

Evaluation Results and Participant Feedback from the 2010 Summer Legal Fellowship Program

Post-Program Interviews

At the end of the 2010 Summer Legal Fellowship Program, students were interviewed individually by volunteers (not program staff) and asked open-ended questions about their experiences in the program and their plans for the future. Here are some of the results:

Question: "What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?"

Responses: All but one student expressed a clear commitment to attend higher education. One student expressed interest in joining the military but is also considering attending college.

Question: "What are some things you learned or achieved in the program this summer?"

Responses: Although responses varied, the responses most commonly fell into three categories: How to do better in the workplace. 44% of the youth mentioned one or more things they learned in this category, such as how to act appropriately in the workplace, how to deal with coworkers, and office skills.

Knowledge about law. 81% mentioned some aspect of legal knowledge, such as the Constitution, due process, and different kinds of lawyers.

Conflict mediation was mentioned by 19% of students.

A few other noteworthy responses were *"how to speak to a possible employer," "computer skills,"* and *"different ways to pay for college."*

Question: "Can you describe any ways that you have changed over the course of the summer?"

Responses: 100% of the students felt that they had changed in some positive way. The types of changes they described most frequently fell into three general categories:

Improved self-confidence was mentioned by 44% of students.

Better interpersonal skills. 50% named interpersonal skills such as improved communication skills, being able to work in a team, and ability to deal with conflict.

Improved emotional intelligence other than interpersonal skills. 31% mentioned capabilities such as ability to deal with anger, understanding emotions, and patience.

Other noteworthy responses were *"I believe I matured"* and *"I'm more curious about the world around me, and I read newspapers now."*

Noteworthy Comments: Here are a few comments students made in these interviews and in anonymous surveys about how the program affected them:

"They prepared us for the real world and taught us the importance of being an adult. I definitely have more confidence."

"This was better than school. I learned more here. And you could talk to the teachers -- they treated you like individuals."

"I have much more self-confidence because of this program."

"They helped me figure out that my opinion does matter...."

"I know the program made a huge impact on my skills for working with others and it made me get out of my comfort zone, which increased my confidence."

"At times I felt that I may not be able to get where I want to be because of the lack of money, but the teachers and speakers involved in the program reassured me that there are ways that I can get past all the obstacles."

Post-Program Questionnaires

Participants also filled out anonymous surveys asking how the program affected them in specific competencies and attitudes. For each competency, they were asked to indicate "much better," "somewhat better," "the same," or "I don't know" according to how they felt the program affected them. The results are displayed in the following table.

Competency	% of youth that felt they were "much better" or "somewhat better" in this competency as a result of the program
Understanding of how law works	93%
Skills for succeeding in the workplace	100%
Ability to communicate	85%
Likelihood of succeeding in school	77%
Commitment to pursuing higher education	86%
Ability to network	72%
Self-confidence	64%
Ability to work with others	72%
Academic skills	76%
Ability to handle conflicts with others	64%
Ability to understand and express my emotions	79%
I am connected to more people who can help me	86%

achieve my educational and career goals	
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Percentage of students that felt they improved in at least seven of the 12 competencies	71%
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Youth Surveys on Internship Experiences

Participants also completed questionnaires, containing both yes/no and open-ended questions, about the impact of their internships. Here are a few comments students made in response to open-ended questions:

"I liked the way they cracked down on me when I didn't do things the right way because I will be better prepared for future jobs."

"I definitely feel more prepared to be more professional and confident."

Participants were also asked to indicate whether they improved in any of seven specified competencies as a result of working in their internship. Results are shown in the following table.

Competency	% of youth that felt that their internship helped them improve in this competency
Computer skills	89%
Writing skills	33%
Speaking skills	33%
Ability to work well with others	78%
Feeling comfortable in a professional environment	89%
Networking	67%
Research skills	56%
I gained knowledge or contacts that will help me in the future	100%
My internship experience will help me be more successful in the future	89%

Percentage of students who felt they improved in at least four of the nine competencies	100%
Percentage who felt they improved in at least six of the nine competencies	67%

Stories

Evaluation data only partly convey our program's impact. A few stories of individual students (whose names have been changed) will give a fuller picture:

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Jasmine is a young woman from Oakland. Her father was killed when she was 10 years old, and her mother is unemployed and struggles to support Jasmine and her two siblings. Jasmine has a passion for psychology, so we placed her in an internship at the Family Violence Law Project where she helped create relationship abuse prevention materials for teenagers. She said *"The Summer Legal Fellowship Program helped me with my communication skills. It also helped me open myself up to other opportunities and possibilities.... My career goal in life is to become a psychologist/counselor. I want to counsel teens and help them through the things they feel limit their lives. I also want to be a pediatrician because I have a strong interest in kids' health."*

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Rico attends Richmond High School. Although the school has a reputation for violence and a high dropout rate, he wants people to realize there are many motivated students like himself and many great teachers. He started off shy and reserved in the program, but became animated in class debates about political issues such as the recent Arizona legislation regarding undocumented immigrants. By the end of the summer, he ended up captivating us with a creative and compelling closing argument in the mock trial, which he delivered without referring to any notes. At the end of the program, he stated *"In this program, I learned it's not as hard as I thought to get into college -- I can't make excuses for myself."* He is facing a challenging time now because his younger brother passed away recently and his family is grieving. But he is maintaining his grades in high school and intends to go to college, and possibly law school.

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Gabriela, a student from Richmond, is in the midst of turning her life around. As a younger teenager, she received a juvenile conviction, but after that decided to change her life. She cut off contact with kids that were a negative influence on her and dedicated herself to doing well in school. She had very much wanted to become a police officer, and was crushed when our police department internship would not accept her as an intern because of her conviction. Likewise, she was not able to intern in her second choice, the District Attorney's office. She kept a positive attitude and was a great intern in the office she was assigned to. She seemed subdued when she was awarded one of the scholarships in our graduation ceremony. Afterwards she confessed that she had felt like crying when she heard her name called and had to work very hard to keep her composure! She had made the decision to change her life on her own, but our program supported her with necessary tools, guidance, encouragement, work

experience and financial support. She is now a community college student, and describes her goals as follows:

"By the time I am 35 I will be founder of a home for children in need. I will call it "Una Mejor Vida", " A Better Life". This home will be for children aged 4-19. I want to give these kids the stability, encouragement, love and support that is needed to get ahead in life. These kids will be those who have no one supporting them, no home, no real family, and/ or no where they really feel safe. I also plan on adopting some but I am not sure how many yet."

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Sheila was at a challenging time in her life when she joined our program. A few months earlier, she had told her mother she is gay, and her mother kicked her out of the house. (She was able to stay with a friend.) A few weeks into the summer program, she came out to the students in the program. In her exit interview, she said *"I felt safe, like I didn't have to worry about what people thought of me."* She also said *"This summer I realized who I was. Being here taught me that I don't have to fit in, I just am me."* She loved working on projects having to do with youth and civil liberties in her internship at the ACLU, and is considering a career as a lawyer or psychologist.

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William is a 16 year-old young man from East Oakland who is interested in a law career. He interned in the office of Oakland City Councilmember Larry Reid, and one of the highlights for him was having a chance sit down and talk with the Mayor. He made a speech in the graduation ceremony reflecting on his summer experiences and his future:

"My summer experience was to me, a look into what it means to be an adult. I learned the realities of sacrifice, the challenges of choosing between what you enjoy and what will pay off, and understanding the concept of team work.... I want to show my appreciation to the staff and those that support this program by showing that I am a positive contribution to society... I want to show that I take value in education because I know that just a few decades ago, not everyone had access to a higher education. Also, that if you try hard enough anything is possible, regardless of the hand life has dealt you! Thanks again and please continue doing this type of work for the community!"

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Kayla interned at the East Bay Community Law Center. In a scholarship essay, she wrote about her goals in life: *"Every time I tell someone that I want to be a doctor or a lawyer I always get the same harsh words. They say 'You can't do that, it's impossible. Girl, why even try, you're not going to be able to make it through all that schooling.' My goal is to make it through college and shield out all of the*

negativity and stereotypes that surround me.... Working in my internship this summer motivated me to do what the lawyers were doing, which was making a difference in the community and making someone's life better." Here are excerpts of a poem she wrote and recited at our program graduation ceremony:

My only wish is to get to college
to get the knowledge
for my future to become a
doctor or a lawyer.

...

I want to go to college and make a difference
not waste my life
and have strife.

I refuse to sit under the covers
and pull back another
sheet over my head
while my fellow citizen
is 20 seconds from being dead.

I am that lawyer
I am that doctor
I am your future
I am me.

She is now in her senior year of high school and applying to college.

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Naomi, from Oakland, expressed interest in pursuing a law career when she applied to the program because *"Law is the most vital factor that keeps society together."* She loved her internship working in her own congressperson's office. Early one morning toward the end of the program, she called the director to say she might be late to class because she was coming from a new, farther-away location. She arrived on time, and she was attentive and participating as always. Later she revealed that the location was a homeless shelter where she was living with her mother and sister. (She has two brothers but they are in prison.) Her mother and sister attended the graduation ceremony a few days later and were proud to see her win one of the scholarship awards we gave out. She is now getting top grades in her senior year of high school and getting ready to apply to college.

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