Project: Fellowship for Building Intercultural Communities

Expected Outcome

The aim of this project is to better the cultural competency, or the ability to effectively interact with people of different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, of both the students in West Philadelphia high schools, thereby increasing the chances of success in higher education and beyond as well as the students at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), who regularly engage with students in West Philadelphia through various avenues (tutoring, mentoring, etc.). Subsequently, this project seeks to:

1. Build a better understanding amongst the Penn students of the background and culture of West Philadelphia students whom they regularly work with
2. Have West Philadelphia students be able to openly and respectfully interact with people with different worldviews and backgrounds and to have a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives.

By ensuring this outcome through the tool of intercultural dialogue, which is the process that comprises an open and respectful interaction between individuals of different cultural background, I hope to help participants both within the Penn and West Philadelphia communities find mutual respect and understanding, thereby promoting peace.

Background

West Philadelphia is home to about 100,000 residents, where the average income is about $36,000 per household and 29% of the population are below the poverty level.[1] Only 20% of adults in West Philadelphia over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or have received higher education.[2] This statistic translates over to the state of education in West Philadelphia. In William L. Sayre High School, only 7.7% of students met the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) proficiency for math and only 13.4% of students met the PSSA proficiency for Reading.[3] Since education is cited as the number one way to escape the cycle of poverty, there needs to be a change in these statistics.

West Philadelphia is also home to the University of Pennsylvania, a leading research university that focuses upon how to change those statistics that are linked to the more complex issues of poverty, education, and health through the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships. The center works to enable Penn students to solve these issues through academic and civic engagement so that Philadelphia, the University, and society itself can benefit. Last summer, I worked with the Netter Center to conduct focus groups and interviews on staff in West Philadelphia, Penn students, and West Philadelphia high school students. I also worked on development and implementation of curriculum of a summer college and career readiness program. Based on the feedback of the interviews and focus groups, as well as my personal observations of curriculum development and implementation, I cited a critical need for intercultural dialogue amongst students in West Philadelphia as well as students at Penn who work in West Philadelphia schools. The lack of dialogue also leads to a lack of cultural competency, which undermines the work that was done by students at the Netter Center. This deficiency also hinders West Philadelphia students in the long run, because they do not know how to interact in an environment with a myriad of different perspectives, which is the type of environment a college campus typically has. To remedy this critical problem, I founded the Fellowship for Building Intercultural Communities, which seeks to build a cohort of intercultural leaders who are able to use dialogue as a tool to increase cultural competency by engaging regularly with the West Philadelphia community. A cohort of 12 Penn students was selected for the spring 2013 semester to attend a kick-off retreat, mid-semester retreat, biweekly meetings, and plan a capstone project that involves interculturalism and civic engagement amongst West Philadelphia high schools. I currently act as a facilitator to these fellows, which included guiding the biweekly meetings, handling logistical components (including scheduling, fellows application process, etc.), and acting as a resource and mentor to the 12 fellows.

Project Description

With the help of the Davis Foundation funding, I plan to expand this spring's pilot program and create an instutionalized structure for its sustainable continuation. I will do this by creating and leading intercultural

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[1] The Pew Charitable Trusts. Philadelphia Research Initiative. Philadelphia 2011: The State of the City. Philadelphia, PA:, 2011. Web.

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Sayre High School 2011 Annual Report." *Philadelphia Independent School District*. Philadelphia Independent School District, n.d. Web. 26 Dec 2012.

training workshops and programs, developing a feedback and evaluation mechanism for these workshops, building and establishing a working pattern of relationships between stakeholders (Netter Center staff, West Philadelphia educators, and Penn students). In order to expand upon the spring program, I will choose two fellows, from the 12 spring fellows, who will draw upon their experience in intercultural dialogue that they've gained, to help me in my project. One fellow will be the Sayre High School fellow, and the other will be the Netter Center fellow.

The Sayre High School Fellow will be charged with gathering data via focus groups and interviews of Sayre students and faculty to create an intercultural program for students at Sayre High School. This program will include workshops that have components of social and cultural capital and related activities that can be implemented within the enrichment period of the following school year. Sayre High School was chosen, because there is already a working partnership between this school and the Netter Center. The goal is to eventually have these series of workshops be expanded to other schools in West Philadelphia, including University City High School and West Philadelphia High School.

The Netter Center Fellow will be charged at examining and collecting data on existing Netter Center programs, including the Urban Nutrition Initiative (youth nutrition and health-based program), the Penn Reading Initiative (youth literacy tutoring program), and Community School Student Partnerships (student organization that provides mentoring and tutoring to schools in West Philadelphia). The fellow will then use this data to develop training that revolves around cultural competency and intercultural dialogue for Penn students to undergo before engaging civically in West Philadelphia schools.

I will act as a **facilitator,** after the two fellows have gathered their research, I will work with them to develop these training workshops and programs, as well as the feedback and evaluation component. During the time the two fellows are conducting their site-specific research, I will act as a resource and mentor, in areas such as data analysis and interview transcription.

Planning and Collaboration

I will be working with the Netter Center for Community Partnerships and the Greenfield Intercultural Center (GIC) at the University of Pennsylvania in order to carry out my proposal. The Associate Vice President and Director, Dr. Ira Harkavy, Associate Director, Cory Bowman, of the Netter Center, and the Director, Valerie de Cruz, and the Associate Director, Vanessa Iyua, have all expressed their interest and enthusiasm for this project. Over this upcoming semester, I will continue to discuss and collaborate with these administrators to lay the foundations for this project.

Timeline

January-April: Complete spring semester for Fellowship for Building Intercultural Communities
May- Select two fellows (Netter Center Fellow & Sayre High School Fellow)
Summer 2013
- *Week 1:* Facilitate orientation for two fellows that will include history of West Philadelphia and Penn and structure of the Netter Center and the GIC
- *Week 2*: Each fellow begins collecting data (focus groups and interviews at respective site
- *Week 3:* Fellows continue to collect data and complete research. Fellows and I will begin to develop site-specific workshops and projects
- *Week 4:* Fellows and I will continue to develop respective projects/workshops
- *Week 5:* Fellows and I will work with staff at the Netter Center for feedback
- *Week 6:* Fellows and I will run simulation of workshops on summer Netter Center Programs, then analyze results and then submit final report to Davis Projects of Peace

Measuring Outcomes & Future Impact

To ensure sustainability it is important to measure the outcomes both qualitatively and quantitatively. Aside from measuring success with continued collaboration with the aforementioned experts, the fellows and I will write weekly reflections. The fellows and I will also develop surveys pre-and post-surveys to be administered to their respective sites. I will also use the Self Assessment Tool, which is a tool that measures the performance level and plans of improvement in eight different areas (environment, administration, relationships, development, programming, engagement, sustainability, and evaluation).

With this these evaluative measures, I hope to build a strong foundation of intercultural understanding and cultural competency to facilitate more efficient and effective engagement within the West Philadelphia community, ultimately fostering peace.

Project Budget: Fellows for Building Intercultural Communities

Stipend Costs

Netter Center Fellow (Stipend)

Housing	$1,500
Food	$950
Transportation	$50
Total	**$2,500**

Sayre High School Fellow (Stipend)

Housing	$1,500
Food	$950
Transportation	$50
Total	**$2,500**

Facilitator (Stipend)

Housing	$1,200
Food	$800
Total	**$2,000**

*Project Development Costs

Netter Center Fellow

Printing/Copying	$300
School Year Implementation Fund	$1,200
Total	**$1,500**

Sayre High School Fellow

Printing/Copying	$200
Food (for Sayre students)	$200
Transportation (for Sayre students)	$100
School Year Implementation Fund	$1,000
Total	**$1,500**

*This is a tentative budget; ultimately the project development costs will be in the discretion of fellows

Total Costs

Stipend Costs	$7,000
Program Development Costs	$3,000
Grand Total	**$10,000**