Professional Evaluation Measures Impact of Student-Run Program to Gain Sustained Funding & Support

About the Program

Dr. Heather Hertema was a first-year graduate student in the School of Pharmacy at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) when she established UCSF's Summer Science Camp in 2007. The camp – still in existence today – is a free, annual, one-week outreach and enrichment program for local 5th- and 6th-grade students who are historically under-represented in STEM/health. Unlike most other nonprofit programs, UCSF Summer Science Camp was begun as, and continues to be, an endeavor run entirely by graduate students.

The Challenge

Although initially funded entirely by UCSF, the program would need external support in order to be sustainable. The graduate students were told that funders would want to see clear evidence that the children served by the camp were benefiting as intended. The graduate students had an existing, validated pre-/post-survey instrument and had been keeping track of campers' responses, but did not have the time or expertise to fully evaluate the camp. In addition, since the organizers were students, the camp was faced with the need to maintain continuity from year to year as students graduated and left UCSF.

The Solution

Dr. van Stelle, prior to co-founding Actionable Insights, was the program evaluator for UCSF's Center for Educational Partnerships (CEP). After meeting with Dr. Hertema, the camp's founder, it was agreed that CEP would support the camp administratively and Dr. van Stelle, as CEP's evaluator, would conduct the annual camp evaluations. In addition, an advisory council was formed, made up of the camp founder, UCSF faculty, staff, and graduate students, to support and advise the rotating cast of graduate student organizers of the camp and to provide the capacity for camp continuity.

Dr. van Stelle evaluated the camp annually for four years, collaborating on data collection with each year's new graduate student camp director and working with the Director of Development & Alumni Relations at UCSF's School of Pharmacy to provide data for grant applications and related reporting. During this period, the group won several multi-year grants for the camp and implemented both a parent orientation night

and an annual camp alumni day. Changes to camper recruitment, counselor training, camp procedures/activities, and new elements such as orientation night and alumni day were made based on Dr. van Stelle's evaluations and subsequent recommendations. All aspects of the program were evaluated annually for continuous program improvement.

Benefits and Results

- Clear evaluation results showing program impact that the camp team could share with UCSF stakeholders and with existing and potential funders.
- Actionable suggestions for improvement of UCSF Summer Science Camp based on data-driven insights into the program, such as:
  - ✓ Improving recruitment by focusing on girls, underrepresented populations, and lower-income neighborhoods, and by offering all camp documents in Spanish.
  - ✓ Offering more classroom management, teaching, and mentoring training to graduate student camp counselors prior to the first day of camp.
  - ✓ Continuing to bring in diverse scientists as speakers, asking them to discuss more explicitly their own backgrounds and how they learn from failed experiments.

> "Your evaluations are a big part of the reason the camp has continued to get support. None of us had any experience in trying to quantify the impact of a program like ours. You took the burden of showing proof of impact off of us, allowing us to better focus on providing a fun, enriching, and educational environment for the students."
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> **Heather Hertema, Pharm.D.**
> **UCSF Summer Science Camp Founder**

About Actionable Insights, LLC

Actionable Insights helps organizations discover and act on data-driven insights to achieve better outcomes. Co-founders Melanie Espino and Jen van Stelle, Ph.D. lend their expertise to clients in the areas of health, early childhood development, youth development, STEM education, aging, and community collaboration efforts.

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