

I. The Need

Each year more than 8,000 youth migrate to the United States without a parent or legal guardian, searching for protection from harm and a better future. Despite their unique journeys, unaccompanied immigrant youth eventually find themselves at a common destination: alone in the U.S. without papers. Once discovered by immigration authorities, these youth face deportation, detention and very uncertain life prospects.

One of the six secure juvenile detention facilities in the U.S. contracted to hold immigrant youth is located in Woodland, California, fifteen minutes away from UC Davis. Yolo County Juvenile Hall detains an average of 20 immigrant youth who range from 13-17 years old. Although they are detained *solely* because of their immigration status, they are held alongside adjudicated juvenile delinquents. They are less likely to receive visits from loved ones because they have been moved far away from whatever support networks they may have.

There is an urgent need to provide hope and support for this vulnerable population of youth to counter the despair and worthlessness they feel when orphaned in a country that labels them "illegal," and puts them in jail for months pending uncertain futures.

II. The Response- The Youth Empowerment Program & The Power of Hope

With the help and guidance of a UCD Law Student, I founded the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) at UC Davis in the Spring, of 2009. What began as a simple idea to distract youth from the reality of their harrowing circumstances, quickly developed into a structured UCD student organization. YEP's mission is to provide a network of support and hope to immigrant youth detained in Yolo County Juvenile Hall by connecting them to college student role models.

After a competitive written application and interview process, we selected nine college students to participate in YEP's founding as *Student Empowerment Leaders* and added sixteen more in September, 2009. The volunteers were selected because of their proven leadership skills and ability to relate to the immigrant experience. Many have grown up as immigrants themselves and share a special bond with the youth due to the trials and obstacles they have faced as immigrants in the United States.

In order to prepare the volunteers to lead a structured curriculum in a high-security detention facility with at-risk youth, I designed a three-month training program. This training includes workshops on team-building, cultural competency, leadership development, the legal systems impacting unaccompanied minors, working with youth suffering from trauma, teaching techniques, and training led by Juvenile Hall facility staff.

The YEP curriculum consists of ten scripted lesson plans that volunteers lead with the youth every other week over the course of a five-month period. The program is premised on providing the detained youth with a sense of voice by allowing choice, engaging individual interests, encouraging mutual respect and teamwork, and building positive relationships. Each lesson plan was critically reviewed by an experienced high school teacher, approved by the Juvenile Hall, and evaluated candidly by the youth and volunteers who participated. YEP volunteers currently spend three hours every other week with the youth in Juvenile Hall and meet as a group for two hours between lessons to reflect on their experience and receive on-going training.

YEP volunteers are inspirations, confidants, and friends for the youth. By learning about the personal life trials YEP volunteers have overcome, the youth witness that despite adversity, success is possible. Participating youth often express sincere gratitude for the opportunity to interact with people who care about them, have fun, and be creative. As a result of the program, many children have personally committed to making positive changes in their life, found a sense of voice, and/or declared that they want to become volunteers in the future so that they can help someone like YEP volunteers have helped them.

YEP has made a profound yet unanticipated impression on its volunteers. Seeing the turmoil of these youth propels YEP volunteers to commit their lives to helping the ostracized, voiceless and forgotten. YEP has therefore discovered its ability to build tomorrow's leaders. This outcome gives us an unexpected sense of hope in our collective power to make a difference and our individual potential to be agents of social change.

Before YEP, the detention of immigrant youth, and their confinement in Yolo County, was unknown in the UC Davis community. As members of the UC Davis community have found out about YEP, there has been an outpouring of support and genuine interest in the welfare of the youth it serves.

III. The Problem - YEP's Financial Hardship

YEP has struggled to secure long-term funding and has relied upon student-member contributions. Because YEP is not a registered 501©(3) organization, it does not qualify to apply for most grant opportunities and has had little success when soliciting donations. In addition, due to the economic crisis in the UC system, resources and funding opportunities for campus organizations are limited. Support from the Strauss Foundation is crucial for YEP to continue it's important work, ensure long-term sustainability, safeguard the diversity of its volunteers, and expand its impact.

IV. YEP's Dreams for the Future

If further developed, YEP could have a multiplier effect, empowering not only the immigrant youth it serves, but also its student volunteers and the future communities that will benefit from the leadership of both populations. In light of our success in bringing hope to Yolo County Juvenile Hall, and potential to build new hope for our world by investing in tomorrow's leaders, YEP aspires to grow its impact. I propose to:

1) Complete two cycles of the YEP five-month curriculum in the 2010-2011 academic year

Costs include: materials such as name tags, markers, stencils, posters, flash cards, game boards, glue sticks, volunteer t-shirt/uniforms, magazines, award certificates, and more.

1) Make a more meaningful investment in our volunteers

YEP aspires to provide dynamic professional development opportunities by partnering with social workers, child psychologists and psychiatrists who can give expertise on how to mentor youth affected by trauma and other serious and complex mental health issues. To compliment these efforts, YEP seeks to provide formal training resources for volunteers, including training manuals and food at full-day trainings.

2) Make Community Outreach a YEP priority

YEP will launch a community outreach campaign and create campus awareness in the following ways:

Awareness Event- In the Spring of 2010, YEP hopes to host a public symposium about unaccompanied immigrant youth featuring expert speakers and letters and artwork created by the youth.

Bi-monthly Publication & Website- YEP will create and distribute a bi-monthly newsletter as well as establish a website that documents YEP's progress. Both will include poems, letters, art work and blog entries by the youth and volunteers as well as volunteer applications, YEP contact information, and eventually, a donation portal.

3) Lay a foundation for long-term leadership and sustainability

In my senior year I will train a volunteer to become Student Coordinator when I graduate. This person will shadow me, practice leading meetings and begin establishing report with the facility. To add prestige and incentive, YEP will give the student coordinator-in-training a \$500 stipend: \$250 awarded at the completion of training and another \$250 after completion of a year as Student Coordinator.

YEP's current program advisor will relocate in August. YEP needs a new advisor whose leadership can provide continuity across the terms of the individual Student Coordinator. Over the next six months, YEP's current advisor and I will meet with potential candidates for the position.

YEP will apply for 501 (c)(3) status to become eligible for soliciting grant money in the future. A lawyer in Yolo County has generously agreed to help YEP through the process of incorporation.

IV. Budget

1. Fall and Spring Volunteer Recruitment and Curriculum Cycle Expenses	\$3,050
Volunteer recruitment/advertising materials and official banner (x2) \$15 X2= \$30 + \$120 (banner) Lesson Plan materials for 5 month curriculum (x2) = 2,500 Volunteer T-shirts (20 per cycle) \$10 x 20= \$200 x 2= \$400	
2. Volunteer Training and Development (x2)	\$ 2,200
Kick-off Orientation and dinner mixer (x2) = \$200 Volunteer Curriculum Manual and Resource Binder (x40)= \$5 x 40= \$200 Full-day training: breakfast, snacks, and lunch (x2) = \$300 Child Welfare, Social Worker, Child Psychologist, Immigration Law Expert Presentations: guest thank you t-shirt, travel expenses \$200 per guest= \$800 Careers with Impact Part 1, 2 & 3 - guest thank you t-shirt and meal stipend \$35 x 3= \$105, End of the Cycle Celebration dinner party (x2) \$250 Team Building Social Activity with dinner (Spring) (\$180 + \$45 gas + \$120 for pizza)= \$345	
3. Community Outreach	\$1,450
Estimated bimonthly publication cost =\$150 per year Website Development and Maintenance= \$300 Campus Awareness event (food, facility reservation, and speaker costs) = \$1,000	
4. Investments to Ensure Sustainability	\$1,300
Costs to File for 501©(3) status = \$800 \$500 Stipend for Student Coordinator in training = \$250 x 2	
Total Budget:	\$8,000

Spring/Summer Curriculum Cycle

- 3/1/10 - Recruit Application Submissions
- 3/17/10 - Written Application Deadline
- 3/27-29/10 - Applicant Interviews
- 3/31 - Background check applications submitted
- 6/1/10 - Volunteer Training begins
- 6/30/10 - Volunteers Receive Facility Badges
- 7/7/10 - On-site facility training
- 7/14/10 - Volunteers enter Juvenile Hall
- 12/15/10 - Volunteers conclude YEP service

Winter/Spring Curriculum Cycle

- 9/1/10 - Recruit Application Submissions
- 9/20/10 - Written Application Deadline
- 9/25-27/10 - Applicant Interviews
- 9/30 - Background check applications submitted
- 11/1/10 - Volunteer Training begins
- 1/5/11 - Volunteers Receive Facility Badges
- 1/12/11 - On-site facility training
- 1/19/11 - Volunteers enter Juvenile Hall
- 6/20/11 - Volunteers conclude YEP service

Community Outreach Timeline

- 6/1/10 Launch YEP bi-monthly newsletter publications (continue bi-monthly)
- 8/15/10 - Launch YEP Website
- 9/1/10 - 12/1/10 - conduct three classroom/student organization presentations
- 1/15/10 - 5/15/10 - conduct three classroom/student organization presentations
- 4/15/10 - Host Campus Awareness Event