

## Urban Education Initiative & Project Coach Impact Report 2017-18



The **Smith College Urban Education Initiative** provides college students with the chance to engage deeply in one of the most compelling issues of the day -- economic and educational inequality in the US -- and to prepare them for meaningful careers that work to bridge economic, educational and social divisions.

More than 1,500 students in a range of majors have participated in the Urban Education Initiative (UEI) since 2000,

interning in classrooms and working as mentors and tutors in Project Coach, Smith College's nationally recognized after-school program. These service learning experiences, combined with UEI coursework, give Smith students the opportunity to engage in both scholarly and on-the-ground explorations of how social, economic and political conditions influence the education -- and, ultimately, life opportunities -- of children growing up in urban environments.

### What We Do

#### **Prepare the next generation of skilled urban teachers**

We provide a range of opportunities for Smith graduate and undergraduate students to gain experience working with teachers, children, and families in urban educational settings. We emphasize the importance of on-the-ground learning for college students interested in learning about teaching and how the challenges of urban education are embedded economic, social, and political contexts. UEI provides apprenticeship opportunities in our own programs and with alumnae who are currently teaching in urban contexts. One of our goals is to recruit and prepare students to become educators and to tackle the challenges of urban education nationwide.

#### **Provide life-changing experiences to high school students and the Smithies who mentor them**

Project Coach forms the centerpiece of the Urban Education Initiative offerings. It is uniquely positioned as a college outreach and youth development program, where Smith undergraduate and graduate students work to bridge economic, educational and social divisions facing Springfield's youth by empowering and mentoring teenagers to become sports coaches and academic mentors to elementary school students. Supported by Smith undergraduate and graduate students, PC's teen leaders run sports leagues, teach about sportsmanship, fair play and other key values. PC also

convenes community forums that bring together parents, teachers, and local stakeholders to discuss issues of community health and wellness.

### **Conduct & Share Applied Research**

Central to our mission is to explore what works in urban education and to share what we learn. In Project Coach, we wrestle with critical questions in youth development - how do we help a teen coach transfer into the school day the leadership skills they learn and practice in Project Coach? How can tracking data improve our ability to support youth at school? In 2017-18, our youth coaches and staff presented at several conferences, and Smithies conducted research that they shared with the world.



## **Our Programs and Impact**

### **Urban Education Fellowships & Pathway**

Generations of educational reform efforts have come and gone and, still, the single most important school-based factor in student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the front of the class. Teachers matter. Yet the question of how to attract, prepare and retain urban educators who are successful in teaching diverse students is still very much alive.

In 2018, the Urban Ed Initiative launched an innovative new partnership with Teach Western Mass, a local organization founded to attract teaching talent to high-need schools in Western Massachusetts. In joining forces, we were able to expand our January term practicum to include college students from Hampshire College, Mt. Holyoke College, and the University of Massachusetts. In addition, we deepened the learning our January interns do by creating a credit-bearing seminar course for the spring that serves as the culminating experience for students who participated in the intensive apprenticeship. We called the seminar a “Case Study of Education in Western Massachusetts.” The course provided the opportunity for students to systematically reflect on what they experienced during January while exploring core questions related to urban education school reform. The course also connected students with influential educational leaders in Massachusetts through panels, field trips and guided conversations on contemporary challenges in the regional educational landscape.

Developing solutions to the challenges facing America’s educational system will require a diverse team of talented and driven educators. This new partnership, course, and a focus on building a cohort of Fellows that will learn together across the year has been an exciting step forward in our efforts to help aspiring teachers become educators “who matter” in profound and life-changing ways.

### ***What is the Urban Education Pathway?***

Open to students from the Five Colleges, students engage in a progression of three program elements that prepare them for in-school experience and deep reflection.

- Fall orientation sessions that prepare students to step into an urban classroom.
- A January interterm fellowship where students gain hands-on teaching skills by serving as assistant teachers in Springfield, New York City, Boston or another American city. We place students in some of the most innovative schools in the country, including New Visions schools, KIPP, and more.
- A spring seminar where students engage deeply with local Western Massachusetts educators, school leadership and policy experts.

### ***By The Numbers***

- 1,200 inner city youth in classrooms from Springfield to Los Angeles received teaching assistance and tutoring
- 32 Smith and Five College students completed intensive January teaching fellowships in New York City, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Springfield, Holyoke
- 23 Smith and Five College students completed the spring seminar, becoming our first graduating cohort of Urban Education Scholars

### **Urban Education Initiative Alumna Spotlight: Glendean L. Hamilton**

***"Project Coach and the Urban Education Initiative were the first experiences that showed me the remarkable things that young people can do when they are given agency to try, to lead, to question, and to create." – Glendean Hamilton***



As an academic coach in Project Coach and the Urban Education Initiative, Glendean L. Hamilton advised, mentored and tutored city youth facing myriad challenges to grow into their potential. Today, Glendean advises mayors across the world as they wrestle with various management challenges in their missions to create stronger, more effective, and performance-oriented cities. As Program Manager for Mayoral Relations at The Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, Glendean inspires mayors to apply cutting-edge solutions to complex and persistent problems and helps city leaders achieve real results for citizens. She is passionate about helping mayors across the world strategize, implement, and measure performance around key priorities of significance to each

particular city's unique cultural, political and historical context. Glendean sees cities as the ultimate engines of prosperity, innovation, and creativity in American society. Glendean was a guest lecturer for the cohort of Boston Urban Education Fellows in January, 2018, sharing her insights about how education policy can shape a city.

## Project Coach

Informed and inspired by the belief that sport can be a powerful catalyst for youth development, Project Coach brings together Smith College students with community partners to narrow the opportunity gap for under-resourced children in Springfield. Smith students mentor teenagers, who then coach and mentor elementary students. Our cascading mentorship model helps address educational equity in Springfield, and is a win-win for elementary students, teenagers, and the college students who learn by mentoring them.



### ***By The Numbers***

- 335 young people in Springfield participated in transformative out of school programming through Project Coach this year
- 170 elementary students participated in Project Coach Afterschool, a 2-day per week sports and enrichment program throughout the school year
- 103 elementary students participated in North End United, Project Coach's Saturday basketball league
- 41 high school students became coaches and mentors, developing leadership skills and providing role models to children
- 21 middle school students participated as apprentice coaches, learning from high school mentors and practicing high impact coaching skills.
- 55 Smith students gained hands-on teaching and mentoring experience through Project Coach, both sharing their knowledge and learning from their students.
- 7 Smith College graduate students participated as Project Coach Fellows, mentoring youth coaches throughout the school year while earning their Master of Arts in Teaching or Exercise and Sports Studies.
- 48 Smith College undergraduates tutored and mentored teens, serving as "Academic Coaches" and supporting Project Coach by creating videos, developing games-based activities, and interviewing youth in Smith's "laboratory afterschool program."

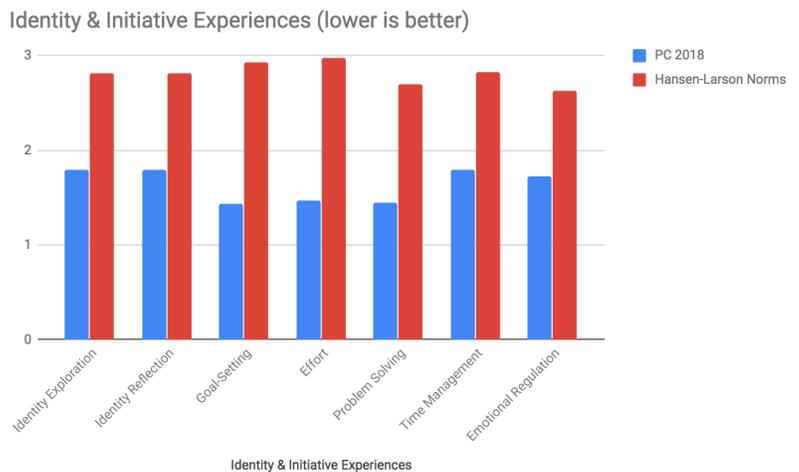
### **Project Coach's Impact on Teens**

- 100% of our high school seniors graduated from high school. In contrast, in 2017, only 77% of Springfield students graduated from high school.
- All of our graduating seniors made a plan to attend college in fall 2018, including Springfield Technical Community College, New England Institute of Technology, and Westfield State.

**“To me, I feel like Project Coach is trying to teach us that in life, it’s not all about getting or receiving and it’s more about giving and helping others. I think Project Coach is a good program because [...] it teaches people that we can be role models no matter what age we are.”**

**- Youth Coach**

Our evaluation measures show that after participating in Project Coach for one year, our teen coaches develop assets and skills in several areas: social emotional learning, academic achievement, and contributing to their community. Our coaches showed high scores in several measures of social emotional learning. In June 2018, coaches completed the Youth Experiences Survey (YES), a standardized assessment developed by the University of Illinois that provides comparison data with over 2,000 teens in comparable programs. PC youth scored significantly better (lower scores are more favorable) than the comparison data in every major category of the YES. When compared to the scores of teenagers who participate in other youth programs across the country, PC teens showed better than average experiences, particularly in two categories: Goal Setting and Effort.



In June 2018, we led a series of focus groups with youth to hear their perspectives on what they had learned in Project Coach. Several coaches noted that PC helped them develop public speaking skills or come “out of their shell.” Many coaches described how they built resiliency skills in PC that help them persevere through academic and social challenges. One student reflected that, “[PC teaches that]....you can make a couple of mistakes but you can also learn from your mistakes so you can’t doubt yourself every time you make a mistake. You’ve got to keep trying, get up and try again. If you show the kids you’re giving up, it’s going to teach them that if they make one little mistake, they have to give up.”

**Project Coach’s Impact on Elementary Students**

We tracked our impact on elementary age participants in two ways this year: 1) Through a pre-post survey of social emotional skills, and 2) By surveying parents about the perceived impact of PC on their children. Both measures showed that PC has a positive effect on the children who participate in afterschool and weekend programming. In a 2018 survey taken of parents of 3rd-5th graders who participate in PC, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. 100% of parents reported that they were satisfied with their child’s experience in Project Coach. Other key findings include:

- 90.5% of parents said that their child had learned a new skill or habit participating in PC, for example, teamwork, sportsmanship, and focus.
- 63.2% of parents reported an improvement in their child’s health from participating in PC.

Additionally, we now have two years of data about growth in social emotional learning. Our pre-post survey of social emotional learning reveals that PC can impact a student’s mindset and attentional control, two key skills that impact educational and health outcomes. In Spring 2017, our assessments showed that PC had the greatest impact on Growth Mindset, or the belief that one’s abilities can change and grow with effort over time. Growth Mindset is a central value within PC, and has far-reaching impacts on young people’s education and health.



Qualitative data from our parents also shows that PC has a positive impact on elementary students’ academics. In our Spring 2018 survey of parents, 85.7% of parents stated the belief that Project Coach had helped their child to succeed in school. In focus groups with parents that we conducted in Spring 2017, several parents shared that their children had become more willing to ask for help and to focus on schoolwork as a result of

program participation. One parent explained: “I just feel like Project Coach has helped [my son] establish a better confidence in saying it's okay to need help, and it's okay to help others.” Another parent shared that he saw benefit in the unique exposure that Project Coach brings to academic opportunities. The 5th grade daughter of this parent visited the Smith College Art Museum with PC. He said, “anyone who takes my daughter to a college is alright with me, because I just want to encourage her to just keep on going and get it into her mind early that the twelfth grade is not it.”

## Sharing the Model: Applied Research and Presentations

Our students, faculty, and staff are deeply engaged in sharing the work we do with a wider community of scholars and youth-serving organizations. Below is a roundup of the public presentations we shared this year.

**Student Presentations:** two students shared unique perspectives from their experiences in UEI during the annual Smith in the World Conference.

**Katie Wing '18J presented “Situated Self: A classroom without walls”**

Katie developed the Young Women's Leadership Group through her connection with Project Coach and UEI. As the Student Life and School Culture Intern at Chestnut Middle School in Springfield, Katie crafted and implemented a 15-week enrichment program focused on women's leadership. The program's purpose: to offer its members the space to expand and strengthen their capacity for interpreting and articulating themselves and the world around them.

**Simin Saba Royesh '20 presented “How the Urban Education Fellowship shaped my understanding of an American Public High School”**

As a student-teacher at Harvest Collegiate High School in New York City, Simin helped the school's Social Studies Department develop a curriculum about Afghanistan called “Developing Nations: Human Rights and Genocide.” The experience helped her understand and compare Harvest Collegiate, a public NYC high school, with her own high school experiences within two private institutions: Marefat High School (Kabul, Afghanistan) and Mounds Park Academy (Minnesota, United States).

Faculty, Staff, and Youth Coach Presentations

**Playing for Change: Out-of-School Programming's Quest to Close Opportunity Gaps (March 2018)**

PC Co-Founder Sam Intrator gave his inaugural lecture as the Elizabeth A. Woodson 1922 Professor of Education and Child Study. His lecture told Project Coach's story, from Sam's early days on a Brooklyn basketball court to today's enduring challenges for promising youth growing up in neighborhoods stricken by poverty. A full house of students, faculty, and community members attended and engaged in a thoughtful discussion about the potential for programs like PC to transform lives.

**Breaking Barriers Workshop** (January 2018): PC Director Jo Glading-DiLorenzo and PC Staff and Alum Joe Wray presented at the MA Youth Soccer Association Breaking Barriers conference in Boston, joining leaders in regional, national and international sports-based youth development organizations to share lessons-learned and facilitate discussion and action on the “play gap” and how to spark sport opportunities for children born into economic disadvantage.

**Transforming Education for Social Justice** (March, 2018): Coaches and staff from the PC team led an active, participatory workshop at the “Transforming Education for Social Justice Conference” hosted by the Collaborative for Educational Services at Easthampton High School. The conference brought together hundreds of educators, students and activists from New England schools for workshops and discussions on the ways in which in-school and out-of-school education can promote equity, social justice and civic engagement.

**Keeping Youth Moving in the Right Direction: Real-time Data Tools that Target Quicker, Smarter and More Responsive Supports** (July 2018): PC Staff presented about real-time data tools that we are developing to provide targeted support to high school students at the Partnership for After School Education Conference in New York City.

## What's Next?

- **Deepen focus on academic achievement for Project Coach youth coaches**

While PC has proven to help high school students develop meaningful leadership skills and social emotional skills, and enhance their ability to work with a team, many of our students continue to struggle in school. This year, we will build on work started in 2017 to explore how tracking data on academic challenges our youth face can help us target real-time support. A new Academic Coach Coordinator will focus on this challenge by interfacing with and training mentors and students on how to approach and overcome difficult school situations.

- **Continue to expand Urban Education Pathway, especially in Western Massachusetts schools**

In Spring 2018, we piloted a new 1-credit course at Smith entitled Case Study of Education In Western Massachusetts. Taught by Sam Intrator and a series of guest speakers representing a diverse network of local school and community partners, the course followed up to the January Interterm Urban Education Fellowship that 32 Five Colleges students completed. We'll expand on this work by continuing to partner with Teach Western Mass to recruit additional students from the Five Colleges, and to add a Year 2 experience for students who completed the Pathway last year.

- **Conduct participatory action research alongside young adult alums of Project Coach to investigate how to help students transition out of high school more successfully**

In Summer 2018, the Urban Education Initiative received our first federal grant. Over the years in Project Coach, we have had many conversations with youth leaders and young adults who have worked in Project Coach about the challenges they have faced leaving high school. In response to these conversations, we wrote a grant to the federal government to explore what our program and others like it can do to better support young people as they figure out next steps after high school. There were 208 applicants and we were one of just 14 grant recipients nationwide to receive a grant to do this work. We are now embarking on a year-long participatory action research project to investigate this challenge in partnership with youth and young adult leaders.

The Urban Education Initiative relies on a vast network of community members and organizations, alums, funders, and individual donors in our work to engage students. These community partners make our work possible and magnify our impact. We are particularly grateful to the family of Jane Grossman Cecil '50, whose generous support underwrites the activities of UEI and the Jandon Center for Community Engagement.

### **Community Partners**

Baystate Health, Brightwood Elementary School, Brightwood Health Center, Chestnut Middle School, Gerena Elementary School, Lincoln Elementary School, New England Farm Workers Council, New North Citizens Council, Partnership for After School Education, Springfield Public Schools, Springfield School Volunteers, Springfield Technical Community College, Teach Western Mass, WGBY, Wright Flight

### **Foundation & Corporate Supporters**

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The **Jandon Center for Community Engagement** engages students, faculty and community partners on social change projects that tackle community driven goals. Through experiential learning and applied scholarship students build essential capacities in critical thinking, creativity, resourcefulness and self-awareness as learners.

They do so while providing significant leadership on complex, urgent challenges facing diverse people and places across society.

