Greenhouses of Hope

Cultivating Youth for Social Justice at Rust College

Elizabeth Williams, PhD, Tennessee State University; Charles Williams, PhD, Rust College; Hilda B. Williams, EdD, Rust College; Mohamed Kanu, PhD, MA, Tennessee State University
Session Overview

- Describe the Greenhouse of Hope framework & Rust College
- Describe Rust College’s youth leadership programs
- Consider dynamics related to Rust College’s programs
  - Youth engagement for social justice
  - Community-campus partnerships
  - Social science & humanities foci in social justice programming design, implementation & evaluation
- Q&A
Greenhouse of Hope

- Genuinely embrace the gifts of youth and young adults
- Cultivate young leaders who want to change the world
- How social science and humanities inform youth engagement programming
Rust College
Connecting Faith with Purpose for Social Justice
Rust College

- Historically Black, coeducational Liberal Arts College founded in 1866 by the Methodist Episcopal Church

- Currently supported by the United Methodist Church

- Academically prepares students in the humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, business, technology and education.
Rust College Health Explorers Program: A *Greenhouse for Youth Health Equity Leaders*
Why a Health Explorers Program?

- 25% of U.S. college graduates are from underrepresented ethnic groups
- Health professions are the 3rd most popular U.S. college majors; yet historic lack of diversity in health
- Underrepresented students turn off from health/science before entering college

Growing our own health professionals in Mississippi!
Why a Health Explorers Program in Holly Springs, Mississippi?

- Holly Springs Schools’ HS graduation rate is higher than Marshall County and the State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Marshall County School District</th>
<th>Holly Springs School District</th>
<th>Mississippi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
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- Designated HS focuses on health career exploration
  - Holly Springs Career and Technical Center
Why a Health Explorers Program in Holly Springs, Mississippi?

- Holly Springs (Marshall County) is a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) with increasing health disparities.

- Underrepresented students from HPSAs often return to serve as health professionals in their own communities.
Holly Springs high school students have questions about health careers...
and Rust College is pointing them in the right direction to pursue health careers.
Health Explorers Program Intents

- Increase HS students’ exposure to health career options & encourage HS graduation
- Excite underserved students about health careers
- Create a “community of health leaders” through learning & mentoring from health researchers, health professionals and other students
Health Explorer Program Design

- **HEP Club**
  - Bi-monthly half-day sessions focused on specific health careers, health professional Q&As and learning activities

  - **24** hours of instructional contact from faculty & college near-peers (March - June 2015; Jan-April 2016)

- Offering Saturday club & in-school sessions for 2016-2017

Don’t just watch a Doc, **become** a Doctor too!
Session Topics include:

- Leadership & Goal Setting
- Behavioral Science
- Health Communication
- Health Disparities & Health Inequity
- Epidemiology & Surveillance
- Medical Ethics
While our scholars represent some of the most underserved in rural Mississippi...
80% of participants’ parents did not complete high school
(2014-2015 cohort)
Our scholars also represent those with the greatest promise to succeed...
100% of participants want to pursue health careers (2014-2015 cohort)
HEP is showing Holly Springs high school students there is a world of health career possibilities waiting for them. See for yourself ....
Rust College Health Explorers Program

- Capitalizing on 150 years of educating students, Rust College is investing in Holly Springs’ high school students.

- Working with partners, HEP is “growing” future health professionals right at home in Mississippi.
Rust College Living Into Our Future Youth Theology Institute: A *Greenhouse for Youth Social Justice Leaders*

**June 19-29, 2016**

Living Into Our Future

For rising high school juniors and seniors. Apply today!
Why a Youth Theology Institute?

- Youth have questions about faith and contemporary challenges.

- Youth programs offer career exploration often without connection to a deeper call to service.

- Youth want a “community” to ask questions, be heard & understand what faith means and looks like in action.
Rust College’s Living Into Our Future Youth Theology Institute

- Supported by a 3-year grant from the Lilly Endowment’s High School Youth Theology Institutes initiative
  - 1 of 4 HBCUs participating

- LIOF is an intentional “community” for youth to explore faith & how it can/does respond *meaningfully* to the world’s problems through social justice & mercy.
“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.”

(Luke 2:46-47, NRSV)
Rust College’s LIOF Intents


- **Believe Vocationally** – “What is our passion?” Explore career fields and align professions to our vocations/call.

- **Strive Spiritually** – “What are our goals and values?” Supports strategies to increase faith and discern places/spaces for leadership with God.

- **Achieve Relationally** – “Live your faith!” See how relationships with God are connected to relationships with & service to others.
Rust College’s LIOF: *Inside the Greenhouse*

- 10-day intensive onsite immersion experience
- Covenant Groups
  - Health & Healing
  - Creative Writing & Performing Arts
  - Ministry and Public Service
  - Business Professionals & Entrepreneurs
- Groups are where “God-talk” & questions happen, exploration is encouraged & leadership is cultivated

- Additional learn & lead opportunities come from:
  - Bonding sessions
  - Worship experiences
  - Field trips
  - Service learning activities
  - Recreational activities
Rust College’s LIOF: Inside the Greenhouse

- 2016 cohort
  - 41 youth
  - Recruited from the Southeast United States (i.e., Mississippi, Tennessee, Georgia, and Louisiana)
  - 15-19 years of age
  - Rising high school juniors and seniors

- 2/3 female (67.5%); 1/3 male (32.5%)

- 100% African American
  - 12% Liberian American
Rust College’s LIOF Greenhouse of Hope

Issues LIOF examines:
- Racism & poverty;
- Violence and neglect;
- Police brutality against young people;
- Black Lives Matter movement & social activism;
- Invisibility and muting of youth of color by adults;
- Resisting stereotypes & (re)defining self;
- Conflicts of being smart and Black;
- Hope in the midst of sadness & despair.

LIOF connected these issues to theology, career interests & youth social action as a response.
LIOF youth are leaders who came to learn and left prepared to serve.

What they learned and left with included...
“Coming into this class, I thought that you were going to shove your own beliefs down my throat. Instead, Mr. Redmond and Mr. Stovall let me choose what I want to believe in with guidance. I was expecting that this class was going to be boring because I was losing faith in God. But because I’m in this class, I am becoming a believer. I’m also questioning other things I believe in. I am forever grateful for this class and the professors.”
We Need a Community

“I feel like I have grown as an individual. I’m open to others every since I’ve been here. I’ve opened up and made friends. I have grown to love these people in creative writing. This group was great and fun to be around. I have learned to just let loose and show your talents. Also, I learned not to be so quick to judge people by their looks or action because you always might not know their story. I have really enjoyed being here. I feel like I’m a changed young lady.”
Called to Work with God

“My experience at Rust has been one I’ll always come back to reflect on. I’ve learned lessons I can use inside and outside the classroom...Essentially, being at Rust has given me the opportunity to expand my faith and understanding of the Lord as well as explore the talents the Lord has blessed me with. I was able to realize that God isn’t a wish-granting factor and you must put in work for God to help you. In addition, the people I have encountered have taught me talent has no face, no specific location, or a gender.”
Rust College’s LIOF: Cultivating Youth Leaders for Today & Tomorrow

- Building on the College’s rich history of cultivating leaders, Rust is doing it once again for youth leaders.

- LIOF connects faith, heart, head, community & service together for social change.
Rust College
A Greenhouse of Hope for 150 years
Greenhouse of Hope Panel

- Benefits of youth engagement in social justice
- Utility of community-campus partnerships for youth social justice programming
- Emerge young leaders who can change the world

cc: Beyond Documentary - https://www.flickr.com/photos/47173165@N02
Questions?
References


