

Health Disparities Summer Internship Program

A partnership between the SUNY Downstate Medical Center, the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban health, and the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President, in collaboration with the AAAIUH's Health Science Academy



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For additional information on the BHDC's Health Disparities Summer Internship Program 2011 contact:

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BHDC'S SUMMER INTERNS (2010) WITH DEPUTY BOROUGH PRESIDENT, YVONNE GRAHAM, AND PROJECT LEADERS AT BROOKLYN BOROUGH HALL

Today's Student, Tomorrow's Health Professional Getting to There from Here

During the summer of 2010, the Brooklyn Health Disparities Center (BHDC) and the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health's (AAIUH) Health Science Academy welcomed the first group of high school students to its four week Health Disparities Summer Internship Program.

The program, designed to expose students to real health issues facing minority communities and simultaneously introduce them to the work of community health workers and health advocates, accepted 51 students from high schools across Brooklyn.

These students represented the brightest minds of their academic institutions and were fully committed to pursuing health careers.

Already exposed to classes in Anatomy, Neurology, and Physiology offered through the Institute's Health Science Academy (HSA), these students were prepared to enhance their academic experience with real world community based experience!

Through the Health Disparities Summer Internship Program (HDSIP), the students were placed at well established community organizations that shared a passion for improving the health of Brooklyn communities. For four weeks, during the summer, these students learned about health disparities from experienced health professionals, researchers and health advocates. At their job placements, they applied what they were learning to their internships and presented their research projects at a special event at Borough Hall attended by Brooklyn Borough President-Marty Markowitz and Deputy Borough President, Yvonne Graham!

HEALTH DISPARITIES SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (HDSIP): PROGRAM RESULTS

Our Interns...Who Were They?

Of the 51 students accepted to the HDSIP, 73% of the interns were female and 27% were males. While our interns ranged in age from 14-18 years of age, almost half of them were 15 years old (47.9%).

Our interns reflected the ethnic diversity of Brooklyn. Of the interns surveyed, the majority identified themselves as Black or African American (60%), Asian (14.6%), White (10.4%) or Caribbean (8.3%). Cumulatively, they spoke 10 different languages.

“So, What Did They Do?”

Three days a week, the HDSIP interns attended morning classes at the SUNY Downstate campus; on afternoons they worked on research projects at community-based organizations.

Through videos and presentations, students learned about the impact of ethnicity, race and poverty on health outcomes.

Learning opportunities also happened outside the classroom, the interns participated in a field trip to a sleep clinic where they had an opportunity to learn about sleep disorders from Dr. Jean-Louis, Professor in the Department of Medicine at SUNY Downstate and Research Director of the Sleep Disorders Center.



During the afternoons, the students worked with their supervisors at the various community based organizations to develop surveys, conduct interviews or focus groups, complete mapping projects and/or assist in data analysis.

“What Did They Learn?”

Our HDSIP interns had very clear expectations for their internships. Knowledge (*of health disparities, diseases & the human body, the medical field, science & research*) was listed as the most common expectation, followed by gaining work experience, helping their community and improving their communication & public speaking skills. And, the HDSIP delivered! At the end of the program, a survey was administered to all of the interns.

In response to being asked what they liked best about the program, 40.5% of the responses indicated learning/gaining knowledge (*about new things & health disparities*).

Gaining work experience by participating at the community organizations was the second favored aspect of the program (25.4%), followed by meeting new people (12%).

“What’s Next?”

Research has shown that minority researchers and physicians tend to serve their own communities (Bach et al, 2004).

Increasing the overall representation of minority groups in health care professions will have a positive effect on the quality of care in our neighborhoods; and fostering the interest of our high school interns in medicine, research and advocacy will translate in improved health outcomes for our communities.

After completing the HDSIP, the numbers of students who were either very /extremely interested in a career in *minority* health care increased by 18.7%. Furthermore, when surveyed on how they intended to apply their experience from their summer internship, the most common responses were:

- To use in school/apply to future research ideas
- Educate/help different neighborhoods
- Research own community

What a Difference 3 weeks can make!

The responses from the community based organizations regarding the interns, have been overwhelming! Whether it was conducting research on childhood obesity in central Brooklyn, completing a community mapping of domestic violence incidence in East New York & Bedford-Stuyvesant, the community-based organizations that worked with our interns found the student projects useful in advancing the work of their organizations! Here are some of their comments:

“One of the things they did, they helped develop the agency's "Facebook" page. The number of "friends" listed on the page increased considerably thanks to their work.”

HAITIAN CENTERS COUNCIL (2010)

“Having the interns provided a new perspective on the issues facing our community. We have added two (2) new program initiatives this year that specifically focus on teens & young adults...”

CARIBBEAN WOMEN'S HEALTH ASSOCIATION INC. (2010)