



4-H Capitol Experience

Preparing Youth for Active Citizenship

March 20-23, 2011 (29th year)

Audience

This program is open to Michigan high school teens interested in citizenship programs and state and local government. Total attendance was 46 youth plus 13 adult chaperones from 19 Michigan counties. Grade levels reached were: 6—9th, 12—10th, 13—11th, and 15—12th graders; 27 were female and 19 male. People of color comprised 21.74% of youth attendees.

Funding

This is a fee-based program. A limited number of partial and full scholarships are available at the county level based on merit and need.

Objectives

This youth development conference is designed to help youth:

- Discover how to be actively involved in influencing policy decisions.
- Explore different aspects of a policy issue that may affect individuals and communities.
- Learn about the policy process at the state level.
- Increase youths' communication, team work, citizenship, and leadership skills.
- Foster participants' ability to meet new people and make new friends from different places and backgrounds.
- Develop and expand career and personal interests.
- Develop social and academic skills needed for a successful transition to college and life as an adult.

Description

Youth development and experiential education theory and practice are fundamental to the program's design and implementation. There are 39 intentional contact hours. Teens participate in a nine-hour Michigan Legislative Simulation over the four-days. The students are assigned to an issue group; such as health, education and jobs & the economy. As part of the simulation, they research and propose Senate and House bills; conduct House and Senate leadership position elections; participate in legislative committee meetings; debate and vote on bills; and have their bills signed into law by an acting governor. When not participating in the simulation, the youth spend time with their legislators, observe an actual House and Senate session; and visit community and state agencies, lobbyists and legislative aides.

In 2011 there were 17 MSU faculty/staff, 1 MSU student and dozens of Michigan government experts involved.

Outcomes

A pre-/post- survey was used to measure participants skills and perceptions. Below are response highlights for youth who "strongly agreed" with targeted skills. "Before" responses are shown in parentheses.

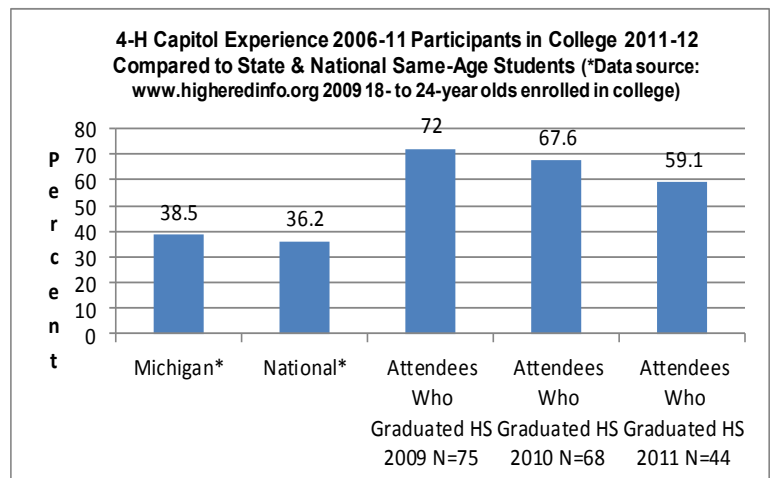
- *I can think critically about public policy issues and find ways for improvement* (7%) 51%
- *I can talk with my legislator* (12%) 60%
- *I can talk with local decision makers* (7%) 51%
- *I plan to vote when I turn 18—95%**
- *I think that teens can influence state government policy makers—97%**
- *I think more positively about government—88%**

(*These outcomes looked at post-Capitol Experience skills and perception only)

Select Comments from Teen Participants

- *I am now interested in state office and making a positive impact. The career experts helped me think about college.*
- *I can now have more of an influence in my community.*
- *I know that if there is something in government that I don't like, I can strive to change it.*
- *I can teach my peers how hard it is to work in state government.*

The program also increases program participants' interest in and readiness for college. Program alumni attend college at a higher rate than their peers.



Contact Information

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