

Project Coach & the Urban Education Initiative

Impact Report 2016-2017

Smith College Jandon Center for Community Engagement

Project Coach is a sport-based youth development program that builds the leadership capacity of Springfield “high risk, high promise” teens. These youth face educational, social or economic obstacles that predict failure. They also have the desire and the capacity to be leaders in their community. Project Coach builds upon community and individual assets to develop leadership through the art of coaching.

For Smith faculty, students, and staff, Project Coach is a laboratory after-school program that provides a rich arena to engage in service learning. Students and faculty investigate in-school and out-of-school factors that impact the academic success and wellbeing of children in economically and educationally disadvantaged cities, while developing their teaching and mentoring capacities.

The Year in Numbers

- **Fifty-six Smith students** engaged in service learning in our nationally recognized sports-based youth development program, Project Coach. Smithies engage in deep learning by participating as mentors, teachers, and coaches to teenagers and elementary school children.
- **44 Springfield youth and young adults** participated in up to 10 hours each week for 38 weeks in positive youth develop programming led and supported by Smith students. They prepared for college and career paths, practiced leadership skills, and found their voices.
- **229 elementary age students** participated in Project Coach programming during the 2016-2017 school year.
- An additional **120 Springfield Public School students** participated in a summer session supported by Project Coach youth through the Mass Migrant Education Program.



Community Impact

Coach Profile: Yesenia

Now 21 and a former teen coach who participated in Project Coach during her high school years, Yesenia illustrates the effect PC has on Springfield youth. Yesenia signed up for Project Coach when she was a high school sophomore and enthusiastically participated in both PC's tutoring and sports training opportunities. The youngest of five siblings, in 2016 Yesenia became the first in her family to graduate from high school, but she didn't stop there. Inspired by the focus on improving health in PC, Yesenia enrolled in Springfield Technical Community College with the goal of becoming a Physician's Assistant. Now in her second year, she is working hard to make this goal a reality, and continues to receive mentorship from Project Coach staff while she works part-time as a Supervising Coach in our program.



Team Stats

- 100% of our coaches in their senior year graduated from high school in 2017. That's in a city with a high school graduation rate of 69%. Our one-on-one mentoring and academic support helps keep youth on track to graduate from high school and move into adulthood with goals and a plan to reach them.
- Project Coach youth consistently rank high on assessments of Development Assets, a nationally recognized tool developed by The Search Institutes. In 2017, youth showed marked increases in Personal Assets, Social Assets, and School Assets after participating in Project Coach for six months.
- At the end of each program year, we ask our coaches to complete the Youth Experiences Survey (YES), which tracks their perceptions of Project Coach and compares their responses to a national data set. In 2017, PC teens scored higher than the national norm on 25 out of 26 measures.

Feedback from Project Coach Parents



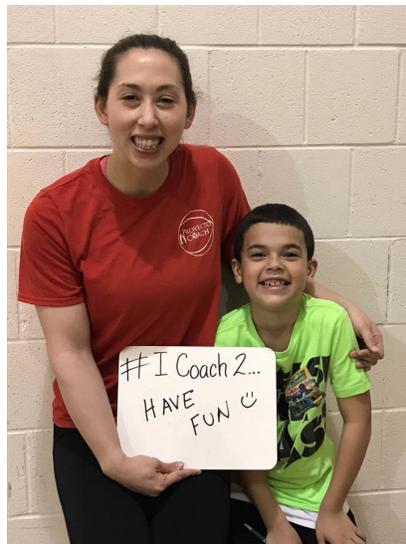
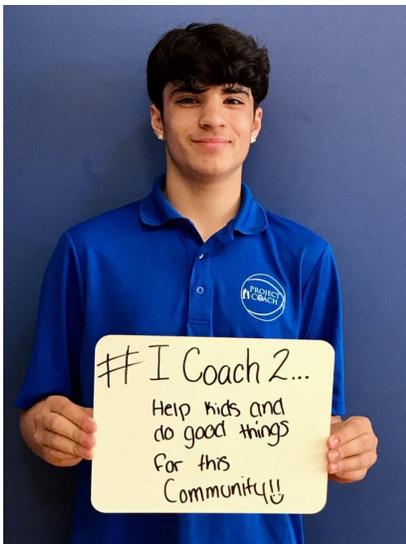
“At Project Coach, my daughter is able to play with other people from different backgrounds and different races. I think that is probably the most important lesson. When I go down to pick her up, I see all kinds of people.”

“Today, the streets are ten times more dangerous [than when I was a child], so instead of me wanting my daughter to go out, I try to keep her inside. So, her playtime is here, in a safe environment where there are people watching all the time.”

-Father of a 5th grader at Gerena Elementary

“The whole day should not be just worrying about schooling. Children need to let go of all this energy, and that is so important for the after school hours. The school is so concentrated on getting prepared for standardized tests that they don't have that time to just be themselves, to let go, to ease the stress, and Project Coach has been a huge way for them to be able to do that. My son had MCAS this week. He's like, mommy I can't wait for Thursday and Friday. I get to have fun. I get to play.”

- Mother of a 3rd grader at Gerena Elementary



Impact on Smith Students

The most important school-based factor in student achievement is teacher quality, and policy makers and researchers are increasingly focused on how to attract, prepare and retain urban teachers who can be successful educators to students from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds. In this context, we combine college-based teacher education and school-based teacher preparation into a powerful pathway that prepares promising students for the challenges of working in high-need schools, districts, cities.

Academic Coursework: Through the Urban Education Initiative, students dig deep into research on education equity and student learning. This year, our students completed the following research, using Project Coach as a springboard and laboratory.

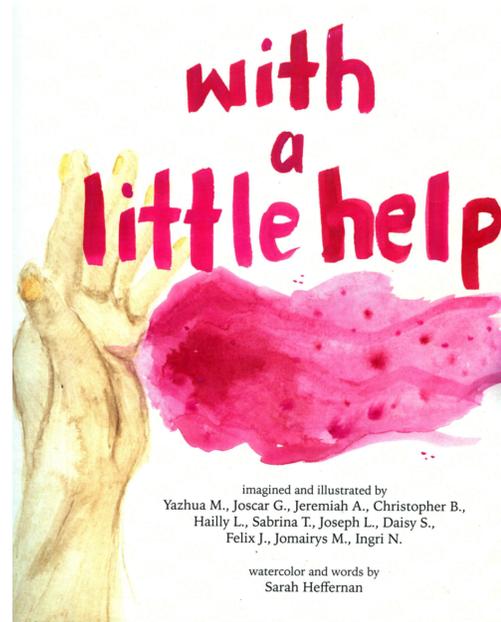
- Kelsey Conti '17 and Katherine Mercado '19, investigated the long-term academic, social and career impacts of Project Coach through an extensive study of PC graduates. They presented their project, *The Smart After School: How Equitable Programs Promote Equitable Access* in April 2017 at **Harvard University's Engaged Scholarship and Social Justice Undergraduate Research Conference**.
- Noa Dubin '19 researched student motivation through an extensive project involving Project Coach young adult coaches and presented her findings at the **2017 Smith College Celebrating Collaborations** showcase.
- Four students in Psychology Professor Nnamdi Pole's Practicum Seminar interned with Project Coach in Spring 2017, conducting first-person interviews and supporting youth programs as a way to deepen their exposure to clinical settings.

"Project Coach impacted nearly every part of my life. That time spent in Project Coach was irreplaceable. Being a part of the program has changed the way I think about youth in general. ... My involvement in Project Coach has inspired me to want to continue to do similar work: to follow a positive youth development framework, to work with adolescents, and to keep encouraging youth into leadership roles."

- Kelsey Conti, Smith College Class of 2017

Apprenticeships in Urban Classrooms

- Ada Comstock scholar Katie Wing '18 completed a teaching fellowship at Chestnut Middle School in Springfield's North End, a Project Coach partner school. She then launched the Young Women's Leadership Group at Chestnut and planned a series of visits to Smith, culminating in the group's participation in Rally Day 2017. Katie continues to serve as the group's advisor, and is now designing curriculum to support the group in Fall 2017 as a special project within the Community Engagement and Social Change concentration.
- Hampshire College student Sarah Heffernan developed a year-long arts education curriculum for Project Coach participants in Gerena School's 5th grade for her Division III capstone. The students learned about African-American artists and created their own children's book. Then, they visited some of the artwork they had studied at the Smith College Museum of Art.



Community-based Mentoring in Urban Settings



- **Out-of-School Program Fellowship:** Six Smith graduate students mentored students in Project Coach for 12-16 hours per week over the course of 43 weeks.
- **Smith College School for Social Work Intern:** A MSW student interned with Project Coach throughout the academic year, practicing clinical skills in a non-traditional school-based setting.
- **Urban Education Mentoring Program:** 46 Smith students and 3 students from the Five Colleges Consortium mentored Project Coach teens one hour each week throughout the academic year.

Impact on the Field of Education & Youth Development

The Urban Education Initiative provides a platform for Smith College to provide leadership within the growing field of education reform and Out of School Time (OST). Faculty and students have written extensively about Project Coach, alums have launched their own OST programs using lessons learned at UEI, and staff and students have trained partners from Springfield to New York City to Chicago on best practices in youth coaching and leadership.

- PC founders' Don Siegel and Sam Intrator's book [The Quest for Mastery](#), published by Harvard Education Press in 2014, has become a seminal resource for OST professionals and a resource for faculty teaching about best practices in education.
- Partner organization Teach Western Mass (TWM) launched their first fellowship program through UEI in 2016-2017. Inaugural PC-TWM Fellow Adam Reid will be teaching for two years in a high-need Holyoke, MA school.
- Project Coach has led seminars and trainings for:
 - The Boys and Girls Club in Springfield
 - Harlem RBI, New York City
 - The Boys & Girls Club of NY
 - Holyoke High School's Summer of Power Academy
 - Bard College's Dream to Achieve Academy
 - Wabash College Youth Program: Teamed with Linda Salisbury
 - Crawfordsville, Indiana YMCA
 - Partners in After School Education, NYC
 - Hyde Park Charter School, Bronx, NYC
 - African Leadership Academy, Botswana, Africa
- Smith-Project Coach Fellow Alums have started programs nationwide:
 - Coaching for Change, Boston, MA
 - Fugees Family, Scottdale, GA

"Many students who participate in Project Coach identify the PC fieldwork experience as one of the most significant contributions to their learning: about themselves, adolescents, education reform, and teaching. Even students who do not choose to participate in PC learn from their classmates who do: the program builds an active bridge between theory and practice that is relevant, complex and a compelling source of problems of understanding to bring to the classroom for analysis and discussion."

- Carol Berner, Education & Child Study Professor

Looking Forward: Plans for 2017-2018 and Beyond

College and Career Readiness Support for Project Coach Seniors

High school graduation is no longer adequate preparation for either college or the world of work, recent research shows. The pay gap is widening, and to keep up we must find ways to support adolescents moving into college or viable career pathways. This year, we'll work with a Campus Compact of Southern New England AmeriCorps VISTA to create a workable transition to adulthood program for graduating seniors in Project Coach. This laboratory initiative will engage Smith students in trying out new mentoring tactics to help students set academic and life goals and work toward achieving them under the mentorship and guidance of Smith students, faculty and staff.

Integrating Social Work Approaches to Youth Development

Many youth who group in neighborhoods disadvantaged by few economic opportunities and underperforming schools experience high levels of trauma and have few opportunities to develop clear goals for their future. This year we're partnering with experts of Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT), a social work approach to values and goal setting that is highly adaptable to youth populations. We'll partner with the Brattleboro Retreat to implement this method alongside our social work staff and MSW intern.

Bridging Community Through Sport for Refugee Youth

Greater Springfield and the surrounding areas have become home to thousands of refugee families, and Northampton itself has welcomed several new refugees in the past several months. Sport has the power to create dialogue and bridge cultural differences. With funding from Smith's President's Innovation Challenge, this year we will launch a weekend sports league, Community United, geared toward refugee youth and providing a space for Smith athletes and students to engage in community-based learning while making a deep impact.

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 Jandon Center's activities.

Community Partners

Baystate Health
Boys and Girls Club of Springfield
Brightwood Elementary School
Brightwood Health Center
Chestnut Middle School
Gerena Elementary School
Lincoln Elementary School
Mass Migrant Education Program
New England Farm Workers Council
New North Citizens Council
Partners for a Healthier Community
Partnership for After School Education
Springfield Public Schools
Springfield School Volunteers
Springfield Technical Community College
Teach Western Mass
TechSpring
WGBY
Wright Flight

Foundation & Corporate Supporters

Amelia Peabody Foundation
Baystate Health
City of Holyoke
Foundation for Global Sports Development
Malloy Family Foundation
Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Contact

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The Urban Education Initiative (UEI) engages Smith students in one of the most compelling issues of our time -- the intractable and widening opportunity gap between children born into poverty and those born into means. UEI combines diverse coursework, service learning in after-school and classroom settings, and immersive apprenticeships in major US cities to provide our students with foundational knowledge and experience to understand the complexity of social inequality in schools. We prepare students for meaningful careers that work to bridge economic, educational and social divisions facing low-income children, families and communities.

In addition to participating in Project Coach, students also have the option of participating in immersive internships based in cities around the country, including New York, Boston, Springfield, and Los Angeles. In 2016-2017, 22 students served as Urban Education Fellows.