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Capstone Projects

2015-2016

Adeola Adegabi

In School Suspension: Systems, Processes, & Implementation

Partner: HISD

Methodology: Interviewed 5 faculty at an HISD high school Conducted observations in ISS classroom Researched ISS models and best practices.

Daniel Cortez

Emerging Latino Leaders Fellowship Program

Partner: Mi Familia Vota

The Emerging Latino Leaders (ELL) Fellowship was created in the spring of 2015 through collaboration between Rice University's Center for Civic Leadership and Mi Familia Vota—a non-profit, non-partisan, national organization dedicated to increasing Latino civic engagement.

Grant Patterson

Block Heroes: Participatory Placemaking in the Fifth Ward

Partner: Fifth Ward Community Development Program

Block Heroes has been a collaboration between Grant Patterson of Rice University's Center for Civic Leadership, Krystal Hasselmeier of the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation, Sandra Flowers of the Greater Fifth Ward Stakeholders' Partnership, Monique Ward of METRO. It could not have been done without the support of Stephen Sye of Habitat for Humanity, Houston. With the framework for the project laid down in Fall 2014, during the Spring 2015 semester, planning and implementation took place. The final work day, which included a volunteer group from Rice and METRO working on houses and planting plants on Coke Street, is set to take place on May 9th.

The goal of the project was to do a participatory placemaking process in the Fifth Ward. This is to say that residents on a single block were to come together to imagine the Fifth Ward and their street at its best and to come up with implementable projects to get closer to that vision. The process of creating and implementing these goals, and all of the challenges and victories that have happened



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in between, are what made the placemaking effort. In working with each other and me to plan these projects, reach out to political and nonprofit actors for assistance in their goals, residents became closer to one another.

Kelsey Walker

FORECASTING WEEKEND RIDERSHIP FOR METRO'S NEW BUS NETWORK

Partner: Houston Metro

2016-2017

Daniella Maldonado

Community Curriculum: Inspiring Students Through Cultural Learning

Partner: Pleasant Hill After School Enrichment

Based on the identified needs of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church's youth program, this project is centered on incorporating a community-based curriculum into the Pleasant Hill After School Enrichment program (PHASE) that serves students in grades K-12 in the Fifth Ward area of Houston. This curriculum uses interviewing, storytelling, and other activities to engage students and provide them with an outlet for imagination and creativity while also expanding upon basic knowledge and skills in reading, writing, and math. The project adds to existing research on place-based learning activities and asset-based models of education, such as that of Luis Moll. Given the growing focus on preparation for generic, impersonal standardized testing in the classroom, the goal of this curriculum is to emphasize local and community history in order to give students a sense of confidence, personal pride, and belonging. Surveys have been administered to gauge the student engagement with the curriculum. The lesson plans have been adapted throughout the semester to fit students' particular needs and are structured to allow students to have ownership over their learning during the program and foster their own interests.

Linda Park

Community Garden Needs Assessment

Partner: IEDA Relief

Community gardens, also known as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), have recently garnered support as a form of civic engagement that empowers solidarity of a community. IEDA Relief, a non-profit organization that serves refugees in



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Houston, plans to adopt a community garden project. Through this program, IEDA Relief aims to provide refugees with a productive stress-relieving activity, to increase the amount of healthy, culturally appropriate food, and to improve refugees' sense of community engagement and belonging in Houston. This needs study assesses the practicality and relevance of IEDA Relief's community garden program and its goals. It incorporates interviews and surveys of the refugees regarding their motivations and interests to initiate the community garden program. Furthermore, the study addresses other models of refugee community gardens to identify the various options that can best accommodate the needs of IEDA refugees. The findings for this study will provide insights to IEDA in deciding to initiate and to design the program.

Bridget Schilling

Teen Healthy Relationships Curriculum

Partner: Pleasant Hill Leadership Institute

This project was to develop a teen healthy-relationships curriculum for Pleasant Hill Leadership Institute that will build on their scheduled spiritual development workshops and challenge students' conceptions of what healthy relationships entail. It will be based around the best practices recommended by the Center for Disease Control and will be created so that it is able to be implemented for multiple years, without being overly repetitive. It will be designed to take advantage of student engagement and build leaders in discussion settings, while promoting PHLI's mission of cultivating Christian, college-bound leaders.

Ann Wells

What Happens After We Leave? Increasing Ethical Ambitions in Engineering and Sustainable International Community Development

Partners: Amigos de las Americas and Engineers Without Borders

Undergraduate engineering students at Rice University are trained within a need-based, problem-oriented framework. The resulting skillset is limited and allows for an inflated sense of their capacity to address the human impact of infrastructural development projects. This project aims to utilize an asset-based approach to reorient undergraduate international community development initiatives towards a more sustainable, community-centered model. A transdisciplinary curriculum was developed by AMIGOS de las Americas, a Houston-Based non-profit that uses an asset-based approach to international youth leadership initiatives. The curriculum was implemented over 3 AMIGOS-Rice Engineering Training Modules with two undergraduate engineering design teams. The success of this project distinctly relies on local partnerships that implement innovative technology in low resource



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populations with a commitment to sustainable design and capacity building. From this experience, students are expected to take tools and strategies to form stronger and more sustainable community partnerships, and a partnership and training model has been established to expand asset-based engineering design techniques to the AMIGOS Engineering Track, the full Rice Engineers Without Borders organization, and other engineering students engaging in international community development.

2017-2018

Caroline Brigham

Buffalo Bayou Affordability Feasibility GIS Mapping

Partner: The Buffalo Bayou Partnership

The Buffalo Bayou Partnership is creating and implementing a Masterplan along the Bayou's East Sector. Integrated affordable housing is a key component in envisioning an expanding, dynamic water-oriented community which is inclusive and livable. New diverse housing neighborhoods can achieve medium density in compact site-conserving plans. Moreover, models of subsidized housing units can be integrated into, and indistinguishable from, market rate residential units. The Buffalo Bayou Partnership works with partner organizations to foster and create accessibility in the Downtown and East Sector. One way that they are currently doing this is by converting sheds and warehouses (including abandoned schools, clubs, and churches) to serve residential, business, technical, cultural and scientific activities.

I will work with the Buffalo Bayou Partnership to identify where sites in the east sector, and analyze the composition (income, race/ethnicity, etc.) of people currently living in available housing, and finally provide recommendations for where more affordable housing can be integrated and what types of integrated affordable housing models may work best for this area. This analysis will be in the form of GIS data analysis of current residents living within the site boundaries, followed by a list of recommended housing models for this site. Based on successful models, these recommendations will help the Buffalo Bayou Partnership and its collaborating partners to plan and implement an integrated housing plan which strengthens access to existing resources as part of their Vision 2022.

Misha Carthen



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PAIR Hype Project

Partner: Partnership for the Advancement and Immersion of Refugees (PAIR)

The PAIR Hype Project is a sustainable, student-led research documentary that advocates on behalf of Houston's refugee community. A team of seven students met throughout the fall and spring semester to design innovative research questions pertaining to the challenges and triumphs of the refugee community, collaborate with university professors and resettlement agencies, and envision a plan to create a documentary series that would educate about the current situation of United States refugees in this political and social milieu. By the end of the Fall semester, the team secured generous funding for this project through the Rich Endowment and reached out to multiple entities to plan out the process of interviewing; by the end of the Spring semester, a full twenty minute video with the guiding question: "Who is a refugee?" was created, as well as a PAIR volunteer testimonial video. The team wrote out their script for at least two videos in the years following, developed a guidebook for the documentary process for future students, prepared a final video screening available for the entirety of the Rice campus, posted their videos on the PAIR website, and chose their leaders to continue this project into the following year.

Madhuri Venkateswar

STEM Education Workshops for Girls

Partner: Girl's Inc.

Research shows that women tend to be unprepared for engineering because they lack spatial visualization skills that men tend to be socialized to learn from sports and other hands-on activities. Therefore, for the CCL Capstone, I worked with Girl's Inc to implement spatial visualization workshops for its students in order to increase their exposure to building, prototyping, and design.

I held a series of four workshops with second-third grade girls at a local elementary school, engaging them in building with materials ranging from packing peanuts all the way to legos. In order to track the efficacy of the workshops, I did a pre and post survey to assess the girl's attitudes towards engineering and science. The surveys indicated that the workshops increased girl's perceptions of their own engineering skills and interest in pursuing engineering as a career. The first deliverable to the community partner was a workbook of activities, tailored to either 7- 10 year olds or 11-15 year olds. The activities included list of supplies, instructions, and debriefing questions. The second deliverable was a training session with the Girl's



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Inc facilitators so they could effectively implement the workshops without needing any outside support. The third deliverable was a staple set of supplies that the girls could use to build spatial skills.

2018-2019

Saheba Bhatnagar

Girls for Leadership in Engineering Program

Partner: Society for Women Engineers, Houston

The Center for Civic Leadership Capstone program partnered with the Society of Women Engineers and Young Women's College Preparatory Academy (YWCPA) to implement an after-school outreach program called the Girls for Leadership in Engineering (GLE) program. 6 middle-school girl students participated in a total of 3 sessions in problem-centered activities to learn about following topics: electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, and computer science. Through experiential learning, students worked together to complete engineering projects and gained exposure to different engineering disciplines. Based on an assessment survey administered to all program participants before and after the program, the program participants reported an increase in self-confidence and interest in STEM fields, especially engineering.

Reilly Brooks

Capacity Building for SEHTA and OST/SU GO Neighborhood

Partner: Southeast Houston Transformation Alliance (SEHTA)

The purpose of this capstone is to build the capacity of the Southeast Houston Transformation Alliance (SEHTA) for SEHTA to be a self-sufficient, independent organization. Capacity building for SEHTA means investing in the effectiveness and future sustainability of the organization through creating a form of governance, institutional structure, financial system, and stronger identity within the community and beyond. Currently, SEHTA lacks a clear identity and set of objectives complementary to, but different from, Go Neighborhoods. Through meeting with stakeholders and workshopping with community members, we identified SEHTA's purpose and importance to become a self-sustaining organization. We determined SEHTA's organizational challenges, values, and opportunities for immediate growth. Moving forward, we are working towards solidifying a dedicated Board of Directors and drafting a strategic vision and organizational business plan. As a result, this



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capstone set the foundation for SEHTA's evolution to become a viable, self-sustaining non-profit.

Kristina Dickman

Evaluation of Peer-to-Peer Learning Program

Partner: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Greater Houston

Mental illness places a great burden on the individual suffering, their family, and society at large. For many people in our society, help resources are confusing and hard to access. The National Alliance on Mental Illness Greater Houston focuses on easing the burden of mental illness for all individuals in the Houston area. Their education course, Peer-to-Peer Learning Program, works to build knowledge and capacity in individuals with mental illness such that they can become advocates for their own mental health and recovery. Up until this point, no quantitative evaluation metric existed. The present study utilizes three metrics for hope, disease insight, and resource knowledge gained to design a longitudinal manner of evaluating the program's goals and success. The survey communicated, which is still undergoing, was administered at three time points and offers a comprehensive view at the impact of this education course on its 9 current participants. The study results thus far indicate significant increase in resource knowledge and disease insight as a result of the NAMI Peer to Peer Learning Program. This evaluation metric will support NAMI Greater Houston in identifying their successes and areas for improvement.

Dilo Dube

"Say Yes!" Toolkit Project Proposal

Partner: The City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department (HCDD)

For my capstone project I was able to partner with the City of Houston's Housing and

and Community Development Department and assist with their "Say Yes!" campaign. The campaign is an educational and awareness initiative to encourage the development of quality homes for all incomes in all areas especially in light of Houston's affordable housing crisis. I was tasked with working on a toolkit that contained information and means to engage learners on the issue. Due to time constraints and unforeseen issues, we were not able to complete the a final draft and test the toolkit as was originally planned but the resulting draft contains a strong step forward for the campaign.

Corrinne Dunbar



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Process Evaluation: Social Needs Screening Program Pilot

Partner: Legacy Health

Social determinants of health (SDH), health-related factors of lifestyle that affect the environments in which we live and work, have an immense impact on the overall wellbeing of individuals and communities. Given this influence, there has been recent interest among healthcare institutions of how to best identify and address the nonmedical social needs of their patients. Legacy Community Health is trailing an innovative intervention to connect patients with unmet social needs to community agencies who can assist in meeting those needs. This volunteer-based system utilizes student Health Advocates to identify relevant resources and assist patients in navigating the receipt of these social services. Legacy is piloting this program before expanding the screening process to additional clinic sites. Here, the results of a mixed methods investigation of the initial implementation of the screening program are described. This process evaluation analyzed data from 1055 patient charts and sought feedback from 47 interns, providers, and clinic staff to inform recommendations to how the screening program can be better integrated into the clinic environment and capture a greater number of patients. Ultimately, this study provided critical evidence to advise alterations to Legacy's screening model to ensure its successful continuation and expansion.

Evan Flack

Creation of Control Group for Evaluation of the Houston Food Bank's "Cooking Matters" Program

Partner: Houston Food Bank

This document outlines the design and implementation processes, along with the results and reflections from my Certificate in Civic Leadership project completed with the Houston Food Bank (HFB) nutrition education department. I completed a study of the nutritional habits of low income, primarily immigrant families in Houston, TX as part of HFB's evaluation of its Cooking Matters (CM) course. HFB began evaluation of CM in the Fall 2017 semester by collection grocery store receipts and nutrition-surveys from participants. My project adds to the evaluation by collecting the same data from a comparison group of parents that have not taken CM. At the time of this report 39 individuals across 4 study locations, have participated in the control group study by submitting receipts/surreys and then receiving an incentive item. An additional 20-30 individuals are expected to participate by the project's completion on May 10.

Sara Meadow

Recommendations for Houston Food Bank's Food for Change Department



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Partner: Houston Food Bank

Food insecurity is a complex and pervasive issue that impacts many American families. Although traditional approaches to hunger and food insecurity tend to work on the meeting the supply side of the issue, recent and innovative approaches to food insecurity understand that food insecurity is often a symptom of many other issues in a person's life. As a result, nonprofits in the food insecurity sphere have recently begun taking more holistic approaches to food insecurity. Food for Change, a department within the Houston Food Bank, is one organization that is taking such an approach. By creating partnerships with nonprofits in different sectors, such as education, health, and housing, Food for Change seeks to address pervasive social issues through food-based interventions that seek to reduce the long-term demand for Food Bank services. Due to the unique importance of partners to the Food for Change department, my project focused specifically on improving the partnerships for the "housing" section of FFC. By breaking my project into three key phases – research, assessment, and recommendations – I was able to provide concrete recommendations to FFC that aim to improve the functionality and effectiveness of the program

Isabel Milton

Project Managing for GEO1X: a collaborative SSI, CCL, SLB STEM engagement program

Partners: Schlumberger SLB Excellence in Education Development (SEED), Rice University Student Success Initiative and Center for Civic Leadership

GEO 1X is a joint initiative of the Center for Civic Leadership, Student Success Initiatives (SSI), the Schlumberger Excellence in Education Development Program, and the Ministry of Education of Ecuador to provide first generation and/or low-income students an introductory international experience focused on STEM outreach. The inaugural GEO 1X occurred in El Coca, Ecuador, over Spring Break (March 9 - March 18, 2018), when six selected Rice students executed robotics workshops with both students and professors from the surrounding region of El Coca, Ecuador. These workshops involved VEX IQ robotics, auxiliary STEM presentations and activities, and energy education workshops. VEX IQ was the chosen pedagogical platform for the STEM workshops. The goal of these workshops in country was that the participants would get both instruction in this new robotics platform and exposure to other pedagogical STEM tools. The Rice students were the primary facilitators for the robotics workshops. The Rice team also presented on special STEM concepts and interdisciplinary activities that they are involved in, including research, engineering design projects, and passion areas that intersect



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with STEM. The American Geological Institute (AGI) conducted concurrent energy education workshops for teachers and students. Qualitative analysis was performed on semi-structured interviews with students to measure student development and comprehension of key topics in civic service and corporate social responsibility. Students were also evaluated through written reflections throughout the preparation period for the trip. This information influenced a best practices implementation toolkit for future programs.

Marjada Tucker

Organizing and Hosting the 2018 Education Summit with HISD Stakeholders for Education Reform

Partner: Children at Risk

The 2018 Education Summit serves to directly engage education stakeholders and advocates at all levels in a collaborative discussion for improvement while equipping and empower students to take the lead. With the synergic efforts of Rice faculty and students and the Children at Risk Foundation, this multifaceted experience is designed to positively shift attitudes and actions concerning advocacy. The summit will feature statistical data presentations, an Oratory contest featuring local students from the Houston Independent School District, and an interactive roundtable discussion of polarizing topics surrounding equity in education in Greater Houston. Twenty areas schools have opted to participate in addition to several politicians, community partners, educators, area students, and School Board Officials.

2019-2020

Student: Katherine Simmers

Title: EXPLORING PARTNERSHIP PATHWAYS: MAPPING HOUSTON'S NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Partner:

Houston, TX has a large population of youth affected by or at risk for contact with homelessness, juvenile justice, foster care and more. In response, a wide variety of youth service and advocacy organizations interact with institutions, other service and advocacy providers, and youth populations throughout the city. In partnership with Texas Appleseed, this project sought to explore homelessness service and advocacy organizations in the Houston area, specifically capacities for collaboration



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and partnerships across organizations. Through interviews with stakeholders across a range of youth support organizations, we recognized informal and formal organizational relationships and collaborations across Houston. Mapping organization relationships revealed a better understanding of organizational proximity in capacities and collaboration, and how organizations utilize collaboration and partnerships. Relationship mapping and organizational profiles will serve to evaluate the need and best design for creating future collaborative spaces for Houston youth service/advocacy organizations. Also, interviews formed new foundations for partnerships and expanded the potential capacity for both Texas Appleseed and the Center for Civic Leadership to build relationships with youth service/advocacy organizations and related institutions in Houston.

Student: Kseniya Anishchenko

Title: Creating a Community Based Socialization Intervention for Home-Dwelling Older Adults with Dementia

Community Partner: BakerRipley Sheltering Arms

Social isolation in older adults has been associated with the development of dementia, and a growing body of evidence suggests that behavioral and depressive symptoms in individuals with dementia could be reduced through frequent participation in social activities. The three-year Houston Alliance to Address Dementia project found that solitary home-dwelling individuals with dementia had significant unmet socialization needs in Harris County, Texas. To build upon that work and address the unmet needs of the community, the nonprofit agency BakerRipley Sheltering Arms in conjunction with Rice University implemented an innovative, low-cost, Rice student-based socialization intervention for home-dwelling elders with dementia. Weekly student-volunteer visits were conducted in the homes for 6 weeks and involved cognitive and social stimulation in the form of service-oriented activities, art projects and conversations. 18 student volunteers and 9 clients have participated in the program. To ensure sustainability of the program, clients will be evaluated at baseline and after the 6-week period using the UCLA-R and Three-Item Loneliness Scales. To understand how the program changes volunteers' perceptions surrounding dementia, the volunteers will be evaluated using the Dementia Attitudes Scale. We hope the results of this pilot program will be used to fund further community-based socialization interventions in our community to (i) improve quality of life in those with early-stage dementia; (ii) promote senior independence; and (iii) cultivate positive Rice community attitudes about individuals with dementia.



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Student: Ashley Gentles

Title: Mapping the availability of frequent public transportation in Houston

Partner: LINK Houston

In collaboration with LINK Houston, a transportation advocacy organization, I am developing a user-friendly software application that allows users to identify regions of Houston that have “fast” public transportation services. Houston is in the midst of expanding its public transportation system. Over the next 20 years, Houston and the surrounding region is expected to grow from a population of 6 million people to over 10 million people, and to accommodate all this growth the city is investing in a transit system that has to meet a wide variety of needs. As the city plans for this growth, LINK Houston is working to ensure that the future of transportation in Houston is an equitable one. Understanding where fast transit is available is a key part of ensuring that public transportation is meeting the needs of communities across Houston -it indicates whether service is available to riders when they need it, and how much time they’ll spend waiting to travel to their destinations. When completed, LINK Houston can use this tool to help the public understand where improvements to service could be made.

Student: Navya Kumar

Capstone Advisor: Dr. Danika Burgess Brown

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Robin Paige

Community Partners: Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast & Planned Parenthood Texas Votes

Through my Capstone In Civic Leadership, I worked with the Public Affairs team at Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast and the Legislative Director of Planned Parenthood Texas Votes. Planned Parenthood is a known leader in accessible and equitable reproductive healthcare delivery for all Americans. The impact of Planned Parenthood Texas reaches far and wide, despite attempts to discredit and defund Planned Parenthood and its affiliates. In order to both support legislative advocacy efforts in Austin and in Houston, I worked on policy analysis for Planned Parenthood Texas Votes and broad preparation for PPGC Lobby Day 2019. Although I aimed to create a deliverable in the form of a “Bill Cheat Sheet,” I redirected my project to inform the creation of the TX Legislative Agenda information sheet and the evaluation of PPGC Lobby Day. Additionally, I worked with the legislative team in Austin to add capacity to legislative lobbying efforts from Planned Parenthood.

Student: Liseth Perez-Sanchez

Partner: Houston Area Women’s Center (HAWC) Domestic Violence

Domestic violence unfortunately is still prevalent in today’s society. Survivors



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of domestic violence must deal with several consequences including overcoming emotional and physical abuse. The Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC) works to help these survivors and provide them with the necessary tools they need to rebuild and gain control of their lives again. Their Tuesday intake appointments serve as the initial contact with the organization where they are registered into the system and made aware of all the different services HAWC provides and which they would benefit most from. Currently, they are having issues with managing 'no-shows to intake appointments. This project served as a way to truly understand every component that leads to the appointments and then offering different interventions that might yield a higher show up rate to appointments. The interventions suggested include low-cost easy implementations that require action by HAWC and place no more burden on the individuals seeking services.

Student: Elizabeth Asonye

Partner: La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)

Project Sector: Community Health, Mental Health, Health Promotion and Education

Date of Report Submission : May 1, 2019

Community Organization Representative: Vanessa Alvarado

Faculty Advisor: Suad Ghaddar, PhDCCI

The project and partnership's goal is to develop a mental health curriculum to be implemented in Fall 2019 as a part of LUPE's current Community Health Club (CHC) model. This mental health curriculum and program aim to: Respond to the community's interest in mental health Equip and empower the promotores of LUPES CHC model to competently assist with mental health education and promotion Be culturally appropriate for the communities LUPE works with Create the space for recognition and discussion of mental health Increase mental health literacy among the colonial residents LUPE serves Reduce the stigma surrounding discussing mental health and addressing mental health needs Increase community awareness of appropriate and available local mental health resources and professionals Connect community members with these resources as needed These objectives were identified and compiled from and with LUPE's Outreach Specialists (also referred to as promotor community health workers (CHW)) and Special Projects & Outreach Coordinator. These individuals are both the potential adopters and implementors of the mental health CHC program and core members of the project's planning team. The main deliverables of the project are: An implementation plan with weekly topics, meeting objectives, and homeworks An electronic format with weekly meetings detailed, the promotores' materials, evaluation materials, and additional resources Pilot toolkits for LUPE's promotores with all materials ready for implementation This project will be completed by the capstone student in August



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2019.

Student: Leya Mohsin

Title: Understanding Hurricane Harvey's Impact on Houston Students

It has now been a year and a half since Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, and it is an appropriate point to take a step back and try to gain a greater understanding of the storm's impact and how Houstonians dealt with that impact. This project specifically focuses on building an understanding of the impact of Hurricane Harvey on children and schools, and providing a resource for educators to use in the event of any future natural disasters. In partnership with Children at Risk and January Advisors, I conducted interviews with Houston-area schools to understand how Hurricane Harvey impacted schools, with a particular lens to the impact on students. I also sought to understand strategies for dealing with these effects, including resources accessed and interventions taken. The final product of these interviews is a blog post summarizing the findings, which will be shared on the blogs of both January Advisors and Children at Risk.

Student: Julia Wang

Title: Care4Calais refugees project

Partner: Care4Calais

When governments do not step in to help people in need, then private organizations must take the lead in giving people the basic necessities of life. To address the needs of refugee communities, organizations like Care4Calais have to know the reasons that refugees left their home country and the challenges that they face navigating complicated new processes. Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan receive a lot of attention, since refugees from these countries are the most visible in news coverage. However, close to nothing is known about Sudanese refugees in France. While most reports have been about Syrian refugees, they are no longer the biggest refugee population in France. For years, most of the 3 million Sudanese refugees¹ fled to neighboring African countries, but they have begun to migrate to other places and became the largest refugee population in France in 2015 and 2016.² Without any information known about this large group of refugees, France cannot take action to help with the root of the problem, nor can community organizations work effectively to address these communities' needs. With Care4Calais, I conducted a data project about Sudanese refugees to help close this information gap. Having more information about Sudanese refugees may help inform policy in France and diplomacy between France and Sudan, as well as between the wider regions of Europe and Africa.



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Student: Amani Ramiz

Title: Medicaid and Education With Children-at-Risk Center of Health Policy

Healthcare coverage has short-term and long-term benefits for children in education. Children are less likely to have serious illnesses but also more likely to have greater educational attainment, school performance, and healthier adults. Medicaid expansion allows coverage for more low-income children, but Texas has one of the strictest Medicaid requirement programs. Texas also ranks worst nationwide for uninsured children according to 2018 data. Children-at-Risk has identified this need and wants to advocate for children's healthcare insurance. The goals for this project were to create a visual one-pager that demonstrates the benefits and statistics of Medicaid coverage in children's education and to engage with policy on a deeper level by visiting Texas legislative session. The infographic would be distributed among senators at the Capitol to engage in policy conversations and demonstrate constituent sentiment before the vote occurred. The assessment of the one-pager indicated that the partner and general public viewed the one-pager as clear, informative, and visually appealing. I've gained a deeper and humbling understanding of policy in this process.

Student: Areebah Ahmad

Title: Food Insecurity and the Houston Food Bank

Partner: Houston Food Bank

The Houston Food Bank provides a food insecurity workshop to pediatric residents and medical students from the University of Texas' McGovern Medical School once a month. It is usually attended by 1-2 residents during their Advocacy rotation or by small group of medical students. The workshop currently consists of a tour of the Houston Food Bank and guided discussion of food insecurity using a PowerPoint. The workshop outlines what food insecurity is and the associated mental and physical health risks. It, then, delves deeper into recent state and federal policies under review to encourage residents to think of food insecurity as something beyond a health problem, but a societal problem as well. The purpose is to encourage the residents, after the training is over, to recommend patients at risk for food insecurity (screened during their intake process) to the Client Assistance Program and HFB programs and pantries. My project seeks to broaden the scope and impact of the curriculum and the population it can be presented to. Currently, the HFB feels that the food insecurity workshops could reach a larger audience and could be more impactful after noticing that some residents are disengaged from the presentation. Firstly, I researched different simulations that can be included in the training that illustrate types of the food insecurity experience. I also researched



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what information and its delivery by other food banks with similar programs to update the curriculum. Then, having updated the curriculum, I hoped to conduct focus groups from bioscience graduate students and premedical students to assess the impact, novel information, and call to action of the newer curriculum and simulation. As a result of covid-19, we were unable to conduct focus groups from the community, however, the outline of the focus groups is included in the report. The curriculum recommendations and interactive budgeting simulation was reviewed by Sarah Crulcich and will be used in a final form of the training when they resume. The overall goal of the curriculum changes is to increase medical professional's confidence in identifying possible insecure patients, their knowledge about the issue and resources to provide to patients, and broadly assess interest in food insecurity advocacy.

Student: Annum Sadana

Title: Engaging South Asian Youth on Issues of Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence

Partner: Daya Houston

In recognition of the high rates of sexual and intimate partner violence among the 18-24 age group and the low help-seeking behaviors of the South Asian population, this project seeks to address this issue at the intersection of gender, health, and immigration. Through a public health lens, I designed a series of events to engage the South Asian community at Houston area universities. These included an introductory event to the work of my partnering non-profit organization, Daya Houston, a documentary screening, and interactive training at Rice University and the University of Houston. However, due to COVID-19 only the first introductory event at Rice University, and an online webinar targeting the 18-24 age group were held. I engaged a variety of community and school-based organizations for these events and held a webinar with Irfana Hussain from Daya Houston. The webinar, with over 40 registrants, revealed the rarity of such conversations in the South Asian community. Results from the post-training assessment survey administered by Daya Houston are forthcoming.

Student: Ellie Dullea

Title: Healthy Living Matters Public Report

Partner: Harris County Public Health

Since 2011, Harris County Public Health's Healthy Living Matters Initiative has worked to reduce childhood obesity rates within the county. Healthy Living Matters advocates for policies on the state, county, and community levels to



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increase physical activity levels and improve nutrition by changing the physical and social environments. For the past six years, Harris County Public Health has worked extensively in the community of Pasadena to foster a community task force and enact policies targeting childhood obesity. My project is the first step in developing a sustainability plan for the community coalition in Pasadena. Through surveys and key informant interviews, I have collected perspectives from over 50% of the coalition in order to identify recommendations and potential future directions for the Healthy Living Matters coalition. I have organized my findings and recommendations into six primary categories: expanding the mission of the coalition, improving coalition projects and impact, future challenges of the coalition, recommendations for future leadership of the coalition, recommendations for future membership of the coalition, and key strengths of the coalition. My findings will provide the foundation for open discussions amongst community members as they begin discussing the future of the HLM Pasadena. The leadership of HCPH and HLM will use my findings to facilitate deeper conversations with the members and craft an official sustainability plan for the organization.

Student: Carly Frieders

Title: Increasing Millennial Participation in the Texas Organizing Project

Partner: Texas Organizing Project's Harris County

My project aimed to increase the involvement of millennials within the Texas Organizing Project's Harris County branch. TOP mobilizes working class people of color to advance racial and economic justice across the state of Texas. Although TOP has had much success in recruiting and training dedicated members who drive the organization's work, it has struggled to attract young adults. My project aimed to improve both the recruitment and retention of this age group through two main stages. First, during the research stage, I conducted several in-depth interviews with stakeholders, including current millennial TOP members, to understand what they thought could be done to attract people from their age group and improve their overall experience with TOP. I compiled my findings from these interviews into a report for TOP staff. Second, during the recruitment stage, I developed a list of over 50 student organizations in Houston with missions related to TOP's work and contacted these clubs to attempt to arrange TOP recruitment presentations at their gatherings. I also looked for opportunities for TOP staff to speak to millennials who were not currently in school. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted this phase of the project, we were able to conduct one outreach event I arranged at Lone Star University and another at the Houston Black Heritage Festival, resulting in the collection of contact information for 60 potential TOP members, most of whom were millennials. During this stage of the project I also produced brochures for TOP targeted at millennial audiences which were used at the



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two outreach events we successfully completed and can be used by TOP organizers when they speak to millennials in the future. All the information I collected and compiled over the course of the project and all the tools I developed for TOP have been organized into an easy-to-use report for TOP staff that they can reference as they continue improving millennial engagement after the completion of my capstone project.

Student: Smeet Madhani

Title: Training Program for Harris Health System (HHS) Volunteers

Partner: MyHealth Training System

My project involved creating a training program for Harris Health System (HHS) volunteers regarding the electronic medical records software Harris Health has developed for its patients, MyHealth. MyHealth is an application and web-based system that was designed specifically for Harris Health patients to access their medical records and view their appointments, lab results, refill their prescriptions, and consult with their doctor through a built-in messaging platform. Thus, the MyHealth system has the potential to greatly empower patients to take control of their own health care and take more ownership of their health. However, MyHealth is not well utilized by HHS patients for a variety of reasons. One of these reasons is because patients are not properly educated and trained on how and why they should use the MyHealth system. My project aimed to create a training program so that volunteers could be empowered to teach patients about the benefits of using the MyHealth system. Because the system is relatively easy to use, the focus of the training program was to teach volunteers how they could effectively communicate why they should use the MyHealth system. However, the training program also covers the basics of how to use the MyHealth system so that volunteers can help patients with downloading the app and initially logging in. Throughout the year, I was able to interview key stakeholders in the HHS, such as nursing staff, pharmacy staff, patients, and volunteers, to determine the key elements of the training program. By working with the Manager of Volunteer Services, Mr. Ian Todd, I was able to develop a primary version of the training program. Future works involve implementing this training program with a cohort of volunteers and observing their impacts on patient usage of MyHealth.

Student: Shubhangi Mehra

Title: Program Implementation Evaluation of Legacy Community Health's Social Determinants of Health Program

Partner: Legacy Community Health

Health disparities in the United States present a very dire problem that causes strain through both its economic implications and personal effects that it has on various



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populations in the community. Legacy Community Health works to alleviate some of the factors that cause these health disparities by addressing these issues at a local, state and national level. Through my own capstone project, I plan to evaluate one of these programs to understand whether it has a positive effect on the patients in the community.

Student: Salonee Shah

Title: Refugee/Immigrant Youth Education

Partner: Baker Ripley

The United Nations reports that there are over 258 million migrants around the world living outside of their place of birth ("Refugees and Migrants," n.d.). A migrant is defined as someone who has changed their country of residence, irrespective of reason for moving or legal status ("Refugees and Migrants," n.d.). More specifically, the UNHCR defines refugees as "people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country" ("What is a refugee?," n.d.). The journey for an immigrant or refugee family to come to the U.S. is often difficult and long, potentially involving numerous dangerous steps ("The Refugee Journey," n.d.). For a refugee, the process to get approved to come to the U.S. is extremely lengthy. After they leave the place of conflict or violence, refugee families go to a safer neighboring country or refugee camp, where they apply as a refugee to the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees). The UNHCR will determine the best location for each family, and then submits a referral to a potential resettlement country. The wait for a refugee application to be processed is an average of 7 years, after which families will go through extensive background checks, interviews, and medical examinations. Before arriving to their new country, refugee families are given a cultural orientation and language training. Immigrants who do not classify under the specific refugee category also go through arduous processes to arrive in the United States. Immigrants seeking

Asylum can be detained for long periods of time after entering the U.S, having to deal with ICE check-ins and the constant threat of deportation ("ICE Arrests," n.d.). This long and perilous journey that refugees and immigrants take are often followed by unique challenges to integration once they are geographically settled in the United States. As outlined by a study published in the Canadian Journal of School Psychology, there are many factors that are involved in the acculturation of immigrant and refugee families - pre-migration stressors, circumstances surrounding the relocation, individual characteristics (gender or ethnicity), post migration stressors, personal resources, social supports and family stability, and particular culture of the host society and its acceptance of diversity (immigrant



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and refugee challenges) (Cole, 1998). In particular, immigrant and refugee youth face barriers related to mental health and education, that require specialized services to overcome.

Student: Jennifer Lee

Title: The Growing Skills Gap Project Proposal For the Greater Houston Partnership Upskill

Mentees: Bryant Black, Dr. Margaret Beier, Dr. Danika Brown, and Morgan Kinney

Partner: Greater Houston Partnership Upskill

Guiding students to find what careers they want to pursue is a difficult task. Educators will often find creative ways to get students to think about their future goals and their desired careers. Identity-based motivation theory suggests that in order to help students identify their future goals, educators should encourage students to experience their adult future self as connected to their current self. In collaboration with the Greater Houston Partnership Upskill and Houston Independent School District's Project Explore program, this study sought to discover the relationship between identity-based motivation constructs of vividness of career goals, specificity of career goals, and pathway to career goals with students' belief in their ability to accomplish their goals. Middle school students in Houston Independent School Districts (N=1168) were surveyed about their career goals and their perceived ability to achieve those goals. Results indicated that there exists a positive relationship between identity-based motivation constructs and students' self-efficacy. These findings suggest that educators should encourage students to establish specific and concrete career goals, emphasize that student experiences in school provide a path to their adult future selves, and demonstrate that adult future selves are near and connected to their current selves.

Student: Jeel Mehta

Title: FoodRx Program decreasing food insecurity

Partner: Houston Food Bank

The Food Rx program is one of the Houston Food Bank's Food For Change (FFC) initiatives to improve health outcomes and decrease food insecurity by increasing families' access to nutritious food (1). Through the Food Rx program, participants receive a food prescription, which they can redeem twice a month at a participating food pantry, called an FFC Market. Each time, they may select 30 pounds of fruits and vegetables in addition to four healthy items, such as legumes, brown rice, and lean meat. The Food Rx program is implemented through partnerships with healthcare partners, who refer certain patients to the program (1).



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One of the Houston Food Bank's healthcare partners is The Center for Children and Women, a medical home for Texas Children's Health Plan Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) members(2). The Center has two locations, one in Southwest Houston and the other in north Houston. The Center began implementing the Food Rx program at both locations in December 2019. For my capstone project, with the support of my project mentors at The Center in Southwest Houston, I developed and implemented an assessment of the Food Rx program in order to understand its impact and accessibility to patients. I created an interview tool that asked patients about their experience with the Food Rx program, barriers to participation in the program, and the effect of the program on various aspects of their health and wellbeing. I interviewed 20 patients, analyzed the results, and generated a report with major findings and recommendations for improvement of the Food Rx program. I shared this report with my project mentors and the FFC Health Partnerships Manager at the Houston Food Bank, who will implement these recommendations to mitigate the barriers to program participation, improve the accessibility of the Food Rx program, and increase the positive impact of the program on families and communities.

Student: Gabrielle Humphrey

Title: Social Work Versus Security: The Unequal and Unjust Nature of HISD's Budget Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

Partner: Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

The tragedy of the American public education system lies in its profound ability to provide separate and unequal educational experiences for its students. Low income Black and Latinx students, rather than actively supported in schools are subject to undue and unjust processes of criminalization, surveillance and punishment. The existence of school resource officer (SRO) programs readily facilitates this, serving as a direct link between students and the juvenile and criminal justice systems. With a growing understanding of the severe and lasting impact policing in schools poses to marginalized students, there is a heightened need to advocate for the removal of officers from campuses nationwide. This begins with understanding how, and to what extent, these programs are funded. In the greater Houston area, TCJC aims to de-structure the school to prison pipeline, as an advocate for students impacted by the presence of police in schools. In order to understand district wide budgets in Houston, the budget process was analyzed and data on HISD district wide and campus level financing was collected. A numerical analysis revealed that funding for security services grossly outweighs funds allocated to social work services. In both district and campus budgets, it was clear that social work was not prioritized. Analysis also revealed that the dominant narrative in youth justice advocacy—



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counselors not cops—is largely misleading, as guidance counselors in practice play a largely administrative, testing-centered role. Conversely, as the provider of wrap around services, social work offers students avenues for success that may aid in overcoming the forces of the school to prison pipeline on an individual and systemic level. With this, advocacy moving forward should focus on the significance of social work programs and personnel.

2021-2022

Student: Sahana Prabhu

Title: Community Informed Visual Design: Investing in Diverse Maternal Experiences and Bringing Awareness to Perinatal Healthcare

Partner: University of Houston (UH) Healthy Start Program

The University of Houston (UH) Healthy Start Program aims to alleviate racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes through education, community outreach, coordinated care, and family involvement. Desiring to make their education efforts more mother-centered, the Healthy Start initiative collaborated with a Rice University Civic Leadership student to conduct a series of focus groups to learn about mothers' impressions on pregnancy health media and preferences on how to receive education in an affirming, compassionate, and normalizing manner. Throughout four sessions, mothers not only shared their feedback on the program's existing recruitment and education materials but also revealed insightful personal experiences, which resulted in impactful, inclusive and community-informed recommendations for Healthy Start to adopt.

Student: Anvita Kandru

Title: Reproductive Justice with National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)

On September 1, 2021, Senate Bill 8 took effect in Texas. S.B.8 effectively bans abortion at 6 weeks and allows private citizens to sue those who facilitate or provide abortions. This law gutted abortion access in Texas, forcing people seeking abortions to travel out of state. This places undue burden on low-income Texans who cannot afford to travel out of state and undocumented Texans, who cannot safely travel through ICE checkpoints. In addition, S.B.8 is intended to sow fear and confusion, even among people who speak English fluently. For Limited English Proficiency (LEP) folks, S.B.8 presents an additional challenge. Many Asians and Pacific Islanders prefer to speak a language other than English. In Texas, about 80% of AAPIs speak a language other than English at home. Of that 80%, a further 40% speak English less



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than very well. This data shows us that AAPI Texans need language support when accessing essential services such as abortion. Thus, this project aims to translate important abortion access information into Asian languages. This project aims to translate a Texas-specific abortion access guide into Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Korean, Tagalog, Chinese, and Vietnamese. The project will culminate in coordinated community outreach to disseminate the translated guide throughout the AAPI community in Texas.

Student: Frederick Russell Drummond

Partner: Oklahoma Policy Institute

For my Civic Leadership project, I will be partnering with the Oklahoma Policy Institute to aid them in their work on the eviction crisis. This will be an extension of my earlier work for the Institute, where I helped craft social media messages, sifted through public eviction data, and researched/wrote a blog post on possible solutions to stemming eviction. This was during the summer of this year, and if anything, the eviction crisis has only gotten worse, as state and federal aid to the public have expired. Despite this worsening, however, it is not clear how many members of the public are actually aware of the degree of hardship faced by many of their fellow Americans as a result of eviction and similar housing-related issues. Thus, my project will seek to raise public awareness of eviction and housing issues among the general citizenry, as well as how ordinary citizens can make a difference when state and federal institutions refuse to act.

Student: Emma Donnelly

Title: Love146 At-Risk Youth Project

Partner: Love146

Before I ever interacted with Love146, I had a great deal of dedication to social issues centered on at-risk youth. I had worked with a nonprofit for at-risk and homeless youth throughout most of high school and engaged in many conversations regarding juvenile justice in college. The summer after my Sophomore year, summer 2020, I interned with Love146 through the CCL LRME program and immediately felt an organic connection to the organization and its mission. I really appreciated how Love146 views the issue of human trafficking from a public health, prevention lens, and felt that their public health structuring of a traditional justice policy issue, trafficking, paralleled one of my long-term personal values of working to reframe what are considered violent crimes in a non-carceral way. Because dismantling our current criminal justice system is a value in a lot of my work, I felt that spending my time with an organization that focuses on survivor support and prevention as opposed to punishment of perpetrators would help serve my growth as an



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individual participant in the carceral abolition movement. Section B of background will cover the context of Love146's work. Sections C & D will cover the material I read and discussed with Love146 to have a shared issue understanding and ultimate project goal, and Section D will conclude by discussing our shared goals and expectations for the issue.

Student: Hannah Kim

Title: Breakthrough Houston's College Completion Program

Partner: Breakthrough Houston

This year, I worked with Breakthrough Houston's College Completion Program to create a curriculum map for their program directors to use throughout a calendar year.. I interviewed 11 students about their experiences with Breakthrough and college and how their identities shaped those experiences. Based on their collective responses, I proposed a list of future events and programs that Breakthrough can implement. In addition, I helped them plan their January networking and socializing event as well as their April financial literacy event. I primarily provided feedback and insight from the perspective of a current college student, and I attended both to assess their implementation and effectiveness.

Student: Izzie Karoh

Title: Dual Diagnosis Capacity Capstone

Partner: Council on Recovery

People with psychiatric disorders, especially those who haven't received much mental health care, are often stigmatized, as are people with substance use disorders and/or histories of compulsive behaviors. The overlap between the two populations is high, and folks who have co-occurring psychiatric disorders often struggle to find care for both conditions—especially with providers who understand the complex interactions between the two. The Council on Recovery is in the process of creating a new Center that specializes in the treatment of co-occurring disorders. In order to model best practices, the Council seeks to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in this area. My Capstone project uses a psychometrically valid index, the Dual Diagnosis Capability in Addiction Treatment (DDCAT), to evaluate the Council's intensive outpatient program ("Healing Choices") and the Council's new outpatient program ("Discovering Choices") to analyze their capacity to integrate treatment for both disorders. The final products included two reports, one for each program, and a final presentation to Council administrators and clinicians. Each report was approximately 50 pages and detailed each rating for the 35 benchmarks, including tailored recommendations on how to achieve a Dual Diagnosis Enhanced rating in each category. Healing Choices was evaluated to be at



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a “Dual Diagnosis Capable” level, with strengths in their clinical treatment and training categories and weaknesses in their continuity of care and program structure categories. Discovering Choices came in slightly below “Dual Diagnosis Capable” with strengths in their program structure and training categories and weaknesses in their clinical assessment and treatment categories. The Council intends to leverage the report to implement concrete changes to each of the programs, ultimately enhancing the treatment of clients with co-occurring disorders. Improving care is an ongoing cycle of assessment, implementation, and re-assessment, and I’m honored to contribute to this process for this organization.

Physical Accessibility of Elementary Schools in the Houston Independent School District

Anumita Jain

Professors Kinney and Brown

This past semester, I worked on a capstone project alongside January Advisors, a data science consulting firm whose clients are primarily non-profit and government organizations, regarding the physical accessibility of elementary schools in the Houston Independent School District. Specifically, I looked at how well-served the residents of each school zone are by various forms of transportation and how accessible their zoned schools are to them through walking, bicycling, and using public transportation. The purpose of this project is to identify any inequities in transit infrastructure that disproportionately affect students of certain schools and advocate for the construction and repair of transit infrastructure that makes access to school more equitable. I measured accessibility by determining both how much of each school zone is covered by sidewalks, bikeways, and public transportation and what percentage of parcel units in each zone are within 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 minutes of their zoned school. I found that the most well-served schools by these metrics tended to be in the north, east, and southwest sides of Houston, and am working on contextualizing those results to determine why that is, and how and where transit infrastructure can be built to make access to school more equitable.

Student: Sumin Hwang

Title: Social Design in the Houston Coalition for Development Without Displacement

Partner: Houston Coalition for Equitable Development Without Displacement (HCEDD)

For my Capstone project I worked with the Houston Coalition for Equitable Development Without Displacement (HCEDD) as a graphic designer and internal



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coordinator, exploring concepts of social design and studying the intersection of artmaking and grassroots organizing. A community coalition comprised of residents and community groups from Houston's Third Ward, HCEDD primarily aims to secure a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with Rice Development Company which would ensure the consideration of Third Ward residents as Rice develops the Innovation Complex in Midtown. Given HCEDD's horizontal organizational structure and their reliance on community engagement, my role as a graphic designer was primarily to design promotional and educational materials for the group as they advanced conversations about policy and community organizing. Throughout the semester, I also began to develop the role of Design Coordinator, as proposed by the community partner. Through this role, I began to take on more organizational responsibilities internally, coordinating between different working groups and the communications and graphics teams. By streamlining this communication and organizational models, we hoped to discover more efficient strategies to fully leverage the potential of graphic design for the coalition's ends. While I have been working throughout this academic year on this project, the work of the coalition is still not complete and I hope to further develop this work throughout the Summer and into my Senior year. In my later work with this project, I hope to further concretize the role of Design Coordinator and to more fully integrate the communications team into the operations of the policy organizing sectors.

Student: Zubaidat Agboola

Title: Community Organizing for Educational Equity in Alief ISD: Assessing the Impact of School Policing, Disciplinary Codes, and Social Support on Students
Partner: Alief ISD

The school to prison pipeline is a phenomenon of school districts preparing and easing students into the criminal justice system rather than toward further educational opportunities and support. This pipeline disproportionately affects Black, Hispanic, students, which is the majority demographic of the Houston suburb, Alief, and its Independent School District. As a renewed focus has highlighted the vast inequalities of the US, educational inequity, I intend to utilize community organizing and advocacy practices to assess issues of policing, disciplinary codes, and learning spaces of students. Partnered with ONE Houston, a local community coalition of organizers, teachers, students, and administrators, I am able to assess the state of educational improvement efforts, policing accountability, and reactions to environmental changes (most notably COVID-19). Through inviting Alief ISD teachers, students, and administrators to engage in individual meetings on such topics, I was able to obtain valuable information on the efforts and barriers to further



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ensuring the best educational environment for students. This information will be relayed to ONE Houston sub-committee on 'Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline' and TCJC.

Student: Krithika Shamanna

Title: Computer Literacy Course

Partner: An-Nisa

Since the mid-1990s, the concept of the digital divide has grown in importance. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shift to all things virtual, technology has become even more critical to daily life in the US. Individuals who lack access to technology or the necessary skills to use technology are at risk of debilitating isolation and depression. Additionally, they may not access essential services such as grocery delivery, communication software, and telemedicine. This problem especially affects immigrant survivors who are unfamiliar with US technological innovations. My capstone project addresses this issue in conjunction with An-Nisa, a local non-profit organization in Houston that seeks to reduce crisis within immigrant families. With An-Nisa, I developed and implemented a basic computer literacy curriculum that covered topics ranging from Microsoft Word to Zoom video conferencing.

Student: Christine Wang

Title: Analyzing the Impact of Charter Expansion on Traditional Public Schools in Houston

Partner: Raise Your Hand Texas

For my senior Capstone in Civic Leadership project, I teamed up with Raise Your Hand Texas, a non-profit organization focused on public education advocacy, to conduct research on charter schools. This interest was spurred by events involving the state takeover of Houston Independent School District (HISD). Current bills in the Texas Legislature, such as SB28, also aim to increase charter expansion by limiting the authority of a locally-elected board to deny charter applications. Specifically, our research question asks: Are public charter schools in Houston high-quality and representative of nearby traditional public schools (TPS)? Based on existing data published by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), our research finds that public charter schools in Houston significantly under-enroll at-risk students and special education students. While we have not conducted the qualitative interviews yet, we expect to complete them by the end of May to understand how school administrators perceive this TPS-charter debate. This research will be presented to the Raise Your Hand Texas policy team, which will help guide their policy recommendations from both analytical and narrative perspectives.



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Student: Rithika Proddutoor

Title: Advocating for Extending Maternity Medicaid with Doctors For Change

Partner: Doctors For Change

The purpose of this project was to create a policy brief about extending Texas Maternity Medicaid benefits from 2 months postpartum to 12 months postpartum, as well as extending these benefits to immigrants. The policy brief's goal is to raise awareness about Maternity Medicaid's limits, and to persuade readers to be involved in and follow the relevant bills in the current Texas legislative session. The policy brief was created in collaboration with Doctors for Change (DFC), a member-based advocacy and outreach organization of healthcare professionals. Following completion, the brief was published on the DFC website, distributed to Every Texan and Cover Texas Now, used in testimony about expanding Medicaid coverage, and formed the basis of discussions with several legislators. Ongoing efforts regarding distribution include following up with the Kinder Institute Urban Edge blog for publishing the brief, contacting the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative, and monitoring the clicks and views the brief receives on DFC's website. Future steps for the brief are continued advocacy on this topic in later legislative sessions and generating more awareness about Maternity Medicaid.

IL.

Name: Arisa Sadeghpour

Title: Understanding the Effect of Evictions on Votingthrough Data Analysis

Partner: Harris County

This report outlines the design, implementation, and results from my Certificate in Civic Leadership capstone project. Given the high rates of evictions in Houston and speculation that evictions could be impacting voter turnout, the project used civic data science to research the impact of evictions on voting. By merging a data set with eviction filings to the November 2020 Harris County voter rolls, I was able to analyze and model the effect of evictions on voter turnout. I found that voters who had an eviction filing and who were still registered at the address of the eviction had a lower likelihood of voting than their counterparts. The results can be used to start a dialogue and advocate for ways to improve voting access for this population.

Student: Emily Weaver

Title: Project with Citizens Environmental Coalition

Partner: Citizens Environmental Coalition

My capstone project analyzed legislative policy that pertained to the environment including air, water, land, waste, pollution, and the regulation of any of the



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aforementioned subjects. Working with my community partner Citizens Environmental Coalition, I created a system to track bills as they advanced through the 87th legislative session, as well as worked on a series of online posts summarizing some of the most impactful bills. In my research I focused on the potential impact of bills if passed, as well as identified stakeholders that may be most directly affected, including non-profits and community members. My online posts will be updated and will be made publicly available toward the end of the legislative session; in these, I sought to synthesize legislative information in a way that was easily accessible and digestible.

2020

2022-2023

Student: Maria Alejandra Mora

Title: Harris County Housing Crisis

Partner: Harris County Housing Stability Task Force

Housing has been recognized internationally as a basic human right, but the implementation of this recognition drastically falls short in many countries, including the United States of America. Not only is there an incredibly large and complex housing problem in the U.S., but certain groups of people are even more vulnerable to experience disparities in housing. Through a partnership with the Tahirih Justice Center, I looked at housing laws and resources with a focus on immigrants, and more specifically, researched housing in Harris County. The purpose of this project was to better understand how federal definitions of immigrant classes affect eligibility for housing programs. It culminated in a drive that consolidated a wealth of information on housing and was sorted according to the website, article, letter, etc's relation to either housing laws, housing resources, or the Harris County Housing Stability Task Force. Since the majority of these resources and findings are comprised of legal jargon and academic writing styles, I summarized main points from the information I deemed most relevant and created a short and accessible pamphlet that services as an introduction to housing in Harris County, lists unrestricted housing programs, and provides resources to reach out to for further information and help.

Student: Anvita Kandru

Title: Senate Bill 8

On September 1, 2021, Senate Bill 8 took effect in Texas. S.B.8 effectively bans



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abortion at 6 weeks and allows private citizens to sue those who facilitate or provide abortions. This law gutted abortion access in Texas, forcing people seeking abortions to travel out of state. This places undue burden on low-income Texans who cannot afford to travel out of state and undocumented Texans, who cannot safely travel through ICE checkpoints. In addition, S.B.8 is intended to sow fear and confusion, even among people who speak English fluently. For Limited English Proficiency (LEP) folks, S.B.8 presents an additional challenge. Many Asians and Pacific Islanders prefer to speak a language other than English. In Texas, about 80% of AAPIs speak a language other than English at home. Of that 80%, a further 40% speak English less than very well. This data shows us that AAPI Texans need language support when accessing essential services such as abortion. Thus, this project aims to translate important abortion information into Asian languages. This project aims to translate a Texas-specific abortion access guide into Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Korean, Tagalog, Chinese, and Vietnamese. The project will culminate in coordinated community outreach to disseminate the translated guide throughout the AAPI community in Texas.

Student: Marin Beal

Title: Fifth Ward Snapshot: A Data Profile School Campus, School District, Zip-Code, and State Level Data

Partner: Center for Urban Transformation

In August 2021, I began the capstone program for the Certificate in Civic Leadership at Rice University. In the fall semester, I began researching the social issues I was interested in exploring during my capstone experience, namely educational attainment and juvenile justice reform (and particularly where the two issues areas may overlap in terms of the school-to-prison pipeline and community-oriented justice). That same semester, I came into contact with the Center for Urban Transformation (CUT), a non-profit organization based in the Fifth Ward in Houston. After meeting with my point of contact at CUT, we were able to develop a semester-long capstone project that brings together all of my research interests: compiling a data profile on the Fifth Ward and aiding in the implementation of a restorative justice workshop series at a Fifth Ward high school. This report serves as my capstone final report and contains the data profile I spent the last semester compiling.

Student: Syed Shams

Title: Texas Civics: Analyzing Current Curriculum Standards

Partner: Children's Defense Fund-TX

Texas civics education is lacking in opportunity, and the Texas State curriculum



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(TEKS) is entering a period of upheaval and revision. Following unsatisfactory revisions to the 2010 curriculum, which was fraught with issues, the State Board of Education (SBOE) has been pushed to complete a new revision this summer and fall. The revisions open the door for positive streamlining efforts that will make the TEKS easier to implement for teachers, but the main importance of the revision is the opportunity to restructure and reframe the curriculum. This restructuring creates an opening to include new requirements for civic engagement and learning within student populations. Civics education has been sorely lacking in schools across the US by a number of metrics, and Texas is no different. Without proper civics implementation and a curriculum littered with ideology from current and past SBOE members that prevents accurate historical learning, Texas students are falling behind and lacking the necessary experience and skills to be active-informed citizens. With the upcoming revision meetings, there is a need to perform an in-depth analysis of the current TEKS, identify places for improvement and determine trends within the structure and language of the current TEKS. Through a partnership with Children's Defense Fund-TX (CDF-Tx), this analysis was performed by compiling the High School TEKS and breaking them down with consideration of the demographics of historical figures, methods of civic participation, and changes to US Democracy. Findings indicated strong demographic inequality and a lack of actionable civics learning. However, changes to US democracy did discuss important landmarks in shifts and generally covered an impressive range of amendments. This analysis will be followed by testimonial development for presenting findings to the SBOE this coming June.

Student: Benjamin Lamb

Title: Harmful Effects of Ethylene Oxide

Partner: Air Alliance Houston

Ethylene Oxide (EtO) is a Volatile Organic Compound used as an important intermediate product to manufacture many petroleum-derived chemicals and sterilize medical equipment. In 2016, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) determined that the chemical was thirty times more carcinogenic than previously thought, making it the largest contributor to air pollution-linked cancers in Harris County. Working with Air Alliance Houston, I have used publicly available datasets to characterize the communities that are endangered by these emissions, laying the foundation for future advocacy. I found that in Houston, Ethylene Oxide is primarily released by a small handful of petrochemical facilities, which disproportionately endanger marginalized populations. However, the data we have on EtO emissions is not only of very poor quality but has been actively manipulated, making all analysis unreliable. We are unsure of the risk to human health and emission levels of other



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air pollutants found in Eastern Harris County. The overall health risk faced by residents there is likely worse than current estimates suggest.

Student: Sam Lowe

Title: Assessing the Impact of Baylor Teen Health Clinic Services on HISD Student Academic Outcomes

Partner: BTHC

This project focused on developing a foundation for a research study investigating the relationship between BTHC service use and several indicators of academic performance in order to determine if school-based clinic services have a positive impact on the educational success of students. The results included an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved research protocol, a literature review summarizing prior studies which analyzed student health and academic data, and an excel spreadsheet compiling possible variables for BTHC's study. This research holds great importance for school and health service provider partnerships in Houston as evidence of BTHC impact on academic performance may encourage other high schools to welcome a clinic presence.

Student: Aylia Rizvi

Title: Program for Immigrant and Refugee Child Health (PIRCH)

Partner: Program for Immigrant and Refugee Child Health (PIRCH)

The state of Texas has the highest rate of uninsured residents in the country at 18.4% with the Greater Houston Area having the highest number of uninsured residents. Immigrants are much more likely to be uninsured with 25% of immigrants and 46% of undocumented immigrants lacking health insurance. The Program for Immigrant and Refugee Child Health (PIRCH) works with immigrant pediatric populations to connect them with affordable and quality care. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the organization has seen an increase in questions about low-cost mental health and counseling services. However, PIRCH currently does not have information to connect their patients with these resources. The purpose of this project was to create a resource sheet and map consisting of low-cost mental health providers in the Greater Houston Area. These providers have varying specialties, such as substance abuse, and speak a variety of languages in order to best serve the population.

Student: Lila Greiner

Title: African Immigrants and Domestic Violence

It is clear that immigrant survivors of domestic violence in Houston need



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extra support. They are unable or afraid to access many resources available due to their immigration status. Black immigrants are more likely to be US citizens or to have some form of legal status, which does make the work easier (Anderson and Lopez). However, 15% of black immigrants are undocumented, totaling over 600,000 individuals in the United States. This creates two avenues of possible support. The first is to address any legal insecurity by providing free or low-cost legal aid to help them find avenues to solidify their standing in the United States, whether through U-Visas or other options. The second is to provide them with resources to help find and navigate the support systems that are available to them. For African survivors of domestic violence, in particular, there is a lack of resources available in their communities. These resources must be culturally sensitive without reinforcing gendered stereotypes and expectations that are prevalent in the African immigrant community. In order to address this neck my capstone project focused on supporting Dr. Kalunta-Crumpton of Texas Southern University in developing the Grace St. Jude Center by expanding administrative capacity at the time the organization is being formed.

2023-2024

Erika Alvarez

Enhancing Support Systems for DACA and Undocumented Students at Rice University: A Strategic Partnership Initiative with FIEL Houston
Partner: FIEL

This capstone project aims to enhance support structures for DACA and undocumented students at Rice University by identifying resource gaps and proposing strategic improvements. The primary objective was to bridge gaps in current support mechanisms at Rice University by collaborating with Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha (FIEL), a local advocacy and immigrant rights group. Through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement with offices such as the Office of International Students and Scholars and groups like the Undocumented Student Support Services Taskforce, the project assessed and mapped the current support mechanisms at Rice and identified significant areas needing improvement. Key initiatives included the establishment of a partnership with FIEL, development of a resource hub for undocumented students, and compiling best practice guidelines for university staff. The culminating activity, a well-attended workshop led by FIEL, highlighted practical strategies for navigating



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legal and systemic barriers. This initiative aimed to not only provide immediate resources but also to lay a foundation for ongoing support and inclusion of undocumented students within the academic community.

Arinze Appio-Riley

LIBERTY: Lifting Identities, Bridging Empowerment & Resilience with Trans Youth

Partner: Normal Anomaly

The LIBERTY Initiative for Normal Anomaly responds to the pressing need for target support of Black Trans youth in Houston. Confronting significant disparities in health, economic stability, and housing, this demographic requires comprehensive interventions that affirm and ground these intersecting identities. Normal Anomaly offers resources for all the aforementioned disparities but a capacity for youth engagement limits their outreach. This capstone bridges this capacity gap, connecting POC Trans youth to mentorship, health, and entrepreneurial programming by creating a safe space at Normal Anomaly's newly opened drop-in center. The implementation of this objective was successful. Normal Anomaly's first safe space for POC Trans identifying youth launched on April 26th 2024 and garnered an impactful cohort. Similarly, LIBERTY bridges gaps in comprehensive data for this intersection through the creation of a questionnaire assessing the perceived risk and inclusivity of LGBT+ specific spaces and Houston, generally. This assessment is specific in its discernment of race, gender, and age, and is viable for continued use for grant applications and qualitative data analysis for future advocacy work. With the two project objectives executed, the capstone project was overall successful in addressing disparities facing POC Trans youth and creating a novel narrative pathway for other parties advocating and empowering this demographic.

Alexander Cho

Partner: Urban Harvest

Together with Urban Harvest, I developed an organizational capacity-building project so that Urban Harvest may continue in their goal to create thriving communities through gardening and access to healthy local food. To this end, I aimed to create three deliverables: an analysis of the surveys that Urban Harvest sends to their Affiliate Gardens, a map of Urban Harvest's permaculture class and its reach in Houston, and a community-facing graphic on how to develop a successful



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community garden. Ultimately, I reported a discussion on formatting and wording for the feedback survey, which would help accessibility. The map showcased the permaculture class' projects and their locations relative to affiliate gardens. The community-facing graphic discussed tips based on interviews with local community members and leaders of successful gardens.

Brendan Frizzell

Bridging the Gap in Migration Literature: Qualitative Analysis of Immigrant Accounts of Abuse

Partner Advocates for Immigrant Survivors

Sociological literature often investigates international migration at a macro-scale. However, micro-scale analysis is crucial to better understand the individual nature of immigration. Advocates for Immigrant Survivors (AIS) is a Houston-based NGO aiming to address this gap in literature. In 2023, they partnered with Political Science PhD student Samantha Chapa at University of Houston (UH) to interview their clients about their experiences as immigrant survivors of abuse. Topics included in these interviews are types of abuse faced, their perceptions of abuse, their interactions with police, and more. My main role in this project is to analyze qualitative data collected from the first round of interviews to find links between the accounts of the participants. Finding the frequency of certain responses and linking similar descriptions of experiences can reflect systemic trends that may be applicable to larger populations. The final product of this capstone project will be an infographic showing summarized results of the first round of interviews.

Nishanka Kuthuru

Community Specific Sexual Assault Presentations Report

Partner: DAYA

Sexual assault remains a pervasive issue affecting individuals across diverse demographics, with underreporting perpetuating its prevalence. The South Asian community, characterized by unique cultural nuances, faces additional barriers in addressing this concern. DAYA, a Houston-based nonprofit organization, stands as a beacon of support for South Asian survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Recognizing the need for tailored interventions, DAYA partners with stakeholders to implement age-specific sexual assault awareness presentations. By employing a multifaceted approach, these presentations aim to educate individuals about



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consent, red flags, and available support services while fostering a culture of prevention and empowerment. Through ongoing evaluation and community engagement, the project seeks to catalyze sustainable change within the DAYA community, leveraging lessons learned to inform future initiatives. By prioritizing flexibility, community engagement, and cultural sensitivity, this project underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing sexual assault within diverse communities. Together, these efforts contribute to a safer, more informed community, aligning with DAYA's mission and creating lasting impact.

Emily London

Mi Casa Es 2Casa: Final Project Report

Partner: Harris County Pct. 2

In this project, I organized a conference for Harris County Precinct 2 focused on Latine housing issues in Harris County with the aim to raise awareness of the unique challenges that this community faces. Latine populations are historically underrepresented in data and programs related to housing. Given that my community partner is a government organization with the largest concentration of Latine residents in all of Harris County within its constituency, addressing this data gap is crucial. The structure of the conference facilitates discussion through a policy-based and community-oriented framework, as the event is open to the public and discussion questions focus on bringing together diverse perspectives to look toward solutions. Assessment of the event will occur on metrics of attendance, diversity, and engagement. Looking at this project through the lens of civic professional development, it analyzes issues through a policy framework, advocates for equitable communities, and effectively communicates messages to a variety of stakeholders.

Denise Maldonado

Rice Works Because We Do: Dimensions of Undergraduate Labor

Partner: Rice University Student Association, Labor Commission

This capstone project delves into the critical need for undergraduate labor reform at Rice University. At the intersection of academic pursuits and social justice at Rice University, there exists often overlooked dimensions of labor performed by undergraduate student-workers. The project collaborates with the Student Association's Labor Commission and the Houston Action Research Team to advocate for equitable employment practices and endorse an emerging campus culture



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prioritizing student workers' rights and well-being. It highlights the financial pressures that many students face and aims to shed light on their insights regarding current labor practices and compensation. Specifically, it analyzes growing areas for improvement and recommendations for institutional accountability to effectively address the present disparities in the various undergraduate employment processes. Through rigorous research and cross-campus collaboration, the project seeks to catalyze positive change, promoting equity and inclusion throughout the employment process for undergraduate students. By emphasizing the importance of social justice and equitable labor practices, it aspires to cultivate a campus environment embodying values of dignity and respect for all working members of the Rice community. This endeavor represents a concerted effort to bridge the expectations of academic excellence with ethical employment practices, ultimately fostering a sustainable employment experience for student workers and leaders across Rice University.

Imaan Patel

Programming for Socio-Emotional Development for Refugee Youth at reVision Houston

Partner: reVision Houston

This paper is based on a year-long capacity building project conducted as part of the Capstone in Civic Leadership under the guidance of the Center for Civic Leadership at Rice University and in partnership with reVision Houston. The primary focus of this project was to aid reVision Houston build capacity in its programming for refugee youth, specifically girls, by identifying their needs and recommending a program that would suit their interests and draw them to the program offering. The project consisted of several stages, which will be outlined in this paper, including but not limited to, partnership building, issue analysis and project development, primary and secondary research, recommendations for project implementation, assessment, and results. The ultimate recommendation is to implement a workshop series with a range of activities that can cater to the diverse interests of adolescent girls in the neighborhoods surrounding reVision to promote social and emotional development and overall wellbeing.

Ella Seigel

Early Childhood Education Funding Sustainability Post-2026 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds



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Partner: Harris County

This research explores alternative funding mechanisms for early childhood programs currently supported by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in Harris County. By examining the national landscape of ARPA investments in early childhood, this research identifies best practices and innovative approaches used in other jurisdictions. Additionally, this project investigates the feasibility and benefits of multiple funding strategies to sustain early childhood initiatives post-ARPA. Through comprehensive analysis and policy recommendations, this study aims to inform decision-makers in Harris County, including the County Judge's Office and Early Childhood Initiatives teams, about effective funding strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability of early childhood programs. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to enhance early childhood education and care in Harris County and beyond.