|  |
| --- |
| **Title of Research Presentation** Partnering with local agencies to prepare youth for food justice and food access careers |
| **Maximum 2500 characters (including spaces but excluding title)****Background/Objectives**The Wayne State University (WSU) Community Health Pipeline (CHP) was formed to engage and empower youth leaders in the areas of food systems, health equity, and food access, as well as connect them with local agencies of change within these areas. The CHP supports Detroit youth in post-secondary opportunities and addresses the lack of diversity in the community health profession by formalizing relationships among food justice organizations, leveraging existing resources, and training youth leaders to address community problems through a participatory action framework. Youth participate in the following 5 pillar CHP process: 1) nutrition education within urban high schools; 2) farmer’s market and urban farm experiences; 3) summer work apprenticeships with local food systems agencies; 4) high school and college student CHP youth advisory board (YAB); and 5) career development and college preparation experiences on a university campus. This paper will explicate collaborations with local agencies and youth and agency perspectives of Pillar 3.**Methods**All CHP youth in Pillars 1-4 (n=882) completed a pre- and post-program survey that assessed interest in college and community health careers; nutrition knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; neighborhood food access; and demographics. Focus groups were conducted with a sample of youth participants (n=16), and surveys and interviews were conducted with agency partners (n=7) to assess perspectives on the summer apprenticeships. Survey results of youth participants (n=53) were assessed using t-tests.**Results**A total of 53 youth (100% Black/African American; 56% female; 55% juniors/seniors) participated in apprenticeships across five agencies. Youth reported significantly (p < .05) more knowledge and confidence regarding nutrition and accessing local farmer’s markets; confidence to attend college and knowledge of food-related careers also significantly increased (p < .05). As future community health advocates, the youth felt that their apprenticeship enabled them to have a positive impact on their community and reported enhancement of key communications, time management and prosocial skills. Agency reports mirrored those of the youth, and all agreed to be host sites in future years. **Discussion**The CHP youth apprenticeship outcomes can assist other community-academic partnerships in designing youth experiences that ensure participation from hardest-to-reach populations and promote youth empowerment.**Keywords**Youth Empowerment, Partnerships, Food Access, Food Justice |