Building programs to engage youth in health sciences: a community and university partnership

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INTRODUCTION

• The University of Pittsburgh is committed to community engagement through place-based partnerships.
• Initial planning for a STEAM studio at the Hill District CEC, developed in partnership with the Hill Community Development Corporation, began in 2016.
• During one of four planning sessions, STEAM leaders from community presented their programming and engagement strategies—this sparked a conversation between faculty at Pitt and leaders from School2Career and M-Powerhouse. A shared goal was formed to build on the existing foundation of community organizations, and address the shortage of underrepresented populations in healthcare fields.
• A virtual healthcare showcase was held in the spring of 2021. One of the sessions, “Analyze an Outbreak,” led by the Department of Biomedical Sciences, generated a full partner program in the spring of 2022.

OBJECTIVES

To engage youth by providing exposure to careers in healthcare and science through interactive sessions.
To develop and sustain partnerships between representatives from university and community who share similar goals.
To evaluate youth programming to facilitate long-term planning and expansion of offerings.

The Hill District Community Engagement Center, the Oakland Planning and Development Corporation, and faculty at the University of Pittsburgh have an ongoing partnership to deliver youth programming to engage students in activities highlighting various professions within healthcare and science. This poster will describe recent expansion of these programs.

CONCLUSIONS

The STEAM studio planning sessions sparked new conversations between community and university.

NEXT STEPS

• The last session for students currently enrolled in the after-school healthcare showcase program will take place on March 14, 2022.
• Feedback from spring 2022 sessions will help to inform how to update program offerings for next year.
• Students will be encouraged to apply for the summer Gene Team research program held on Pitt’s campus.
• Since the virtual showcase in spring 2021, the School of Pharmacy has also led youth programs at the Homewood CEC, including partnerships with Learn and Earn, PittEnrich, Y-Achievers, and HYPE.
• Sustainable partnerships between university and community collaborators provide valuable youth engagement.

CONTACT

For more information on how you can be involved with youth programming, email Catherine Rebitch at car184@pitt.edu.
For more information on programming at the Hill District CEC, email Kirk Holbrook at kth52@pitt.edu.

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