

2021 Diversity/Multicultural Individual Awards

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State and Regional Winners

Epsilon Sigma Phi

Title of Program

Advancing English Language Learners Road to Success – the Camden County 4-H/Rowan Upward Bound Program Partnership

Abstract

Since 2010, the Camden County 4-H Program has partnered with Rowan's Upward Bound Program in Camden, NJ. Designed to serve the needs of low-income and first-generation college bound students, the UB Program focuses on English Language Learners. 4-H programming is aligned with UB's yearly themes, such as STEM, healthy living, citizenship and leadership. Since 2010, Camden County 4-H has worked with an average of 20 Rowan UB students annually to deliver about 50 hours of programming (500 hours total). Kinsey was instrumental in transitioning the UB Program to an all virtual program in 2020-21.

Program Description

Since 2010, the Camden County 4-H Program has partnered with the Rowan Upward Bound (UB) Program in Camden, NJ. Upward Bound is a U.S. Dept. of Education funded program designed to serve the needs of low-income and first-generation college bound students. The Upward Bound Program achieves this by preparing students for high school completion, college enrollment, and college graduation by providing college preparatory activities and supportive services.

The Rowan UB Program focuses on students who are English Language Learners. Camden, NJ is an urban area in southern NJ that is plagued by typical urban issues, such as poverty, crime, unemployment, and drugs. Home to 73,562 residents, 31% (or 22,804) are 18 and under. Fifty-one (51%) percent of the population are Hispanic and 41% are Black (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The number of students who are English Language Learners continues to increase, and the languages spoken by students in the school district include Spanish, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, and Urdu. Most Rowan Upward Bound students are from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and other Spanish speaking countries.

Each year, the Rowan UB Program serves roughly 40-50 students in grades 9-11, who are recruited from Camden schools for participation in the program. Students who commit to the program attend Saturday classes twice a month throughout the school year and a five week (five days a week) summer program. They attend grade-specific classes (9-10th; 11-12th) in ESL, Spanish or French, Math, Science, and Art. 4-H programming is aligned with their yearly themes, which have included STEM, healthy living, and citizenship and leadership. Programs taught by 4-H are in English so students can continue to improve their communication skills in English.

More specifically, STEM programs have focused on engineering design, science exploration, and climate science. Healthy living focused on food and fitness. Leadership addressed leadership skill development and youth issues.

In 2020, the global pandemic precipitated the need for 4-H and Rowan UB to reach new levels of collaboration in its 10-year relationship. Delivering a summer program was a requirement of their federal grant and with Kinsey's 15 years of experience of online course design and teaching, she was able to mentor the program leader and train teachers to move to an all virtual summer program.

Accomplishments

Since the beginning, the partnership between 4-H and Upward Bound has been strong. The two program leaders (Kinsey and Dr. Margie Olivencia) developed a lasting bond as professionals, which has sustained their individual efforts to provide high-quality, high-context programming to urban, at-risk youth. Each program leader is committed to the other in sharing program ideas and opportunities, such as grants or conference attendance. In 2011, 4-H received an \$18,000 grant from the JCPenney Afterschool Grant from the National 4-H Council for UB's afterschool program at Woodrow Wilson High School, where many program participants attended. In 2012, the two presented the Rowan UB Program's Healthy Living Program conducted by 4-H at the National Afterschool Association Conference in Indianapolis.

Several times a year, Kinsey and Olivencia map out the topics for 4-H programming held in a spring, summer, and fall session, which last for six weeks. From 2010-2021, 4-H has worked with:

- an average of 20 Rowan UB students per session or a total of 200 students
- an average of 50 hours per year or 500 hours

Programming highlights:

- Climate Science Program - 17 youth; 55 hours of programming - introduction to climate change; using rain barrels for water conservation; digital storytelling; camping in the Pinelands, and teambuilding.
- Food and Fitness Ambassador training - 15 youth; 15 hours - Get Moving-Get Healthy Program about healthy eating habits, portion sizes, understanding MyPyramid, and simple exercises.
- Live, Learn, Lead with Camden County 4-H – 12 youth; 6 hours. Completed Kouzes and Posner's Student Leadership Challenge on personal leadership traits and styles, teambuilding, and conflict resolution.

- Youth Issues Forum – 28 youth; 3 hours. Exploration of community issues through a SWOT Analysis: identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in their community, specific issues youth were concerned about, as well as the creation of a personal leadership development plan.
- Immigration Law Program by Rutgers-Camden Law School – 20 youth; 2 hours.
- Pinelands Environmental Education Program – 30 youth; 3 hours.
- 2020 Virtual Summer Program – Kinsey trained UB teachers to conduct virtual lessons on Canvas with 14 youth over 50 hours.

Program evaluations were conducted for all programs and all were rated over 4.0 on a 5.0 Likert scale.

Future Implications

The essence of a partnership – advancing shared interests through cooperation – has been achieved between Camden County 4-H and the Rowan Upward Bound Program for more than a decade. This partnership has been sustained due to mutual goals, respect, and a commitment to youth.

This was never more evident than the work that was successfully completed since the Summer of 2020 to the present. The critical issue to solve was how to deliver a summer program for Upward Bound students when stay-at-home orders had been in place since mid-March 2020. A requirement of their federal grant, Olivencia had to plan for a summer program. With Kinsey's 15 years of experience of online course design and teaching, she was able to mentor the program leader and train teachers to move to an all virtual summer program.

This started with a technology survey used to gauge the level of knowledge and experience with various online teaching platforms and apps that could be integrated into an online course. This aided in determining the best platform to conduct their six courses, which include English as a Second Language (ESL) Writing, Art, Social and Emotional Health, Music, Math, and Leading through Adversity, taught by Kinsey.

Canvas was chosen as the best learning management system. Then Kinsey participated in multiple Zoom calls to gather feedback from instructors, created a one-hour Zoom training on the features of Canvas, and conducted individual trainings with five of the seven instructors. Kinsey also created the basic course shells in Canvas for each class and then assisted the instructors on an as-needed basis in preparation for the July 7, 2020 program opening. Monday through Thursday students logged in from 9:30 am-1:00 pm for continuous classes and Zoom visits from guest speakers who spoke about local government, leadership, financial planning, and college preparation. The transition to all virtual programming was deemed a success and was continued in fall 2020 and now spring 2021.

Olivencia has praised the relatively smooth transition to online learning and feels it is preparing students for college even moreso due to the use of the Canvas course management system. The Camden County 4-H Program and the Rowan Upward Bound Program have developed a lasting partnership that has achieved its goal of serving urban, at-risk youth and preparing them for a bright future.