The study was conducted by the Public Policy and Management Center (PPMC) at Wichita State University (WSU). The PPMC is an independent research body, and this report was prepared by the research team. It represents the findings, views, opinions and conclusions of the research team alone, and the report does not express the official or unofficial policy of WSU. Information for this report was supplied by the student attendees of the college experience camp. The accuracy of findings for the report is dependent upon the information they provided.
The PPMC would like to thank the staff and volunteers from the Fairmount GoZones! and Lynette Woodard Recreation Center summer programs. Specifically, the PPMC would like to acknowledge Cassandra Carrington, Darryl Carrington and Angela Buckner. Additionally, the following WSU Hugo Wall School students made significant contributions to the camp: Kaylin Kinchion, Craig Crossette and Kevin Ash.
The Public Policy and Management Center (PPMC) in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, at Wichita State University utilized a portion funds provided by the Knight Foundation to develop a College Experience Summer Camp for youth in grades 3-12, on the WSU campus, but the target population was middle school youth. Approximately 60 youth attended the eight-week summer camp. The youth were recruited through two existing summer programs in the community surrounding WSU: The Fairmount GoZones! summer program, and the Lynette Woodard Recreation Center summer program, led by the City of Wichita.

The camp was designed to provide exposure to college curriculum, requirements, expectations, and campus life to youth who are underrepresented in college populations across the nation. By increasing their exposure, it was theorized there will be an increase in their knowledge of the higher education enrollment process, academic opportunities, athletic opportunities, financial obtainability, and campus life. Furthermore, an increased interest and desire to attend college was expected to be reported.
During the eight weeks on campus, the youth attended mock lectures and activities provided by WSU faculty in the fields of mathematics, engineering, anthropology, art, music, and athletics. The activities and mock lectures were designed to educate the participants on the idea that college can be tailored to their specific interests while demonstrating how exciting learning in college can be. In regard to diversity, youth attended a session provided by the WSU Office of Diversity and Inclusion to show the youth, that despite the popular image of college being for “those with money,” opportunities are available to make college affordable or in many cases free for many of the youth present.

In addition, the PPMC partnered with two community partners to help expand the summer program: The Build and Rebuild Educational Ministries and Math Academy provided an additional day of activities on campus or at the recreation center to expand interest in mathematics; and Art that Touches Your Heart, provided weekly lessons in art on campus to support artistic interests and to prepare for the “graduation” event.

In order to determine whether or not the program had served its purpose, a survey was developed, titled the “The College Awareness Survey for Youth” The survey probed areas in regard to a youth’s emphasis on college, their immediate family’s emphasis on the youth attending college, knowledge of college requirements, knowledge of college life, and family college attendance history. This survey was administered pre-camp to develop baseline data of where youth currently stand in the specified areas. The response rate for the survey pre-camp was approximately 80% (N=40). Results from the survey administered pre-camp are:

1. **I think going to college is important for my future.**
   - 97% Strongly Agree
   - 2% Agree
   - 0% Disagree
   - 1% Neither Agree or Disagree

2. **We talk about going to college a lot in my family.**
   - 12% Strongly Agree
   - 84% Agree
   - 5% Disagree
   - 1% Neither Agree or Disagree

3. **I think I will go to college.**
   - 44% Strongly Agree
   - 54% Agree
   - 1% Disagree
   - 1% Neither Agree or Disagree

4. **I know what I have to do to be ready to go to college**
   - 21% Strongly Agree
   - 32% Agree
   - 47% Disagree

5. **I understand what it is like to go to college**
   - 20% Strongly Agree
   - 34% Agree
   - 46% Disagree

6. **I need more information and help to get ready for college**
   - 9% Strongly Agree
   - 82% Agree
   - 9% Disagree
   - <1% Neither Agree or Disagree

7. **I feel invited to be a student at Wichita State University**
   - 22% Strongly Agree
   - 43% Agree
   - 28% Disagree
   - <7% Neither Agree or Disagree

8. **I would like to spend more time at Wichita State University**
   - 72% Strongly Agree
   - 19% Agree
   - 4% Disagree
   - <6% Neither Agree or Disagree

9. **How many times have you gone to an event, camp, field trip, or activity at Wichita State University?**
   - Majority have visited 1-5 times (92%)
Verbatim quotes when asked “Why do you want to go to college”

“I love to read.”
“Why do you want to go to college”
“I want to get a diploma so I can get a job.”
“Why do you want to go to college”
“I want to be a doctor.”
“Why do you want to go to college”
“I want to get a job.”
“Why do you want to go to college”
“I want to be smart.”
“Why do you want to go to college”
“I want to make money.”

College Experience Camp Student Demographics

Per the data from the pre-camp survey, there appears to be a general desire for the youth to attend college. This is confirmed with the high percentage of the youth believing college is important for their future and a high desire to spend time at Wichita State University. However, we see a disconnect in fulfilling this desire based on the high number of individuals who disagreed with the questions regarding knowing what they have to do to go to college and understanding what it is like to go to college.

Furthermore, a moderate number of individuals did not feel welcomed at Wichita State University and a high number of youth felt they needed more information in order to get ready for college. From this data, the youth have a general desire to attend college for many reasons; however, the youth did not appear to possess the knowledge and resources in order to do so nor did they feel overly welcomed to attend Wichita State University, despite it being literally their back yard. When we look at the condensed list of the participants’ verbatim quotes as to “why they want to go to college,” the real lack of exposure and knowledge of college is displayed.

The responses are insubstantial in the aspect that the youth lack content to understand what it means to go to college. In other words, their answers are very generic. They contain no personalized goals beyond “I want a job,” but don’t say what job they desire, or they state they want to be a doctor but they do not state what type of doctor (which raises the question, do they know that different types of doctors exist i.e. MD, PhD, PharmD, etc.). These responses seem as if college is a foreign world to the participants from our target population. Our summer camp aimed to expose them to this “foreign world” and make it their world.
As mentioned previously, the camp’s activities were designed to provide exposure that would result in an increased desire to attend college. To measure whether or not the design was effective, a post-camp survey was administered on the last day of the program. The response rate for the post-camp survey was slightly higher at approximately 90% (N=53), however, at this amount averages can be still compared as the difference is not enough to change the weight of the averages. The results of the survey administered post-camp are presented in the following graphic:

**Student Perceptions of College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in student answers from before to after camp</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think going to college is important for my future</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We talk about going to college a lot in my family</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I will go to college</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what I have to do to be ready to go to college</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand what it is like to go to college</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need more information and help to get ready for college</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel invited to be a student at Wichita State University</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to spend more time at Wichita State University</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the responses from this data, a positive increase was seen in areas that interpret to our youth participants having an increased interest in attending college. This increase also includes the participants showing an increased knowledge-base of the requirements, resources, and preparation needed to attend college. At the end of camp, all participants stated they felt going to college was important to their future, which is a 3% increase from the pre-camp survey.

A 50% shift from Agree to Strongly Agree was reported in regard to the youth talking about attending college more often with their family. This may be a result of the college summer camp generating conversation in the youth’s household and/or with their family. Furthermore, a significant increase, by 73%, was reported in regard to knowing what is required of the youth to be prepared and eligible to attend college. Correlating with this finding...
was a 67% decrease by those who Strongly Agree that they needed more information to attend college. In addition, qualitative data was gathered post-camp by informal focus sessions with the youth. Overall, youth and adults (summer camp staff/parents/guardians) that participated in the focus groups were overwhelmingly positive about the experience. Many indicated an excitement to continue the experience again or wanting to be more involved at WSU. When looking at the verbatim quotes, we can see that there has been an elaboration in the interest to attend college, with comments including specific programs youth wish to study, mentioning early preparation for college, and expressing realization of how to reach certain careers through college.

**Verbatim quotes recorded post-camp by youth on their experience:**

“I enjoyed making friends and meeting new people.”

“College is fun.”

“I want to go to the aerospace college.”

“I met many new friends.”

“College is easy to get into if you try hard.”

“We need more black people in college.”

“I felt like I was with my friends at school.”

“Learning is not boring in college because you get to learn what you want. In school we have to learn stupid subjects we don’t care about like math and reading.”

“A lot of people go to college and quit. I want to go to college and not quit so I can be a doctor.”

“I didn’t know you can go to college to be a museum worker. I want to do that. I always wondered how you do that.”

“I want to play basketball but I don’t want to go to class.”

“I want to be a doctor but I saw you can be a doctor in math. I don’t get what that means but it sounds better because you don’t have to touch people’s bodies.”

“I gotta start studying now if I plan to be able to get in college, my grades aren’t that good but I got time.”

**Conclusion**

While this is a small sample and a one-time effort, the data suggests that having youth attend activities on campus that promote academic learning and provide a variety of simulated college experience does have a positive impact on their perception of college and increased confidence to attend college in the future. Qualitative data from youth, parents/guardians and summer staff workers indicate also indicate a positive change and desire to replicate in the future. Additional research into continuous programs and involvement of youth would be interesting to explore. Involving additional community partners to work on campus is another important aspect for future consideration.