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Rachael Steward

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Images of Engagement

Seattle University Youth Initiative

By Rachael Steward

The Seattle University Youth Initiative (SUWI), launched in 2011, strives to strengthen education and support systems for 1,000 neighborhood youth and their families while enhancing the university by providing service learning and research experience to students, faculty, and staff.

The Youth Initiative works with schools, community-based programs, university students, faculty, and staff to offer academic and enrichment opportunities for youth living in a large geographic zone just south of the campus. Throughout the year, including summers, youth participate in events and programs, which include support for children to ensure proficiency in core academic subjects in order to successfully transition to the next grade levels and to develop a college-going identity.

Using a collective impact model, the university engages partners who provide education, housing, health and employment opportunities to support youth and their families. This approach arose from



2016-2017 Youth Initiative Statistics

University student volunteers and service-learners

294

Hours of academic assistance and mentoring in K12 partner schools

4,285 hours

SU undergrads employed in K12 program

73

Hours provided by K12 student employees

7,946 hours

Number of SU students registered for community engagement positions in target area

756

Number of faculty instructors engaged in initiative

191

Number of courses with service-learning component

429

Students who took a service learning course in 2016-2017

59%

SU students who graduate with a service-learning course

75%



listening sessions with community and campus stakeholders to develop a genuine, mutual partnership between the community and the university.

The success of the Youth Initiative is captured in the increased engagement of both campus and community (see statistics box). Academic, social, and community-building programs are hosted in partner public school buildings, as well as on the university campus. Washington Middle School students, for instance, spend a day on campus learning about college life. They visit dorms and participate in group discussions led by campus staff.

Each year the Jumpstart Program supports about 150 preschool students with early literacy support, thereby increasing kindergarten readiness. Approximately 125 elementary school students participated in the Extended Learning Program at Bailey Gatzert Elementary. In fall 2015, 74 Washington Middle School students were matched with academic mentors who provided a total of 421 hours of academic support.

Campus engagement billows out to include faculty immersions as a method to increase faculty knowl-

edge in areas such as homelessness, creative place-making, digital literacy, and several others.

Rachael Steward is the deputy director of Community Engagement. For more information, see <https://www.seattleu.edu/suyi/vision-and-goals/>



Photos: Seattle University students work with Bailey Gatzert Elementary School students during the After School program as part of the SUYI. Photos courtesy of Seattle University. Photographer: Yosef Kalinko