

PROJECT SOAR

STUDENT OUTREACH, ACCESS, & RESILIENCY

Project SOAR Fact Sheet

Overview of Program

Project SOAR (Student Outreach, Access, & Resiliency) is a service-learning experience that routinely places over 100 UA undergraduate mentors in under-resourced, public middle schools in the Tucson area. These students are enrolled in either HED 350 or HED 397B, both of which examine issues of college access. This College of Education program is housed within the Center for the Study of Higher Education in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and Practice.

Courses Associated with Project SOAR

HED 350

In January 2010, Project SOAR's 3-unit course HED 350: Student Outreach, Access & Resiliency in Education, was approved as part of the General Education curriculum and is now a recognized Tier II INDV course. HED 350 is an upper-division undergraduate course that introduces students to the major theories and research conducted in areas of college access, outreach, academic achievement, and resiliency. Although previously listed as HED 397A, this course has been offered since spring 2005, and has always included the Project SOAR service-learning component, which requires that the students mentor for at least 25 hours per semester. HED 350 is now offered during Fall and Summer I semesters.

HED 397B

Offered each spring, HED 397B: Service Learning is a continuation of HED 350. Though this course is a complement to HED 350, HED 350 is not a pre-requisite for HED 397B. Run as a small-group discussion section, this course emphasizes the mentoring experience, while providing supplemental instruction on the major theories and research conducted in areas of college access, outreach, academic achievement, and resiliency. The welcoming classroom environment allows returning students to fine-tune their mentoring skills while assisting classmates who are new to the program, and engages all students in academic coursework regarding current issues in K-12 education and college access. Students are required to spend an average of 1 to 2 hours per week at their assigned schools, for a semester total of 25 hours of service.

Subsections of Project SOAR

Native SOAR

Founded in 2006, Native SOAR is a specific discussion section of both HED 350 and HED 397B that addresses educational issues specific to the local Native American community, and provides mentoring to Tucson's Native American youth.

Cos SOAR

Cos (College of Science) SOAR is a discussion section of both HED 350 and HED 397B specifically designed for CoS undergraduates who are interested in combining science outreach with the mentoring and tutoring they provide at local schools.

Relationship with College of Science

In Summer 2010, Project SOAR agreed to partner with the College of Science to create a section of SOAR specifically for CoS undergraduates. The CoS section of SOAR, currently overseen by Biochemistry doctoral candidate and graduate assistant (GA) Katie Holso, is designed for College of Science undergrads who are interested in combining science outreach with the mentoring and tutoring they provide at local middle schools. Additionally, the CoS SOAR GA will work with the CoS outreach centers (Biosphere 2, Flandrau Science Center, Marine Discovery, Steward Mirror Lab, etc.) to engage SOAR middle school mentees in science through campus visits and/or in bringing resources from these centers into the schools.

Impact of Program

- Over 17,000 mentoring hours have been logged by SOAR students since 2005
- 1,760 middle school students have benefitted from a SOAR mentor since 2005
- A 2010 mentee survey revealed that 73.5% of the middle school students believed they had a mentor who motivated them to do well in school, believed they could be a success (71.3%), and had increased their motivation to get good grades (69.5%)
- 70.1% of the middle school mentees surveyed agreed that their mentors had increased their interest in going to college. Additionally, mentors were credited for increasing their knowledge about getting into college (67.2%) and future careers (64.4%)

Program Leadership

Project SOAR was developed in 2005 and directed by Dr. Jenny Lee, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for the Study of Higher Education, from 2005 through Spring 2009. Associate Professor Dr. Regina Deil-Amen served as director during the 2009-10 academic year, and Dr. Lydia Bell, Assistant Professor of Practice, currently serves as the director of Project SOAR .

Project SOAR Research Efforts

Research stemming from Project SOAR has been presented at the annual meetings of both the Association for the Study of Higher Education and the American Educational Research Association. Publications stemming from these research efforts, co-authored by Jenny Lee, Higher Ed. alumnae Michelle Espino and Stephanie Levitt, and current SOAR Director Lydia Bell, have been either accepted for publication or are under review in various education journals.

Schools Currently Served by Project SOAR

Challenger Middle School (Sunnyside Unified School District)
Chaparral Middle School (Sunnyside Unified School District)
Hohokam Middle School (Tucson Unified School District)
Mansfeld Middle School (Tucson Unified School District)
Roskruge Middle School (Tucson Unified School District)
Wildcat Middle School (Charter)

Project SOAR Contact

Director: Lydia F. Bell, lfbell@email.arizona.edu, (520) 621-1517

Website

<http://soar.web.arizona.edu/>