I know how to communicate professionally. I don't get anxious over appointments with high-level executives because during my work-study experience, I got to speak with the founders of organizations. It was easy for me to communicate with them. I've learned to work on Excel documents too—something that I didn't know how to do before. And apart from that, I've become more communicative with people. So, the Politis program has helped me a lot professionally and I'm ready to apply to many jobs that require multitasking.

Will you maintain your relationships with any of the organizations that you've worked with during Politis?

Yes. I have spent about two and a half years working for the Doctors of the World, so I will most probably continue volunteering for another year. It depends where I am, in Greece or abroad.

Finally, if you had to give some advice to a freshman at Hellenic American University about how to make the most out of the Politis Program, what would you tell him or her?

I would tell the student to contact the director of the Politis program and ask the director for opportunities that align with the students interests! I would encourage the student to do some independent research as well. And I would stress that one shouldn't wait until their final year of studies to complete 45 hours because they will think it is just a job. It's an opportunity —and the earlier one gets started the more one can get out of it, because becoming a volunteer gives you a sense of belonging. It gives you a sense of fulfillment, connectedness, satisfaction. Helping people that really need your help is a great feeling. You also learn a lot about real-life issues that our community is facing. So it is a great thing to volunteer because you become well-rounded, and the job market and universities need well-rounded people.

Thank you so much for your years of service to the program.



On the Istanbul field study, HAU students paused to reflect under a solidarity banner of jailed mayor Ekrem Imamoğlu.

Looking Ahead

- The Politis Program has an open vacancy for a work-study student assistant in the upcoming academic year, 2025-2026. Interested undergraduate candidates are encouraged to get in touch with the Politis Program to arrange an informational interview.
- The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC) offers a training as a prerequisite for participation in the annual Volunteer Program. A summer training session will be announced to prepare HAU students for the Fall.
- In the academic year 2025-2026, a new hands-on humanitarian course GE 162 International Service Learning will be offered. The course will put students on the fast track to completing the Politis requirement.
- Should you have any questions about the program or ideas for future opportunities, please contact politis@hauniv.edu.

See you at the Politis program Orientation in the Fall, for all new and returning students!



POLITIS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

ΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ

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Hellenic American University (HAU), accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), educates students to be global citizens across two campuses in New Hampshire, USA, and Athens, Greece. HAU's Athens campus, Hellenic American College, offers a wide variety of degree options, cultural events and study abroad programs in a rich learning environment within walking distance of the Acropolis, the Parliament, ancient Greek and Roman agoras, and the first modern Olympic stadium.