



2023-2024 Program Descriptions

Program A – Uprooted: Combatting Evictions & Housing Insecurity

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 [Link to website](#) for more information

A home is one of the most central aspects of anyone’s life. Where you live affects your education, healthcare access, safety, and so much more. For those facing homelessness or constant relocation, it adversely affects employment, children, and housing security. Eviction, a significant but often overlooked factor, exacerbates housing insecurity due to underreporting and data gaps. Our ASB wants to focus on evictions and the general issue of housing insecurity to uncover perspectives beyond academic research. To do this, we will critically engage with the Houston and New Orleans communities, and learn from diverse community partners ranging from eviction lawyers to housing programs, and even tenant unions. This endeavor allows us to comprehend how these issues manifest in different contexts while also revealing underlying challenges within our own neighborhoods. Join us in this program as we work to make housing more secure and welcoming for everyone!

Program B – Giving the Green Light: Sustainability at the Intersections of Tech and Engineering Innovation

Site Leaders: Cecilia Nguyen (ckn5@rice.edu) & Kiana Komeiji (krk10@rice.edu)

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As the world becomes increasingly centered around technological advances and engineering innovations, it becomes increasingly urgent that sustainability enters into the conversations happening in these industries. Along with understanding what it truly means to be sustainable in these spaces, it is imperative that future generations acknowledge their influence in the workforce and actively work to create a cleaner future in tech and engineering. In addition to a curriculum that will include engaging with sustainability from multiple systems (social, economic, and environmental), understanding how communities have been impacted and what work is being done on that front, and learning about policies that influenced and continue to influence these industries, our program intends to work with a variety of community partners in order to increase understanding on what is happening in the industry today. Some potential partners for this program include Houston’s own Greentown Labs, the Center for Energy Studies at the Baker Institute, Rice’s Office of Sustainability and other organizations such as the Global Sustainability Leadership Institute and the Austin Technology Incubator at UT Austin. By connecting with

community partners that are doing sustainable work, cohort members will also be able to form connections with possible avenues that they can pursue in their own future careers. Through our ASB program, we ultimately hope to inspire civic professionalism and empower students to engage with their future careers in a lens of sustainability and environmental consciousness.

Program C – Incarceration Through the Lenses of Education

Site Leaders: Dayanh Rubio Gomez dsr6@rice.edu & Juliana Pinho Muller jpm8@rice.edu

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Prisons have long thrived on the “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” mentality. This ignorance fails to see the social determinants that can influence the likelihood of incarceration, such as education. Education is meant to be a gateway to a brighter future, but what happens when our system fails to provide the necessary resources and support for its most vulnerable students? This ASB trip seeks to understand the transformative power of education at different stages throughout an incarcerated individual’s life, aiming to identify the gaps and prejudices that set them up for a life entangled in the criminal justice system. We will learn from multiple community partners around Texas: local organizations promoting career programs to youth at risk, universities with in-prison college degrees, and institutions helping formerly incarcerated women getting their life back on track. Participants will also learn how to advocate for prison reform and education interventions through policy and community outreach.

Program D – No Stigma, No Shame, Just Schooling–The Case for Comprehensive Sex Ed

Site Leaders: Sure Ibukun smi4@rice.edu & Manna Treviño mdt5@rice.edu

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The issue of sex education is all-encompassing in the United States--it affects everyone. However, this issue has grown increasingly politicized in time after the Dobbs decision, and those attending school in places affected by anti-sex ed policy pose a greater risk of harm from a lack of comprehensive sex ed. In a post-Roe America, it is especially important to advocate for well-researched and comprehensive sex education in every state, as it is one of the most effective ways to empower and educate youth about their sexual health. Not only does comprehensive sex education manifest in lower rates of teenage pregnancy and STI infection, but states with comprehensive sex ed show a decrease in intimate-partner violence, as well as homophobic bullying and harassment. Our ASB program, "No Stigma, No Shame— Just Schooling: The Case for Comprehensive Sexual Education," addresses the pressing need for comprehensive sexual education in public K-12 schools, with a focus on marginalized communities. Through community-engaged learning, ethical frameworks, critical reflection, and service, our participants will understand, engage with, and work toward solutions for sexual education challenges. New Orleans, with its decentralized education system, offers unique insights into sexual education disparities. We will meet with healthcare and educational experts and community partners to develop a critical understanding of the barriers to comprehensive sexual education within public

schools. Amidst the Houston Independent School District (HISD) takeover and the push for an expansion of public charter schools in Texas, engaging with New Orleans' community partners will allow us to predict significant changes we may see in Texas and how to prepare for them.

Program E – Pride Beyond Borders: Legal Justice for Queer Migrants

Site Leaders: America Malacara acm17@rice.edu & Roselyn Ovalle rbo1@rice.edu

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Our names are Ame and Rosie, and we are Co-Site Leaders for our project “Pride Beyond Borders: Legal Justice for Queer Migrants.” This year, we will be delving into the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals migrating to the United States from Latin America, and what their experiences look like before, during, and after crossing the southern border. To gain a holistic understanding of this issue, we will be pursuing affiliations with organizations engaged in direct service to those in the queer Latine community, as well as more policy- and law-oriented organizations that aim to help these individuals within the current legal framework.

Program F – Rising Above: Navigating the Waters of Urban Flood Challenges and Resilient Solutions

Site Leaders: Anya Yan ay52@rice.edu & Kalina Tsung kt53@rice.edu

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As climate change exacerbates the severity of flooding globally, challenges regarding flood warnings, disaster relief, and recovery are on the rise. As one of the costliest disasters in the US, flood damages have amounted to over \$1 trillion since 1980. Hurricane Harvey in 2017 cost around \$125 billion in damages alone, and Hurricane Ida's damage in 2021 amounted to \$95 million. Amidst the rising flood risks, coastal communities and areas with poor drainage infrastructure are especially prone to devastating flood consequences. In addition, flooding events exacerbate pre-existing socioeconomic disparities, disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, and widen existing gaps in access to resources, infrastructure, and emergency response. We will explore the intersection between socioeconomic status, urban development, and political legislation, and how these factors impact community access to resources. We will be collaborating with community partners in the Greater Houston area and New Orleans, including grassroots organizations, government bodies, and potentially other college groups to learn about current efforts and initiatives in building community resilience and a just environment under climate crisis. In New Orleans, a city with low elevation and exposure to severe storm surge events, we hope to learn strategies regarding disaster relief, flood warnings, or infrastructure management that are applicable to Houston. We will learn to advocate for resource management and a more sustainable approach to flood risk management. At the end of our ASB, we hope to create a project that can be shared with members of the Rice and Houston community about flood resiliency.

Program G – Bringing Health Home: Addressing the Absence of Primary Care in Homeless Communities

Site Leaders: Claire Shi cys5@rice.edu & Sarah Yang sy64@rice.edu

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Homelessness is a recalcitrant public health problem in the United States, with people experiencing homelessness (PEH) seeing disproportionately high rates of chronic mental and physical health conditions, substance abuse issues, and co-occurring disorders. PEH have vastly higher mortality and morbidity rates and a shocking 3-decade gap in average life expectancy compared with housed individuals. These unfortunate health outcomes can be attributed to deeply rooted barriers to primary healthcare. Primary care is the provision of integrated, accessible healthcare services by clinicians who manage patients' personal healthcare needs and develop a sustained partnership with patients. Access to primary care is positively associated with lowered mortality and improved management of acute and chronic conditions. Due to systemic factors like affordability, accessibility, and competing priorities, PEH experience inequities in primary care access and subsequent vulnerabilities to diseases and other highly preventable medical conditions. Our ASB program aims to examine the intersection of homelessness and primary healthcare. Participants will investigate the structural barriers that PEH face in obtaining primary healthcare and the ways in which we can close gaps in healthcare. We will meet with various community organizations in Houston and New Orleans to learn about how the community is addressing these barriers to uplift the homeless population toward greater health equity. Through direct service and close interactions with community leaders, policymakers, and other experts, our participants will gain a concrete understanding of how to engage with vulnerable populations, reflect critically upon structural barriers, address health disparities, and more.

Program H – Mind The Gap, Build the Bridge: Navigating the Complexities Surrounding Education Inequality Within the Latine Immigrant Community

Site Leaders: Jose Urquilla jau2@rice.edu & Briana Rojas bsr3@rice.edu

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Latine immigrant communities have continuously faced systemic, political, and cultural barriers that have prevented their access to higher education. Shockingly, only a mere 10% of college students are first-generation immigrants, underlining the alarmingly large achievement gap between Latine immigrant students and their native-born peers. Despite the efforts made throughout these past years to improve this issue, policymakers are still currently implementing new rules and regulations to restrict access to higher education for immigrant students. With the overturning of affirmative action and the current battle faced by DACA recipients, the future of Latine immigrant students is left uncertain. During our ASB we want to explore the underlying reasons and root causes that contribute to the limited availability of educational resources and learn what other institutions and organizations are implementing to overcome these challenges. We will be traveling to Austin, Texas as part of our ASB, where we plan to sustainably engage with the issue on a personal, community-based, and political level. By the end of our program,

participants will have a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of the problem at hand, which is crucial for fostering inclusivity and breaking down stereotypes. Through first hand experiences and interactions with advocacy groups, participants will learn about innovative solutions and best practices implemented by various institutions and organizations to bridge the educational gap in immigrant communities.