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Abstract

The project was developed to provide opportunities and resources to first-generation youth from possibly following in their parents footsteps whose jobs may often be marred by racial and ethnic inequality at United Way of Santa Cruz, with the Jovenes SANOS program. During a three-semester internship, and through interactions with the program's youth, the need for school related resources, and college readiness became apparent. Such missing resources and readiness are due to a lack of access to tutoring; absence of a study place, home care responsibilities, lack of access to mentorship for college readiness, and missing employment pathways. Consequently, such factors have unwanted consequences that can be an obstacle to the future of students with lower lifetime earnings, the likelihood of remaining in poverty is high and less likely to access higher education. The project's goal is to provide the essential resources and information that youth may need to succeed beyond their known potential and reach higher education, which may deter them from poverty in later life. The capstone project aimed to do this through the conduction of a workshop provided by affiliated agencies which will include knowledge and resources that will be shared to students.

Keywords: youth, college readiness, higher education, poverty

Agency & Communities Served

The Jovenes SANOS program at United Way of Santa Cruz County, works with students in Watsonville that are potential first generation college students. The agency seeks to strengthen a country-wide alliance to stand for immigrant families by elevating their voice, offering social services, and supporting high school students who will be first generation college students with mentoring and training. Jovenes SANOS is working on projects that increase youth equitable opportunities, engagement in the community for every individual to reach the highest level of wellbeing by participating in projects such as Youth Advisory Council, Youth Action Network, and the new project We Belong Research from UCSC.

Jovenes SANOS is an agency that serves the community of young people from the city of Watsonville. They are mostly Hispanics, English language learners, smart and capable of succeeding in their life. In accordance with world population review, "25.06% of Watsonville residents speak only English, while 74.94% speak other languages. The non-English language spoken by the largest group is Spanish, which is spoken by 70.95% of the population" (2019). Jovenes SANOS is working hard to provide them tools that they will benefit from and aiding in their path to accomplish their brilliant future. The youths are engaging in activities that Jovenes SANOS provides them to enrich their knowledge and experience such as workshops, meetings, and important collaborations with educational institutions.

The We Belong Project: Collaborative for Community-Engaged Research & Immigrant Justice is working alongside a research project on how immigrants experience life right now within Santa Cruz County and what can be done to improve conditions for all county members (2018).

The program is working among immigrant communities analyzing their stories, aiming at people who belong to mixed-status families, and people working at immigrant agencies or organizations. The objective of those projects is to expand youth involvement in community-level decision-making and knowledge, and increase relationships with adults, strengthening youth leadership skills such as content knowledge, public speaking, and meeting participation. Moreover, skills that are important for the development of the youth are the knowledge of research methodologies/data indicators, youth connections to higher education resources and the understanding of social determinants of health and health equity. All this is related to the description of the mission and vision of the program which is "To *grow* powerful skilled young leaders working towards creating a culture of health and a thriving Watsonville community" (Jóvenes SANOS, 2021). Their vision is to create a safe environment truly entrenched in equity and justice (2021).

Problem Description

Much of today's youth has become entrapped within the same cycle their immigrant parents have. Such a cycle includes working jobs marked by both racial and ethnic inequality, often targeting both the parents and children. The unfortunate truth is that youth from immigrant families are often more likely to work in similar low-wage paying jobs as their parents. According to Qualifax, the National Learners Database, parents heavily influence their children's level of education, what they know about work and certain occupations, and their attitudes towards said work (Parent's Role in Career Selection, 2021). Seeing how adolescents are often easily influenced and the role model views they have cast onto parents, the youth is often subconsciously guided by their parents' way of living. Many may find it easy to work low paying

jobs during their youth in an attempt to contribute to the household but become entrapped within the job cycle. This has become a huge issue as it has set back much of the youth within countless communities and prevented them from generating brighter futures for themselves.

Contributing Factors

Lack of Access to Tutoring

The level of education in the city of Watsonville is, "4% with a master' degree or higher, 8% bachelor's degree, 24% some college or associate degree, 25% high school diploma or equivalent, and 39% less than high school diploma." (Niche, 2021, para. 11). Immigrant families in the city of Watsonville work long days in the fields picking strawberries and vegetables to support their families and the living style costs in the area. Young people do not go to the library or study groups to have better school performance because they have to help their parents with housework. "Older children often have to go to work in order to supply the family with much-needed funds for basic family needs or need to stay home to take care of younger siblings so that their parents can work." (Schargel, F. 2014, para. 3). That is one of the main reasons why many youths drop out of school and end working on similar jobs like their parents.

No Place to Study/Home Care Responsibilities

These families live in small apartments within the city which provide limited space for the family itself, let alone a private study. Unfortunately, this is due to the high living price within the area. According to UC Santa Cruz, "Nearly 70 percent of renters surveyed in Santa Cruz County experience "rent burden," defined as spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent and utilities, according to preliminary results of a survey of 1,700 renters across the county conducted by UC Santa Cruz" (Mcnulty, J. 2017, para. 1). The burden of a small

apartment may often impact a student's ability to efficiently study as they may be forced to work in a noisy and distracting environment. Additionally, children are often burdened with home care responsibilities which in turn may heavily impact their school performance. The negative impacts are seen through school performance, frequent tardiness or missed attendance, regular school failures, and not enough time for school work at home (Wichmann, 2017).

Lack of Access to Mentorship for College Readiness, Employment Pathways, and Resources to Success

Lack of access to mentorship can have a negative impact for the youth. Is well known that the resources can improve the future of the youth, especially when they have the need to be someone and want to transform their lives. That is why, "Mentors become someone that their mentees can turn to when they are having issues with friends, or when they are struggling with classes, or when they are unsure about something in life" (Martin, L. 2021, para. 6). The mentors become someone very important in their lives, someone they can trust and who also inspires them, because like them the mentors have gone through very similar situations and they will be able to understand them. In addition, students who use mentors have much more academic success compared to those who do not.

Consequences

Lower Lifetime Earrings

The socio-economic background of immigrant families influences their family environment and contributes to low lifetime earnings. Families with low-income status tend to be

from parents without any college education in agreement with the authors, (Douglas-Hall and

Chau, 2007).

> 25% of children in low-income families –almost 7.2 million –have parents with
>
> less than a high school diploma. 36% over 10.3 million –have parents with a high
>
> school diploma. But no college education. And 39% over 11.0 million –have
>
> parents who have at least some college education or more. (para. 2). Such data
>
> exemplifies that families with low-income status tend to come from parents
>
> without any prior college education.

Likelihood of Remaining in Poverty is High

Additionally, the neighborhood and the schools around play an important role in this

case, because, "Funding is based on property values so that low-income neighborhoods receive

less funding than wealthy neighborhoods" (Schargel, 2014, para 5). This can be a potential factor

that has been affecting youth in their academic accomplishment and the reason why they keep on

working class and without professional achievements. Less resources for low-income families

means lack of higher education.

Less Likely to Access Higher Education

In fact, some families are less likely to access higher education due to the barriers that

can appear in their way to do it. Their economic status is the battle that they face every day,

because it is hard to have a balance between school and job security. Not only that, but the values

that the youth have with their parents and family sometimes limited them and, "They can either

put school off for a period of the time to save money for school or choose to pack their schedule

and work while they are in school" (Terralever, 2020, para. 4). Certainly, when young people face challenges with their education while working, with limited job opportunities which have the minimum wage and that it is impossible to get better paid without having a higher education. In this case the young people will be the first generation to graduate from a superior school. That means that they might experience obstacles that might push behind their success to accomplish their postsecondary degree, and this is something that unfortunately they cannot control.

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Lack of access to tutoring	Immigrant youth are more likely to work in similar jobs to their parents who may have no college information due to language barriers or no higher education; such barriers due to immigrating at a young age	Lower lifetime earnings
No place to study/home care responsibilities		Likelihood of remaining in poverty is high
Lack of access to mentorship for college readiness, employment pathways, and resources to success		Less likely to access higher education

Capstone Project Description and Justification

Capstone Project

The prospective capstone will be workshops which will provide the youth with essential tools, such as one-on-one college and career information, needed to succeed as they build up their future. Due to the current ongoing worldwide pandemic, the workshops will be a remote service by which students may receive knowledge and resources to fulfill their expectations about university. It will be led by affiliated agencies wanting to aid the community's youth by providing them with the assets they need to achieve their academic and personal goals.

Capstone Project & Project Purpose

The purpose of this capstone project is to motivate the youth to believe that higher education is within their reach. Unfortunately, the youth of today, especially those within migrant families, often become stuck within the cycle of not pursuing higher education and working low wage paying jobs. Fortunately enough, contributing factors to this problem, such as lack of access to tutoring, lack of access to accommodating study places, and lack of access to mentorship can all be properly addressed. By addressing the issue and contributing factors, we may be able to break down barriers that have prevented migrant families from overcoming themselves, and young people, from obtaining university degrees and prospering careers.

This project's workshops will work to support and motivate young people in accomplishing their academic goals. This will be done by offering support, knowledge, and additional resources to the community's youth. The program will provide information regarding universities, colleges, and alternative schools that the youth may be interested in. It will also provide step-by-step aid to students about school applications, grants, FAFSA, AOPS, and other programs that may be available for them. Such aid and resources will be made available to students who may have never had any academic guidance before. This will be beneficial to them as they will gather new information regarding academics and may allow them to succeed in school. Essentially, the principle purpose of this project is to gather the youth and empower them through educational resources that may change their lives and allow them to better grow and lead as our future generation.

Project Justification

The youth served by United Way Agency are potential first-generation students who need encouragement and support in order to thrive on their path to higher education. Unfortunately, the level of higher education within this specific community, the first-generation community, has been found to be quite low. This allows us to understand why this specific community is in need of encouragement, resources, and agencies that may motivate them to keep striving towards educational success. In accordance with the *PNPI First-Generation Studen*ts website, "Research has found significant differences in enrollment, degree attainment, and finances between continuing-generation students (whose parents have a bachelor's degree or higher) and students whose parents have little or no college experience." (Fact-Sheet First Generation Students, 2021). Such data supports the fact that first-generation students will struggle with college enrollment, partially due to minimal guidance from a parent or guardian. Thus, it is important they are provided adequate information regarding college and college enrollment. The more information these students receive in regards to college and college enrolment, the less stressed they may be about the enrollment process and the more likely they may be to enroll for college.

A workshop, previously designed for groups to address issues, hand out information, and tackle important tasks, would be a great and easy way for students to receive information and aid regarding college. Additionally, it has become evident that immigrant low-come families are the ones who struggle the most when it is time to reach out for educational aid and resources. The reason for their struggle is normally due to the fact that the first-gen students often come from families that have never had any college experience. Such families may have experienced a lack of services that would otherwise provide them with further educational assistance. Thus, it is important to support and encourage such students so that they may be provided with tools that

may allow them to succeed. A workshop will provide the students with information about college readiness, useful educational data, and resources which will allow them to receive academic aid they may have never otherwise received. This project's workshops will easily allow students a personal connection with mentors who can offer knowledge, guidance, and clarification of any doubts. Speaking with someone directly through the workshop session will provide quick, easy, and personal aid and information to students. Something that worksheets, infographics, and videos could not so easily provide equally

Project Implementation

The idea of offering workshops came about after recognizing that the community is in need of a change that can support our community's future generation. Following this recognition, conversations with mentors at the agency ensued and possible ideas that could be worked out during the pandemic were integrated into the capstone project. Through brainstorming, the idea of working through a virtual mode came about. It was determined that the workshop would be conducted by the RISE Student Program, authorized by Sarah Emmet, the Director of Community Impact at United Way of Santa Cruz. Following this approval, the idea was truly put into action.

The work for the project first began through Google Sheets, a spreadsheet to be specific. The interns chose to work through Google Sheets as it's a free tool and easy to access. Through Google Sheets, it was established that students could sign in to a drop-in program at available times which included every recurring Thursday, for three weeks, for an hour. The hours were determined according to intern's availability and student accessibility (outside of their regular school hours). It was determined early on that all students from the agency would be recruited to

participate. These students were recruited as there would be easy communication with them through the program itself. It was expected that all of the agency's youth, which is a total of 8 young students, will attend all meetings and workshops.

The first step of the project was to obtain information about the students' needs, concerns about college readiness, and what their main fears about attending university were. To ensure that a successful and informative workshop could be created, it was important to determine what information students might already know about college and what information they might be lacking. With this in mind, the idea of a "College Knowledge Jeopardy" came about. This game would be played with the recruited students. After primarily communicating with the students, they were asked to complete a pre-survey, before the game, that included questions regarding college and college readiness. Such questions included, "Are you currently planning to attend college? " and so on. This pre-survey was done in order to obtain intel on how the students felt about attending college or how prepared they felt to enroll. Following this, two teams of students proceeded to play Jeopardy. The game contained 25 questions including information about college admissions, majors, true/false questions and miscellaneous information all about college. The goal of the game was to determine how much the students already knew about college admissions and readiness. This would provide the intel about what information that may need to be touched on more profusely during the workshop.

A post-survey was then conducted directly with the students after the game where they themselves had the ability to tell us what they were expecting or wanting from the workshop. Through this, we were able to get each student's direct input. Essentially, through the College Knowledge Jeopardy, it was expected to obtain key points in regards to what the recruited youth

needed in order to continue with their dream of attending college. Through the gathered data, those running the workshop would be familiarized with the information and resources needed to conduct an impactful and helpful workshop.

If done properly, the workshop can bring many benefits to students by allowing them to interact with peers and mentors which can heavily impact their life. The main purpose of the workshop is to well inform the students about many options and opportunities that they may never imagine existed nor are available to them. A detailed implementation plan and timeline can be seen in the Scope of Work in Appendix A.

Assessment Plan & Expected Outcomes

As an assessment evaluation of the program, a survey was conducted among the eight students within the agency in order to assess the effectiveness and benefits of the program. Information asked for on the survey included questions such as "Are you planning to attend college?" and "What tools might allow you to succeed on your path to higher education". Feedback for the questions was helpful and included positive comments. As the program idea spread amongst the youth, students reported feeling some sort of relief knowing that they were not alone in their attempt to venture into higher education. Additionally, fellow interns and mentors at the agency found the program's goals beneficial and necessary.

The project's outcomes are expected to encourage the community's young people to continue their education into superior education (ei. University, trade school, college). The priority of the workshop is to inform these attending students about higher education, provide motivation and aid when applying to schools, and provide tools that may be needed for success

as first generation graduates from immigrant families. Through gathered information and preparedness, a successful workshop for the students feels guaranteed.

Additionally, the overall expected outcome for this project is to provide educational aid to the community's youth and to inspire them to continue on the path of higher education. By allowing them to continue on the path to higher education we hope to provide them with a better and brighter future. Through engagement with the workshops, the youth will be provided with the adequate tools, support, resources and information that will ensure their path to higher education.

Project Results

The first workshops were advanced by a fun and interactive College knowledge Jeopardy game which allowed the students to show some interest in college. Following this, the first workshop, "The Career Roadmap," presented by the RISE program, was held on October 18, 2021 and was then followed by a second workshop on November 8, 2021; the results were as expected and many youths attended and got engaged in the workshop. The workshop's material was prepared to inform the youth on the following information: the varying types of higher education available to them, the differences between community college vs. a four-year college, the differences amongst CSUs, UCs, California private colleges, and out-of-state colleges, options of technical and vocational training. Information regarding obtaining specific degrees was presented in the second workshop on different ways to pay for college and financial aid deadlines, as well as obtainable loans was also included in presented information.

The youth within the program attended the workshop and participated in pre and post surveys. Such surveys included questions such as "What questions do you have about college and the differing options?" (pre-survey) and "After this workshop, do you think you have learned more about college and your different career options?" (post-survey). The results of the surveys were satisfactory for the project because the youth collaborated and answered all questions. An expected outcome was for collaborations from both the youth and the program. It was also expected that the youth would show further interest in college or higher education. All of these expectations were met as collaboration from the youth was seen through participation and further interest was shown through the youths' question asking and additional comments. Additionally, collaboration from the affiliated agency RISE was seen through the conduction of the workshop itself and how thorough they were at answering any and all questions.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Living in Watsonville for many years and having children who attend school locally allows one to realize what the community is in need when it comes to higher education and opportunities. The opportunity to intern at United Way of Santa Cruz within the Jovenes SANOS program inspired others and really looked into the needs of the community's youth at the program. Through this, it was determined essential to develop a capstone project that could provide young people with the resources and knowledge they needed about higher education. Thus the idea of collaborative workshops was created.

Through the duration of the capstone project, numerous difficulties arose. Looking for an affiliated agency with the capacity to conduct the workshop proved difficult. Lots of emails were delivered to multiple agencies and no response was ever returned. The mentor's support was fundamental during this difficult time as she provided a list of additional agencies to contact. As the RISE program began to show interest in hosting the workshops, it was important to collaborate effectively, pay importance to time management, and take leadership in order to determine the workshop's success. Essentially, the alliance of both agencies was successful and allowed for the development of the project.

A future recommendation for the agency, or working intern, would be to properly plan their project or events, manage their time effectively, mark important deadlines, and set goals all from the very beginning. It's also important to note that making connections with other agencies will make one's work easier. Additionally, being willing to make changes on projects may allow for a better outcome and working at a good pace and reaching set goals may allow for delays to be avoided within the project.

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Appendix A
Scope of Work

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
Starting the project with a Google Docs form for the drop-in hours as a first step	Attending the drop-in hour and distributing a survey	May 10, 2021	Gabriela Sanchez
Research potential workshops and Outreach to community Organizations	Emails, text, and calls	August 30, 2021	Pamela Velasquez
Collaborated in the design of the advertising post for the "College Knowledge event for IG	Canvas platform	September 6, 2021	Pamela Velaquez
Create pre and post surveys for the "College Knowledge Jeopardy"	Google Forms	September 13, 2021	Pamela Velazquez
"College Knowledge Jeopardy" event	Co-hosting	September 20, 2021	Pamela Velazquez
Revise the results of the event surveys	Checking Google Forms	September 23, 2021	Pamela Velazquez
Contact the organizations that will offer the workshop	Emails, text, and calls	September 27, 2021	Pamela Velazquez RISE Program
Set up dates and times with RISE Student Programs for the workshop	Emails	October 4, 2021	Pamela Velazquez RISE Program
Create advertising for the set of workshops and pre and post surveys	Canva platforms/ Google Forms	October 11, 2021	Pamela Velazquez
The presentation of the 1st Workshop "Career Roadmap"	Developing the capstone project with the collaboration of the RISE program	October 18, 2021	Pamela Velazquez RISE program
The 2nd Workshop was presented "Career Roadmap"	The second part of the capstone project with the collaboration of the RISE program	November 8, 2021	Pamela Velazquez RISE program