

Huckleberry Youth Programs

The Huckleberry Wellness Academy has been recognized as a model health career college pipeline for low income, youth of color most of whom will be first in family to go to college. This innovative program, while only in its fifth year, has demonstrated that with academic and psycho-social support, youth can achieve more than what current demographic trends portend. With 90% of our high school graduates heading to college, these youth have worked hard to reach their potential.

HWA currently has two alumni cohorts that will be juniors and seniors in college this coming Fall. These cohorts were small in number (11 and 12 respectively) and staff devoted a lot of time easing their transition. During the early years of the program, since we had not yet reached capacity, this support was possible. Now with over 130 youth in our San Francisco and Marin programs we will not be able to accommodate the same level of attention for our 28 rising college freshmen. Despite a curriculum that stresses academic preparation, psycho-social well-being and self-advocacy, research indicates the odds are against our youth completing college.

Huckleberry Youth Programs proposes to use RMYF funding to develop a College Liaison position to facilitate the transition for our Huckleberry Wellness Academy participants as they enter secondary institutions. We would initially target CSU East Bay, San Francisco and Sonoma, along with City College of San Francisco, Santa Rosa Junior College and UC Santa Cruz.

The College Liaison would accomplish three objectives that currently HWA is unable to provide to our youth:

- 1) To visit targeted campuses to develop an understanding of policies and procedures for new students and to identify and establish relationships with key support staff on campus particularly in those programs created specifically to support our youth such as the CSU Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP). These contacts would be recorded in the college handbook described below. It would also be helpful to have a dedicated staff person to be able keep up with these policies as they change to inform our college preparatory support as much as possible.
- 2) Provide assistance for our youth as they transition to campus, introducing them to staff on site, reviewing course assignments and facilitating engagement in extra-curricular activities. Another service would be to facilitate the exceedingly more complicated transfer process from community college to four year institutions which is applicable to more than a third of this year's high school graduates.
- 3) Develop a college handbook focusing on basic "How to" directions for managing the transition to college identifying by name key individuals on campus. This information would complement existing resources provided by the individual institutions but would highlight specific barriers and challenges faced by our population.

A position devoted toward easing this transition for our participants would provide us with valuable information about the degree of support necessary to ensure first year completion for our target population especially for our higher need youth who tend to enter community college.