

Melissa Nicolas

May 10, 2019

Rich Collins Final Report

Narrative Report:

Initially, I planned for this project to be a partnership with the Waltham Boys and Girls' club in an effort to catalyze a college preparedness course for twelve first-generation high school students by providing them with a collegiate expedition where we will be able to indulge and engage in various college tours in surrounding states—most specifically Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York—, a trip that otherwise would not have been available to them. As time has progressed the project went through many mini transformations. Instead of a week-long college tour that would involve traveling to many states and booking many hotels for all of the participants of the trip, the fellowship committee thought this project best should work as a focus group for a potentially larger group/trip next year. Therefore we plan on taking 8 kids on two-day trips to tour local colleges in Massachusetts and some universities in Providence, Rhode Island. These trips have been scheduled for May 25th and June 8th originally they were scheduled for the public school's system's predetermined spring break (April 14th- April 20th) but unfortunately the Boys and Girls club did not have enough staff members that week to be able to go on the trip and support the club at the same time. Anna Sebunnya is the education coordinator of the Waltham Boys and Girls club and she has been a tremendous help throughout this entire process. Originally this was her project idea but because of lack of funding could get up and running. Anna was very helpful with securing spaces at the Boys and Girls club for our biweekly workshops, detailing the tools or supplies

needed for the budget proposal and communicating with local colleges to have a tour guide ready to help the students engage with the colleges.

We held a total of four workshops this semester with the teens. The first workshop was about distinguishing between a school that is a match and a school that is the right fit. This workshop revealed that many of the teens did not know that there was a difference and that their plans for college were just to apply to schools that would accept their grades. The second workshop centered around what resources can be found on a college campus that we felt it was necessary the teens know about. Those resources ranged from career centers and financial aid office to police escort systems and mental and physical health centers. We replaced one of our workshops for a panel discussion with current Brandeis and Bentley undergraduates to take any questions that the youth in Waltham had about the application process, college experience, and post-college concerns. We expanded the discussion out to more than just the 8 teens in the program but to any high schoolers in Waltham that wanted to participate. We realized that many of the concerns of Waltham youth are the financial aid and application process, many students believed they would not be able to afford college and that they would have to fill out the financial aid forms themselves due to the existing language barriers in their home. Many teens expressed that because they will be the first ones in their family to go to college, they do not know what to expect and do not expect much assistance from their families. The Brandeis and Bentley students used the discussion to tell the youth of some of the things that helped them get through the financial aid and college application process and what resources that were available to them, which many students found really helpful and eased their anxieties about college. From the responses of the panel discussion, the last workshop before the trip covered everything the

teens needed to know about the financial aid application, scholarship applications, and college applications. We had a financial aid advisor come in to speak with the teens and answer any questions they had. Anna and I also researched local scholarships that the teens could apply for and also gave them advice about the scholarship packet the high school provides. These workshops were tremendously successful because of the impact they had on each student outlook on college.

This project was very much a learning experience for both Anna and I professionally. Some of the major obstacles of this project was finding a consistent time each week for Anna and I to meet to discuss logistics and plan the workshops and trips. We both had very hectic schedules and sometimes we had to move or even cancel meetings for many unforeseen conflicts that would occur when our meetings were. The next biggest obstacle for our project was outreach. We knew there would be many teens interested in this project but I was very confused as to why not as many were signing up. Later in the semester after we have solidified our 8 teens, I found out that the marketing for the project was only to club kids and the project was made exclusively to club kids which was not my idea for the project. I wanted as many teens, club members or not, to be able to use this opportunity. This is something that greatly hindered the number of students in the program.

For right now the project is coming to a close we just need to go on our college tours in late May and early June and hopefully continue this project again next year. There are still a lot of teens that have expressed interest in doing this if it were made available. Future plans would include hopefully a bigger program with more workshops starting at the very beginning of the spring semester and many guest speakers with expertise on various subjects. The students will be

more involved in what things they want to talk about. Many of the teens expressed that they would like the financial aid workshop to be extended out to parents in Waltham so that they can help their kids with that process, which I believe is a wonderful idea and if possible will definitely be implemented next year. My goal is for this project to create a legacy in Waltham that all community members would like to be involved in and hopefully will address the disparities in graduation rates within Waltham as well as the disparity between resources available to students regarding college.

#### Evaluation:

To begin the process of the college preparedness workshop we required that each student applying fill out an application expressing why they are interested in this program and what do they feel they could learn from it. We used these applications as guides as to what we think the teens want and make sure we were catering to their needs and not what we felt was best. This application was when we thought we would be doing the week-long trip but none of the students objected to the change in the duration of the trip. After we finished the workshop series we also required each student to partake in the exit survey so that we could measure the success of the workshops independent of the trip but also Anna and I wanted to know how well we did relay all this information to the teens and how well did we facilitate relevant conversation that would prove to be beneficial. The results of the survey were very positive the teens gave the entire project very high scores and showed major interest continuing with this project as seniors for next year.



**Name:** Muriel Dol

**Date:** 11/4

**High School & Graduation year:** Waltham High 2020

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## WBGC College Program Application

*The Waltham Boys & Girls Club College Tour program is for youth in their junior year of high school. This program is not only for youth to visit schools they have interest in, but also to prepare them for tours they attend on their own as well as ready these students for the college experience. To help us give the experience to those who will utilize this tour to its fullest extent, please fill out this application and return to the Waltham BGC Education Center by February 1st, 2018.*

**The WBGC College Program will begin and on Thursday, February 28th @ 6:30 and will continue alternating Thursdays until May 2nd, if admitted can you make the commitment to attend all meetings.**

Yes, I can.

**Are you available during the week of April Break (Sunday, April 14th to Saturday, April 20th) to join us on a multi-state tour?**

Yes, I am available during that week.

**What colleges do you have an interest in on the East Coast?**

I have an interest in Brandeis University, Bard University, Tufts, John Hopkins, and UPenn.

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**This program is meant to help you gain skills while you navigate your college process. What would skills are you looking to gain by going on this college prep program?**

I am hoping to gain a better sense of where I want to be in a few years. Choosing a college is a very important decision to make. I know that the environment I am in will play a role in the amount of success I have. Being able to tour schools and learning the right questions to ask will help me pick the best place for me when the time comes.

**What do you plan on majoring in once you're in college/ what career have peeked your interest?**

I plan on majoring in neuroscience/biology.

**In a minimum of 250 words please explain how you this program will be beneficial to you as you are looking into and apply for schools. (Please attach to application)**

This program will be beneficial to me because being able to visit campuses can help me narrow down where I want to go. Thinking about where I want to apply has been a stressful experience so far. One's environment plays a big role in their mental health. I would want to be on a campus that feels welcoming and where I can be happy. Looking at brochures and websites do not always show what the actual school is like. I want to be able to be on campus and get a firsthand experience at the schools that I will be applying to. By visiting some of the colleges I am planning to apply to I will be able to get the sense of what the school's atmosphere is like and whether I can see myself being successful there or not. A lot of colleges also tend to look at whether an applicant has visited their campus in the past. This opportunity to do so would help give me that extra boost. Not a lot of students are able to visit schools they want to apply to and I think it is very important. Additionally, being a part of this program would grant me the support and resources I need in order to be able to visit colleges that are farther away. Both of my parents are very busy and do not have the time to take me on college tours that are far away. By being a part of the College Program I would not have to be held back by that. This program would give me opportunities to learn more and prepare myself for college.

# Exit Survey

Please submit feedback regarding the course you have just completed, including feedback on course structure, content, and instructor.

\* Required

## College Tour Program \*

Your answer

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### Level of effort

Poor      Fair      Satisfactory      Very good

Level of effort you put into the meetings

### Instructor Performance

Presentations were clear and organized

Instructor stimulated student interest

Instructor effectively used time during meetings

Instructor was available and helpful

Gave prompt and had useful feedback

### Meeting content

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree

Learning objectives were clear

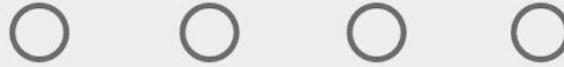
Meeting content was organized and easy to understand

Meeting information was relevant

Meeting was



Meeting was organized to allow all students to participate fully



What aspects of this program were the most useful or valuable? \*

Your answer

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How would you improve this program? \*

Your answer

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What colleges have you not visited yet?

Your answer

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Would you be interested in going on a tour in the fall? \*

tour in the fall? \*

- Yes
- No
- Depends on the school

Would you like to meet in August/early September to start the Common Application?

- Yes
- No

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managing up in which I needed to make Anna's job easier sometimes and take on some of the harder work like contacting Colleges for the trip or adding to the slides for the workshops. One of the biggest struggles in my project was feeling a sense of ownership over it. This was because this was an idea I did not conceive myself but felt passionate for but this was a project that existed before me and I did not feel I had a place to make demands or changes that I thought would be beneficial to the project. By the end of the project, I was able to overcome that internal struggle. I realized that I am someone that likes to take on a lot and does not like to ask for help. I can be very hard on myself but one thing I definitely learned is that I need to start establishing more boundaries for myself. There is a limit for everything and I definitely learned my limits this year trying to implement this project, be a full-time student, part-time worker, and engage in many extracurriculars at Brandeis including but not limited to 8 hours of dance practice every week. In the end, I became more confident in myself and I am very proud of the work I was able to accomplish during this fellowship and the lasting relationships I have made with Will and the rest of my Cohort.