

Building Equitable Partnerships and a Social Justice Mindset Through a Donor-Funded Reproductive Rights and Health Internship Program

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Abstract

This article discusses the characteristics of a donor-funded internship program for undergraduate students interested in reproductive rights, health, and justice at Tulane University's Newcomb Institute. It describes the results of a preliminary study of this program's outcomes and makes recommendations for program improvements. This article will also argue that this program, despite its unique challenges, provides a model for other colleges and universities that are interested in developing equitable community partnerships and cultivating a social justice mindset in students. This study indicates that the program has been successful at developing young leaders in a social justice movement, serving underrepresented student groups, building trust with community partners, and creating opportunities for multiple collaborations with those partners.

Keywords: social justice, experiential learning, higher education, reproductive justice, internships, community partnerships



In 2017, Newcomb Institute of Tulane University received a 5-year gift from an individual donor to create experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students interested in reproductive rights and reproductive health. This donation resulted from a common interest between Newcomb Institute and the donor in creating meaningful opportunities for students to (1) learn about and become leaders in the field of reproductive rights and health and (2) make an impact on the landscape of these issues in New Orleans and Louisiana more broadly. The primary initiative that resulted from this donation has been the Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health Internship Program (RRRH), a paid internship program that places undergraduates at community organizations and with faculty members working on reproductive rights, health, or justice initiatives or research. This article describes this program and a preliminary study of its outcomes, strengths, and areas for improvement. Based on this early data, we suggest that this program provides an

important model for cultivating social justice leadership in undergraduates as well as creating deep partnerships between university and community entities.

Newcomb Institute is a center for feminist research, teaching, and student engagement, whose mission is to educate undergraduates for gender equity in the 21st century. Under the direction of Professor Sally Kenney, a political scientist, Newcomb Institute has identified programmatic priorities including reproductive rights, health, and justice; campus sexual assault; gender and imprisonment; women's political leadership; and women's history, among others. In each of these areas, the institute strives to combine curricular, experiential learning, and research opportunities that mutually inform each other. In the case of reproductive rights, health, and justice, the institute has supported course development and teaching (e.g., Media and Reproductive Rights; Reproductive Rights, Law, and Public Policy; Reproductive Politics in New Orleans; Sexuality, Knowledge Production,

and Education), ongoing research projects (e.g., on sex education in Louisiana, breastfeeding at work, racial disparities in birth outcomes), and community-engaged experiential learning (e.g., RRRH, conference attendance, and *Conceiving Equity*, a networking event featuring the annual Roe v. Wade lecture). This emphasis on creating synergy between teaching, research, and community engagement arises partly out of Tulane University's emphasis on community engagement and public service.

Community engagement is a crucial part of Tulane University's institutional identity and undergraduate core curriculum. For Tulane, community engagement is largely demonstrated through service-learning, which typically aims to be "a vehicle for connecting students and institutions to their communities and the larger social good, while at the same time instilling in students the values of community and social responsibility" (Neururer & Rhoads, 1998, p. 321). In the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Tulane reinvented itself as a community-engaged, service-oriented university working to recover and reinvigorate a devastated city (Giegerich, 2008). In 2006, Tulane became the first major university to require service-learning as part of its core curriculum (Cowen & Cowen, 2010). The university requires two separate service-learning experiences over the course of the undergraduate years, one that is incorporated into a course (20 or 40 hours of service) and one that can either be part of a course or an unpaid internship for academic credit. These public service experiences are administered by the Center for Public Service, whose vision is "to promote community, equality, and justice" (Center for Public Service, n.d., "Vision") through a number of goals, including to "develop a sense of self-agency and social responsibility that includes all in the community and the larger global context" and "incorporate social justice and intercultural frameworks into all our programs" (Center for Public Service, n.d., "CPS Equity Statement," para. 1).

In general, service-learning experiences are meant to develop authentic, mutually beneficial, sustainable relationships between community partners and the university (James & Logan, 2016), cultivate students' sense of self-efficacy and interest in community engagement (Knapp et al., 2010), and allow students to apply classroom

knowledge to effect social change (Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018). Although the Center for Public Service at Tulane works hard in a variety of ways to ensure quality service-learning experiences for students and community partners and is at the forefront of this work nationally, many critiques of service-learning remain important and relevant. For instance, some scholars and educators argue that, without the proper time, training, and resources, which can be difficult to access within the course of one semester, service-learning places a burden on the community organizations it is meant to help (Eby, 1998; Strom, 2010). Others suggest that perhaps it can function more like "voluntourism," in which students use their brief time working with disadvantaged communities to experience personal transformation while providing no real benefit to those communities (Dobson, 2018). Still others have pointed to the ways that service-learning often reifies, rather than dismantles, the structures and logics of White privilege and supremacy (Mitchell et al., 2012).

In the case of Tulane, these critiques of service-learning make up just one facet of the relationship between the university and the larger New Orleans community—a relationship that could easily be characterized as fraught (Verghese, 2020). The data from this preliminary study of the RRRH program's effectiveness suggest that a donor-funded, paid internship program may overcome many of these critiques while meeting the goals put forth by most social justice-oriented experiential learning programs, including promoting students' intellectual growth, contributing meaningfully to the missions and work of community organizations, developing social justice leadership, and strengthening the relationship between the university and its surrounding community (Austin & Rust, 2015; Butin, 2007; Reiff & Keene, 2012). This study also indicates that this type of program has unique challenges and areas for improvement, covered below. Nonetheless, this program provides an exciting model for social justice experiential learning that can complement existing programs like those run by Tulane's Center for Public Service. The program does this by (1) allowing specific students and community partners to develop a more long-term mutually beneficial relationship, (2) compensating students (including those from underserved groups) for their labor, while also providing them

significant educational benefit, and (3) deepening ties between the university and community organizations that build trust and offer opportunities for multiple collaborations.

Building Partnerships Around Reproductive Rights, Health, and Justice in New Orleans

Louisiana has some of the worst reproductive health outcomes in the nation and is arguably one of the most restrictive states in terms of laws that govern sex education, abortion access, and other reproductive health care issues. For instance, the state had the second highest rate of new chlamydia cases, seventh highest rate for syphilis, and the fifth highest rate for gonorrhea in 2018 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). It has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality, and its rate is increasing faster than the national rate (Kieltyka et al., 2018). The state also has the sixth highest rate of adolescent pregnancy in the nation (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). According to the Center for Reproductive Rights, “Louisiana imposes more restrictions on abortion providers than almost any other state” (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2021, para. 3). In the wake of the *Dobbs v. Jackson Whole Women’s Health* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in June of 2022, which eliminated the federal constitutional right to abortion, Louisiana banned abortion in nearly all cases. Sex education is not mandated in Louisiana, and any sex education that is taught is not required to be comprehensive or medically accurate (SIECUS, 2021). These and many other issues, including high rates of poverty disproportionately affecting Black Louisianans and women, contribute to a dire reproductive rights, health, and justice landscape in which Tulane University students are, sometimes unknowingly, immersed (Butkus & Donovan, 2018).

Numerous community organizations, often underresourced, in New Orleans are working tirelessly to improve this landscape through policy advocacy, culture shift, and service provision. Likewise, several faculty members at Tulane work on community-engaged research projects aimed at understanding problems and compiling data that will be useful in addressing reproductive health disparities and poor outcomes. The

RRRH program developed out of a desire to leverage student energy toward these efforts in an intentional, ethical, and educational manner. To do this, community partners needed to be involved from the early conversations with the donor. For instance, then-executive director of the New Orleans Abortion Fund, Amy Irvin, was invited to meet with the donor and Newcomb faculty and staff to help shape the contours of the program and provide advisement and connections useful in engaging additional partners. Irvin continued to provide an advisory and cofacilitation role for the first 3 years of the program. Once the funds were pledged, Newcomb identified the need to bring on a full-time faculty member with subject matter expertise to direct RRRH and the institute’s other reproductive rights, health, and justice initiatives. American studies scholar Clare Daniel (first author of this article) was hired based on her scholarly engagement with reproductive politics and extensive experience with student advisement. Daniel took over the program after two initial terms, spring and summer 2017, which were led by a senior program coordinator at Newcomb. At the time of this writing, the program has partnered with 13 different community organizations and five faculty members (see Table 1).

The RRRH program is guided by the principles of the reproductive justice framework, developed by Black women in the 1990s, which recognizes the “right to not have children using safe birth control, abortion, and abstinence; the right to have children under the conditions we choose; and the right to parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments” (Ross et al., 2017, p. 14). Community and faculty partnerships are developed based on the potential for an intern to contribute to a project that engages with some aspect of reproductive justice. Partners’ work has included sexually transmitted infection testing, abortion access, breastfeeding consultation, access to doula care, sex education advocacy, eliminating unfair taxes on diapers and feminine hygiene products, and much more. Community organizations (both that serve as internship sites and that do not) are also invited (and provided an honorarium) to present at biweekly interns’ meetings on issues related to reproductive justice, including fair housing, raising the minimum wage, combating sexual assault, promoting environmental justice, and many more.

Table 1. Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health Internship Program Partner Organizations

Partner organization	Organization mission	Number of RRRH interns over all terms*
Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies	“IWES is dedicated to improving the mental, physical and spiritual health and quality of life for women, their families and communities of color, particularly among marginalized populations, using community-engaged research, programs, training and advocacy” (Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies, n.d., “Mission”).	4
New Orleans Breastfeeding Center	“The New Orleans Breastfeeding Center provides high quality, holistic, and evidence-based lactation and infant feeding support to families in the New Orleans metro area and surrounding parishes” (New Orleans Breastfeeding Center, n.d., para. 2).	4
Saul’s Light	“Saul’s Light partners with hospitals, local organizations, and healthcare professionals to meet NICU and bereaved families’ day-to-day needs” (Saul’s Light, n.d., “Long-Term Goals”).	2
New Orleans Abortion Fund	“In partnership with the National Network of Abortion Funds, the New Orleans Abortion Fund, Inc. was established in 2012 as a community-based 501(c)(3) organization rooted in social justice, with the purpose of challenging socioeconomic inequalities by providing financial help to people who cannot afford the full cost of an abortion” (New Orleans Abortion Fund, n.d., “Mission,” para. 1).	18
Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine	“As stewards of the first school of public health in the United States, the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine cultivates independent thinkers, innovative leaders, fierce advocates, and accomplished scholars. From the neighborhoods of New Orleans to communities worldwide, we conduct research and collaborate with our partners to ensure that all of humanity has an equitable opportunity to be healthy and pursue optimal well-being” (Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, n.d., “Our Mission”).	10
VAYLA New Orleans	“VAYLA’s commitment to youth development, community empowerment through education and cultural awareness forges a sacred space for young leaders to engage and empower each other through complex cultural exchange, community dialogue, and comprehensive civic engagement” (VAYLA New Orleans, 2021, “History,” para. 2).	4
Lift Louisiana	“To educate, advocate, and litigate for policy changes needed to improve the health and wellbeing of Louisiana’s women, their families, and their communities” (Lift Louisiana, n.d., “Our Mission”).	10
Sista Midwife Productions	“Our Mission is to improve pregnancy and birth experiences and to eliminate perinatal disparities by increasing the number of black birth workers, teaching families about their rights and options; and creating transparency and accountability within childbirth education and the medical obstetrical system” (Sista Midwife Productions, n.d., “Who We Are,” para. 2).	3
Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast	“The mission of Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Inc. is to ensure the right and ability of all individuals to manage their sexual and reproductive health by providing health services, education and advocacy” (Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, n.d., “Our Mission”).	2

Table continued on next page

Table 1. Continued

Partner organization	Organization mission	Number of RRRH interns over all terms*
Birthmark Doula Collective	"Birthmark Doula Collective is a birth justice organization dedicated to supporting, informing and advocating for pregnant and parenting people and their families in New Orleans" (Birthmark Doula Collective, n.d., para. 1).	2
School of Liberal Arts, Tulane University	"We strive to build a global liberal arts curriculum and faculty, we embrace our dual identity as a liberal arts college within a research one university, we forge a deeper relationship with New Orleans and the Gulf South, and we craft a liberal arts education for next generation leaders and the careers of the future" (School of Liberal Arts, Tulane University, n.d., "Our Mission").	7
Tulane Newcomb Institute	"Our mission is to develop leaders, discover solutions to intractable gender problems of our time, and provide opportunities for students to experience synergies between curricula, research, and community engagement through close collaboration with faculty. We support student research initiatives, advocate for a gender-integrated curriculum, develop community-engaged service-learning courses, and bring women leaders to campus" (Tulane Newcomb Institute, n.d., "Today," para. 1).	6
Creative Community League	"Creative Community League utilizes cultural strategies for movement building, supporting artists, storytelling, and other dynamic community involvement in moving reproductive and sexual awareness into creative spaces" (Creative Community League, n.d., para. 1).	1
Black Feminist Rants	Black Feminist Rants: Conversations on Reproductive Justice and Activism is a podcast that centers the experiences of Black women and femmes navigating social justice spaces and the world (Black Feminist Rants, n.d.).	1
Women With a Vision	"The mission of Women With A Vision is to improve the lives of marginalized women, their families, and communities by addressing the social conditions that hinder their health and well-being. We accomplish this through relentless advocacy, health education, supportive services, and community-based participatory research." (Women With a Vision, 2021).	4
New Orleans Children's Advocacy Center	"The New Orleans Children's Advocacy Center is a program of the Audrey Hepburn CARE Center at Children's Hospital that provides a coordinated, multi-agency approach to the investigation, intervention and treatment of child sexual and physical abuse" (Children's Hospital New Orleans, n.d., para. 2).	1
Tulane School of Medicine	"We improve human health and foster healthy communities through discovery and translation of the best science into clinical practice and education; to deliver the highest quality patient care and prepare the next generation of distinguished clinical and scientific leaders" (Tulane School of Medicine, n.d., "Mission").	1

Note. *Some students interned at multiple sites and may be counted more than once in the table.

Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health Internship Program Details

The RRRH program places students in paid internships lasting a semester or longer. Typically, students may work up to 15 hours per week and receive \$12 per hour. They do not receive academic credit for the internship. Students apply to open positions via a Newcomb Institute-administered application process. The program coordinator vets the applicants and sends three to five finalists to each site for interviews and selection. Finalists are selected based on a demonstrated interest in the fields of reproductive rights, health, or justice and a track record of high-quality academic and extra-curricular work, with the goal of providing the organizations with passionate students on whom they can depend (Mitchell, 2008). Utilizing a cohort model aimed at cultivating a “critical community” (Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2020), all interns come together for biweekly meetings throughout their internship term. The program is designed to accomplish a number of interrelated goals pertaining to students’ career readiness; their knowledge of social inequality and its effects on reproductive rights, health, and justice; and their understanding of and ability to navigate and affect political processes.

The RRRH program combines on-site professional work experience with a classroom-like educational experience in which cohort members network with and learn from each other, as well as hear from other community organizations working on issues related to reproductive rights, health, and justice. These meetings aid in the development of what Novak et al. (2007) referred to as “the ability to reframe complex social issues,” which is a common objective of experiential learning programs (Clark-Taylor, 2017). They also give students what Jakubowski and McIntosh (2018) discussed as the opportunity to engage in dialogue that prompts them to question prior beliefs and engage in important self-reflection. Through these meetings and their experiences at their internship sites, students cultivate a critical understanding of systemic injustice as they map the connections between economic, environmental, racial, and reproductive justice. This systemic understanding ideally helps to prevent what Mitchell (2008) referred to as a dichotomy of “us-them” that often occurs through service-based programs, by demonstrating

the interdependencies between the reproductive lives of Tulane students and the circumstances of the greater New Orleans community. The program also requires students to develop professional communication skills as they present themselves and their work to the public via poster presentations and public blog posts (Newcomb Interns, 2021). As Bebelle (2017) described, this emphasis on professional development in students is key to developing lasting relationships with community partners, by ensuring that both parties grow from the experience. When both parties gain from the experience, it helps to develop what Sarah Fouts (2020) referred to as a “doing with” mindset rather than the “doing for” mindset that has been promoted by some Tulane community engagement programs in the past.

Another crucial aim of the program is to support and augment the reproductive rights/health/justice work of partner organizations and faculty. Service-learning and other internship programs provide motivated students over the course of a semester and therefore have the potential to give these organizations an extra resource and a fresh perspective to expand beyond their current projects (Bushouse, 2005; Tarantino, 2017). The RRRH Internship program similarly provides this to partners, but also gives students and community partners the opportunity to renew their internship relationship at the end of each term, which helps to prevent what Brown (2001) identified as the constant “turnover” typical with many short-term programs. This long-term partnership provides what Mitchell (2008) described as an opportunity for higher education institutions to authentically engage with the community and demonstrate a commitment to community development and change.

Currently in its fifth year, the program runs all year round with spring, summer, and fall internship terms. It has served 76 students. Individual students have participated in the program anywhere from one to seven internship terms. Newcomb publicizes the application for open positions each term as widely as possible to all undergraduate students via the Newcomb News (weekly newsletter) and campus partners. It is notable that the program has consistently attracted a student population that has a greater percentage of Louisiana residents and is far more racially and ethnically di-

verse than the overall undergraduate student body at Tulane University (see Table 2). By being more representative of the New Orleans community, program participants are arguably better equipped to connect the Tulane community to the surrounding community, and the program is able to resist the politics of Whiteness mentioned above in which primarily White students may presume that they have the ability to help communities of which they have little knowledge and to which they have no ties (Mitchell et al., 2012). This diversity in participants also aids in retaining partnerships with organizations that are looking for students who have insight about and affinity with the populations they serve. In addition, by paying student interns, the program provides meaningful opportunities to some students who are otherwise underserved at the university, helping connect them, or keep them connected, to the local community while compensating them for their labor. Students can spend more time at their site and develop deeper, mutually beneficial relationships.

Measuring the Impact

The preliminary assessment of RRRH (IRB Approval 2020-734) focused on how the students' experiences in the program helped them clarify their career goals, preferences, and abilities; navigate a professional work environment; build professional relationships; learn about reproductive rights, health, and justice; and understand processes of political and institutional change. This study also evaluated the degree to which students' work furthered the mission of the internship site and whether the site supervisor had a positive experience with the program. Three separate tools were

utilized in this study (described in detail below): the intern end-of-term survey, the site supervisor end-of-term survey, and an alumni survey.

Over the course of the program's first year, nine learning objectives (see Appendix A) and two objectives for internship sites (see Appendix B) were developed. These objectives were used to design end-of-term surveys for interns and site supervisors, which were primarily meant to provide formative insights. At the beginning of each term, students are asked to work with their supervisor to establish five learning goals for the internship term. They are provided with resources to help them develop SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-based). Students turn in these goals to the program coordinator, they revisit these goals in the biweekly interns' meetings, and they are asked to consider whether they met their goals in the program evaluation. Site supervisors are also asked to assess whether their intern met their SMART goals in their end-of-term survey (see Appendix B)

To assess the effectiveness of the program in creating lasting impacts for students regarding the nine learning objectives, an anonymous survey was developed for program alumni, which was emailed to all former interns who graduated from Tulane University between 2017 and 2020. The response rate for the survey was 58.3% (21 out of 36; Appendix C).

The intern end-of-term survey was emailed to all interns at the end of each internship term beginning at the close of the fall 2017 term. The data analyzed in this article is from fall 2017 through spring 2021. Some students participated in the program over

Table 2. Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health Internship Program Participant Diversity

	Spring 2020 cohort	Tulane 2019–2020 freshman class	New Orleans*
People who identified as people of color	71.4% (10/14)	30.48%**	66.01%
People who identified as Black or African American	50% (7/14)	9%***	59.7%
People who are Louisiana residents	35.7% (5/14)	9%**	N/A

Note. *U.S. Census Bureau, 2019.

**Tulane Office of the Registrar, 2019.

***Hasselle, 2020.

multiple terms and were emailed a new evaluation at the end of each term. Response rates for each term are listed in Table 3. Over the course of these 11 terms, the evaluation yielded a total of 80 responses.

The site supervisor survey was developed in summer 2018 and is emailed to each site supervisor at the end of the internship term. This survey evaluates a site supervisor’s experience in the program each term, whether she/he/they acquired a new intern or continued with the previous one. Thus, if a supervisor remained as a participating partner over the course of multiple terms, they likely filled out the survey more than once (see Table 3). These rates exclude the program coordinator, who is also a site supervisor but abstains from taking the questionnaire. Some supervisors had more than one intern per term and filled out one questionnaire per intern; others who had more than one completed only one questionnaire. Each questionnaire completed was counted as one, regardless of how many interns it evaluated.

Because the intern and site supervisor end-of-term surveys were developed to obtain formative insights, they are not administered anonymously. These surveys are an important resource for the program coordinator to gain intern- and supervisor-specific information in order to troubleshoot unique issues. However, to give interns the

opportunity to submit anonymous feedback, an additional survey was emailed along with the end-of-term survey with one open-ended prompt: “Please provide any anonymous feedback you have about the Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health Internship program that you would like to share.” This survey has received only three responses since the fall of 2017. These responses are discussed below.

Findings to Date

Findings from these three tools—the intern end-of-term survey, site supervisor end-of-term survey, and alumni survey—suggest satisfaction on both the student and internship site sides. The intern end-of-term survey and alumni survey indicate that most learning objectives have been met for the majority of students and that the program positively impacted their career development. Site supervisor end-of-term surveys show that most site supervisors found the intern’s work to be beneficial and had a positive experience in the program. At the same time, results indicate that the program is meeting some learning objectives more than others and that on a few occasions, site supervisors had unsatisfactory experiences with their intern and/or the program, suggesting areas for improvement.

As the data from the end-of-term survey

Table 3. Survey Response Rates

Response rates for end-of-term survey		Response rate for site supervisor survey	Response rate for alumni survey (administered one time in spring 2020)
Term	Response rate	Response rate	Response rate
Fall 2017	100.0% (7/7)	N/A	55.6% (20/36)
Spring 2018	25.0% (3/12)	N/A	
Summer 2018	85.7% (6/7)	71.4% (5/7)	
Fall 2018	100.0% (11/11)	60.0% (6/10)	
Spring 2019	100.0% (11/11)	66.7% (6/9)	
Summer 2019	75.0% (9/12)	87.5% (7/8)	
Fall 2019	36.4% (4/11)	50.0% (4/8)	
Spring 2020	21.4% (3/14)	61.5% (8/13)	
Summer 2020	57.1% (8/14)	60.0% (6/10)	
Fall 2020	50.0% (8/16)	66.7% (8/12)	
Spring 2021	55.6% (10/18)	61.5% (8/13)	

(see Appendix A) and the alumni survey (see Appendix C) indicate, the RRRH program appears to have been largely successful at meeting learning objectives related to career development. For instance, 90% of students who completed the end-of-term survey and 95.24% of alumni respondents agreed that the internship had enabled them to learn more about their career interests and goals (Learning Objective 1). All students who completed the end-of-term survey noted that through the process of developing, reflecting upon, and working toward their SMART goals, they were able to meet some or all of their goals (Learning Objective 2). Similarly, 100% of alumni respondents agreed that the program helped them learn how to develop and accomplish professional goals (Learning Objective 2). All end-of-term survey respondents and 90.48% of alumni respondents agreed that the internship had enabled them to become better prepared for their future career by honing one or more of the transferrable skills indicated (Learning Objective 3). One alumna discussed what she learned in the program, saying, “This internship led me to understand how to be self-motivated and come up with new tasks. I keep it on my resume because it serves as a litmus test towards how well an organization fits my values.” Eighty-five percent of end-of-term survey respondents and all the alumni respondents noted that they had achieved one or more of the elements related to professional self-awareness and independence (Learning Objective 4). The majority (96.25%) of end-of-term respondents and alumni respondents (95.24%) indicated that they had learned about and/or practiced professional relationship-building and networking (Learning Objective 5). These results are supported by a comment left on the alumni survey, saying, “This program helped me develop a professional network in New Orleans and exposed me to the structure of policy nonprofits.” Likewise, a majority (93.75%) of end-of-term survey respondents and 100% of the alumni respondents agreed that the internship program had helped them learn to present and practice presenting their work in a professional setting (Learning Objective 6).

However, responses to some individual survey questions related to career development indicate areas for improvement. For instance, only nine of the 21 alumni respondents (42.86%) agreed with the statement “the internship program increased my un-

derstanding of my professional strengths and weaknesses.” This outcome suggests that more self-reflection could be systematically built into the program, in which students reflect both with their supervisors and in one-on-one meetings with the program coordinator about their internship performance. The site supervisor end-of-term survey currently includes questions about the interns’ strengths and weaknesses, so another way to increase students’ awareness would be to share these results (with the supervisor’s consent) with each intern at the end of the term. Relatedly, only 31.25% of end-of-term respondents noted that they met all five of their SMART goals. Although all respondents met at least some of their goals, the low percentage of students meeting all their goals provides further support for the idea of building in more structured reflections.

Data from these two surveys also suggest that the program has been successful in teaching students about reproductive rights, health, and justice, and about social inequality. All of the end-of-term survey respondents and 90.48% of alumni respondents agreed that they had learned at least one element of Learning Objective 7, regarding knowledge of the reproductive rights/health/justice landscape in New Orleans, Louisiana, and beyond. For instance, an alumna stated, “The program made reproductive justice easy to engage with and understand. I am able to take what I learned from the program and talk/educate peers and colleagues.” The program’s success in this area is also highlighted in one of the three responses to the anonymous end-of-term intern survey, which says, “I thoroughly enjoyed the Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health Internship Program! I met a lot of amazing people through this program and learned about reproductive justice and rights through many perspectives of the NOLA community. It was well organized and helped us find ways to connect ourselves more with our organizations as well as the topic of Reproductive rights.” Another important marker of success in terms of Learning Objective 7 is that 95.24% of alumni respondents agreed that they continue to stay informed about these issues.

Similarly, 91.25% of end-of-term survey respondents and 90.48% of alumni respondents agreed that they had learned about social inequality in the United States

(Learning Objective 8). However, only 76.19% of alumni respondents and 72.5% of end-of-term respondents stated that they had furthered their understanding of how to engage with institutions and systems of power to create change around reproductive issues (Learning Objective 9). This shortcoming likely reflects that some interns worked in capacities (e.g., conducting research, data entry, etc.) that did not engage in direct advocacy or activism, but importantly, it suggests that more work could be done to incorporate these topics into the interns' biweekly meetings through guest speakers and workshops on these topics, as well as through more intentional structures for interns to share their work with each other. This possibility is further supported by a second response to the anonymous end-of-term survey, which stated that it would be nice for the interns to have more opportunities to hear from each other in the biweekly meetings.

Site supervisor end-of-term surveys also indicate that the RRRH program is meeting its objectives for the students and for the internship sites (see Appendix B). All supervisor respondents agreed that their intern made some or very much progress toward her/his/their stated goals. And 56 out of the 58 respondents (96.55%) stated that they observed some or very much development in the student's skills, knowledge, or performance. In terms of the two program objectives for the internship site, 51 out of 58 supervisors (87.93%) agreed that their intern had benefited their organization "greatly," and five chose "somewhat"; only one respondent chose "very little." One supervisor did not choose an option regarding their intern's work but commented that the intern "developed many resources for our policy education programs and assisted in updating our website with youth friendly language." These results indicate that the program is accomplishing the goal of creating mutually beneficial relationships with internship sites.

Results were very similar for the second program objective related to internship sites. When asked how they would rate their experience with the RRRH program, 56 out of 58 (96.55%) supervisors rated their experience with the program as either "excellent" (91.38%) or "good" (5.17%). One supervisor described their experience with the program, saying, "My continued appreciation for including me in the RRRH

Program. I thoroughly enjoy working with the interns and my work has benefited." Supervisors were also asked whether they would recommend this program to others. No supervisors responded that they would not recommend this program, and 52 out of 58 (89.66%) responded that they would recommend it without hesitation. Such support was further expressed by another supervisor, who commented that their intern "was absolutely wonderful! She was an integral part of our advocacy efforts and community organizing. I will miss her. Thank you so much for a wonderful internship experience! I will gladly recommend it to others!" Overall, the site supervisor surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction with the program.

However, the two instances in which a supervisor said that she would "maybe" recommend the program reveal one of the challenges of working with students who are juggling multiple responsibilities and sometimes personal hardships as well. These students can require additional supports to navigate the barriers to success that they face. In these instances, struggles with family, mental health, and economic and/or academic difficulties got in the way of completing internship duties and sometimes even communicating clearly about the need to take a step back from the internship. These realities suggest that the RRRH program could improve its training around clear communication and provision of support services.

Indeed, as mentioned above, the RRRH program attracts and retains a large number of students from marginalized backgrounds, who may be struggling with challenges related to racial injustice, gender-based violence and/or oppression, and economic hardship. For instance, 85.7% of alumni surveyed noted that they relied on their internship to help pay for their tuition/rent/day-to-day necessities. Anonymous feedback collected in the alumni survey echoes this sentiment, as one intern states, "This program is one of few that allows for paid internship experiences, which are hard to come by but extremely necessary to ensure that students of all economic backgrounds have access to formative professional experiences." Thirty-eight percent (8/21) of alumni surveyed identified as a person of color. Likewise, the spring 2020 intern cohort was far more racially diverse and contained a larger percentage of Louisiana

residents than the overall Tulane student population (see Table 2). That cohort (similar to many other RRRH cohorts) also had a far higher percentage of Black-identified students than the Tulane student body, bringing the racial makeup of the group much closer to that of the majority-Black city of New Orleans.

Although this reality may result in a higher percentage of students with multiple stressors and barriers to success than the average Tulane student, the program's ability to attract, support, and retain students of color, Louisiana residents, and low-income students has proven to be an important part of retaining community partnerships with organizations working at the intersection of reproductive, racial, and economic justice in New Orleans. However, survey results suggest that the RRRH program could do more to ensure these students have the programming support (e.g., transportation, supplies, reproductive justice training) and social/emotional support they need to be successful interns. For instance, the site supervisor who said the intern benefited their organization "very little" also commented: "We are happy to host an intern but we lack some capacity, such as we do not have a computer for the intern to work on—they have to bring their own. We do not have extra supplies for the intern to use—they have to bring their own. We would like to help the intern with transportation with bus tokens, but we do not have this capacity." This supervisor also requested that training on how to supervise an intern be provided, an idea that was also supported by the third response to the anonymous end-of-term survey in which an intern describes the need for site supervisors to be trained on how to provide regular productive feedback to interns. (In response to this idea, the program coordinator held an optional meeting of site supervisors to discuss best practices, compiled these into a resource, and made it available to all supervisors.) Creating a program that equitably serves both marginalized students and under-resourced organizations requires a full accounting of what supports are needed to make the relationship a success. The RRRH program has more work to do in this area.

Next Steps, Challenges, and Implications

This preliminary assessment seems to indicate three main areas for improvement for

the RRRH program moving forward.

1. More structured reflection activities should be built into the program, encouraging interns to consider what they have learned about their professional strengths and weaknesses and how this information might inform their career trajectory. Such activities could include periodic guided check-ins with the site supervisor and the program coordinator. It may also involve sharing and reflecting upon supervisor evaluations of interns' performance at the end of each term.
2. The program should place a greater emphasis on teaching interns how to engage systems of power to create social change. The biweekly meetings could include more guest speakers and workshops that focus on processes of institutional change, political advocacy, and culture shift. The program could develop more peer-to-peer learning opportunities in which interns who are deeply engaged in these activities share their work with fellow interns. The program coordinator could also develop one collective advocacy activity per term in which the entire cohort could participate.
3. A more comprehensive support system should be developed for students struggling with logistical, academic, or personal challenges, as well as organizations that need additional supplies to host an intern. For instance, regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings between the program coordinator and both the students and the site supervisors would provide opportunities to anticipate and troubleshoot barriers to success, such as transportation and scheduling issues, challenging personal issues, and academic difficulties. A separate fund could be created for students who need bus passes, emergency financial assistance, or other support. Such support has been provided in previous terms upon request and on a case-by-case basis; however, the creation of an official fund would signal to all students that this form of support is available to them. Finally, a list of campus resources for students experiencing academic or personal difficulties could be distributed and discussed at the beginning of each term.

Despite these important areas for improvement, the results of this study indicate that the RRRH program could provide a useful model for other universities interested in building deeper ties with their community, fostering a social justice mindset and skillset in their undergraduate students, and creating equitable programming for marginalized groups on campus. Moving forward, these results could be confirmed or refuted through a more substantial assessment of the program, including anonymous surveying of current interns and site supervisors at the beginning and end of each term, and a systematic longitudinal alumni study that includes a control group of students who participated in other internship opportunities or no internships during their time at Tulane.

For colleges and universities interested in creating a similar program, a primary challenge to the initiation and long-term sustainability of the program will undoubtedly be fundraising and donor relations. As mentioned above, Newcomb Institute received a 5-year pledge from an individual donor to create and implement this internship program. As of this writing, the program is concluding its 5th year, and the uncertainty of its future has loomed uncomfortably over the community partnerships until one donation from another individual donor and a grant from a private foundation were secured. These new funds will extend the program for two additional years. In order to truly secure this program in perpetuity, an endowed fund roughly 20 times the annual budget of the program would be necessary.

Fundraising is not only a challenge in terms of the program's long-term sustainability, but also in regard to the labor of stewardship. Donor stewardship and fundraising efforts, in collaboration with Newcomb Institute's executive director and Tulane's Department of Advancement, have been part of the coordinator's work since the program's inception. This work involves communicating regularly with current and potential donors about the program and its successes, contributions, and value to the students and community, which requires a special skillset that someone trained in teaching and working with undergraduates in an experiential learning program would not automatically possess. Moreover, the donor-funded aspect of the program adds a layer of accountability beyond the stu-

dents, the university, and the community, the specific contours of which can vary from donor to donor.

Being donor-funded, however, also provides certain advantages for the program. First and most obviously, it allows Newcomb Institute to compensate students for their labor in the community, which facilitates many of the positive outcomes detailed above. Second, it provides a secure way to pursue programming in what is otherwise a controversial political area. The existence of a fund designated for reproductive rights and health allows for programming and resources to be devoted, for instance, to student advocacy around abortion, sex education, emergency contraception, home birth, breastfeeding, sex work, and many other topics that could cause friction with alumni and other university constituents. The unique donor-funded structure of this internship program makes it particularly suited to the goal of educating and training future leaders in the reproductive rights and justice movements.

This preliminary research indicates that, perhaps more so than shorter, unpaid service-learning experiences such as those required within Tulane's core curriculum, a donor-funded paid internship program of this sort is a crucial vehicle for the deep and sustained engagement with social justice work in their surrounding communities that students—particularly economically marginalized students whose time must be spent in gainful employment—need and desire, and that position the university as a valuable community ally. The RRRH program fosters significant ties between the university and community organizations, thus creating a connection that builds trust and provides opportunities for multiple collaborations (such as community-engaged research projects and service-learning partnerships). It also appears that programs like RRRH continue to improve student outcomes after graduation by fostering the development of skills vital to a professional environment and allowing students the opportunity to network and grow in their field of interest. A longitudinal study of alumni career outcomes would assess how much students have been advantaged by being able to demonstrate their passion for reproductive rights/health/justice and gain a foothold in the field.



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Appendix A. Intern End-of-Term Survey

Learning objectives for interns	Measurements for objective	Percent that met objective
1. Learn more about their identified career interests in reproductive rights, health, and/or justice by engaging with them in a professional context and executing a set of tasks associated with that career.	It exposed me to a workplace setting in a career field of interest.	60% (48/80)
	It exposed me to tasks that I might perform in a career field of interest.	80% (64/80)
	It exposed me to potential colleagues in a career field of interest.	67.5% (54/80)
	It has not helped me clarify my career goals.	10% (8/80)
2. Increase their understanding of their own preferences and abilities relating to professional work settings and tasks, as they develop professional goals, reflect upon those goals, and reassess them at the end of the internship.	Met all five goals.	31.25% (25/80)
	Met some goals.	68.75% (55/80)
	Did not meet any goals.	0% (0/80)
3. Become better prepared for their postgraduation career by gaining experience as paid workers in a professional environment. They will hone their punctuality, time management, professional correspondence practices, accountability, and other important workplace qualities, while gaining familiarity with receiving and incorporating feedback from supervisors and other stakeholders, as well as advocating for themselves in the workplace.	It increased my punctuality.	40% (32/80)
	It increased my ability to set my own work pace and meet deadlines.	91.25% (73/80)
	It increased my ability to follow the protocols of professional communication (in-person, over email, phone, social media, etc.).	88.75% (71/80)
	It increased my ability to advocate for myself in the workplace.	61.25% (49/80)
	It increased my ability to incorporate constructive feedback.	80% (64/80)
	It did not prepare me to enter the workforce.	0% (0/80)
4. Become self-aware, self-monitoring, and self-correcting (i.e., knowing what they need to do, demonstrating initiative, completing tasks in a timely manner, working at a pace they can sustain, producing a high-quality work product, taking ownership of mistakes, and managing self-doubt, negative emotions, or frustration).	It increased my ability to manage a project and produce a quality product.	85% (68/80)
	It increased my ability to take ownership over mistakes.	72.5% (58/80)
	It increased my ability to manage self-doubt, negative emotions, and frustration.	66.25% (53/80)
	It increased my ability to demonstrate initiative (i.e., identify problems and find solutions).	82.5% (66/80)

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Appendix A. Continued

Learning objectives for interns	Measurements for objective	Percent that met objective
5. Develop networking and relationship-building skills through interactions with their supervisor, program coordinator, fellow interns, and community partners. They will know how to listen actively and ask engaged questions. Students will gain knowledge of the importance of professional networking.	It increased my knowledge of how to cultivate a professional relationship through mutual support, courteous communication, and fastidious follow-up.	83.75% (67/80)
	It increased my knowledge of the importance of networking.	73.75% (59/80)
	It increased my active listening skills.	77.5% (62/80)
	It increased my ability to ask engaged questions of potential network members.	73.75% (59/80)
	It did not increase my knowledge and skills related to building a professional network.	3.75% (3/80)
6. Learn to present themselves and communicate their work in a professional manner in multiple public forums. They will learn how to speak clearly and concisely about their experiences and the importance of their work.	It helped by requiring that I write blog entries about my internship.	66.25% (53/80)
	It helped through activities I did at my internship site (i.e., tabling, workshop facilitation, etc.).	58.75% (47/80)
	It helped by facilitating my participation in a formal presentation about my internship at a conference or professional event.	77.5% (62/80)
	It did not help me learn how to and practice presenting myself and my work to the public.	6.25% (5/80)
7. Develop knowledge about the landscape of reproductive rights/health/justice/politics in the United States, Louisiana, and New Orleans. They will understand what organizations exist in New Orleans and what work they do. They will gain knowledge of which issues are most pressing on the local, state, and national level and what pieces of legislation could or do govern these issues.	I learned about the landscape of organizations in New Orleans that work on these issues.	86.25% (69/80)
	I learned about the laws in Louisiana that regulate these issues.	77.5% (62/80)
	I learned about how the state of reproductive rights and reproductive health in New Orleans and Louisiana compares to the rest of the nation and/or world.	91.25% (73/80)
	I did not learn anything about reproductive rights and/or health.	0% (0/80)

Table continued on next page

Appendix A. Continued

Learning objectives for interns	Measurements for objective	Percent that met objective
8. Increase their understanding of the complex interlinking of social inequalities (according to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.) and develop their senses of social justice and empathy toward marginalized communities.	I learned about how the politics of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and immigration status intersect to affect access to reproductive rights and reproductive health services.	91.25% (73/80)
	I learned about the differences and similarities between the terms “reproductive rights,” “reproductive health,” and “reproductive justice,” and their historical and social origins.	75.00% (60/80)
	It did not increase understanding of the complex interlinking of social inequalities and develop my sense of social justice and empathy toward marginalized communities.	6.25% (5/80)
9. Further their understanding of how to engage with institutions and systems of power (i.e., the local and state government, dominant discourse, etc.) to create change around reproductive issues.	I learned about strategies for addressing unequal access to reproductive rights and healthcare services.	72.5% (58/80)
	I learned about strategies for effecting policy change.	57.5% (46/80)
	I learned about strategies for effecting culture shift (i.e., intervening into dominant discourses that stigmatize certain sexual and reproductive behaviors).	70.00% (56/80)
	It did not further my understanding of how to engage with institutions and systems of power.	11.25% (9/80)

Appendix B. Site Supervisor End-of-Term Survey

Objectives for internship sites	Question for objective	Qualifications for meeting objective	Percent that met objective
1. That the intern's work contributes meaningfully to the organization's mission and benefits the organization.	The intern's work benefited my organization:	Greatly	87.93% (51/58)
		Somewhat	8.62% (5/58)
		Very little	1.72% (1/58)
		Did not choose an option.	1.72% (1/58)*
2. The supervisor has a positive experience, such that she/he/they would recommend the program to colleagues and community partners.	You would rate their overall experience with the RRRH program as:	Excellent	91.38% (53/58)
		Good	5.17% (3/58)
		Average	3.45% (2/58)
		Poor or terrible	0% (0/58)
	Would you recommend this program to others?	Yes, without hesitation	89.66% (52/58)
		Probably	6.90% (4/58)
		Maybe	3.45% (2/58)
		Probably not or "No"	0% (0/58)
3. The intern experienced growth and met all or some of their personal goals.	Did the intern make progress toward her/his/their stated learning objectives?	Very much	81.03% (47/58)
		Somewhat	18.97% (11/58)
		Very little	0% (0/58)
		Not at all	0% (0/58)
	Did you observe development in the student's skills, knowledge, personal and/or professional performance?	Very much	72.41% (42/58)
		Somewhat	24.14% (14/58)
		Very little	3.45% (2/58)
		Not at all	0% (0/58)

Note. *Did not choose an option, but they stated that the intern "developed many resources for our policy education programs and assisted in updating our website with youth friendly language."

Appendix C. Alumni Survey

Learning objectives for interns	Measurements for objective	Percent that strongly agreed or agreed	Percent that chose at least one option for the objective
1. Learn more about their identified career interests in reproductive rights, health, and/or justice by engaging with them in a professional context and executing a set of tasks associated with that career.	My experience as an intern helped me to better identify my future career goals.	95.24% (20/21)	100% (21/21)
	My experience as an intern furthered my interest in reproductive rights, health, and/or justice.	80.95% (17/21)	
	My experience as an intern has positively influenced my post-college professional opportunities.	80.95% (17/21)	
	The internship program exposed me to a professional environment.	85.71% (18/21)	
	This program taught me and allowed me to practice tasks relevant to my future career aspirations.	66.67% (14/21)	
2. Increase their understanding of their own preferences and abilities relating to professional work settings and tasks, as they develop professional goals, reflect upon those goals, and reassess them at the end of the internship.	The internship program increased my understanding of my professional strengths and weaknesses.	42.86% (9/21)	100% (21/21)
	This program taught me how to develop professional goals.	71.43% (15/21)	
	This program helped me accomplish my professional goals.	76.19% (16/21)	
	This program helped me clarify my preferences toward different work settings.	95.24% (20/21)	
	The program helped me clarify my preferences toward different work tasks.	95.24% (20/21)	
3. Become better prepared for their postgraduation career by gaining experience as paid workers in a professional environment. They will hone their punctuality, time management, professional correspondence practices, accountability, and other important workplace qualities, while gaining familiarity with receiving and incorporating feedback and incorporating feedback from supervisors and other stakeholders, as well as advocating for themselves in the workplace.	This program helped me build the skills I needed to enter a professional workplace.	85.71% (18/21)	90.48% (19/21)
	This program taught me professional skills that I still use today.	61.90% (13/21)	
	This program taught me time management skills that I still use today.	71.43% (15/21)	
	This program helped me develop professional correspondence practices that I still use today.	76.19% (16/21)	
	This program helped me learn how to advocate for myself in the workplace.	61.90% (13/21)	
	This program helped me learn how to receive and incorporate feedback from supervisors and other stakeholders.	85.71% (18/21)	

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Appendix C. Continued

Learning objectives for interns	Measurements for objective	Percent that strongly agreed or agreed	Percent that chose at least one option for the objective
4. Become self-aware, self-monitoring, and self-correcting (i.e., knowing what they need to do, demonstrating initiative, completing tasks in a timely manner, working at a pace they can sustain, producing a high-quality work product, taking ownership of mistakes, and managing self-doubt, negative emotions, or frustration).	This program allowed me to demonstrate my own initiative and follow my own pace.	100% (21/21)	100% (21/21)
	This program helped me to develop a personal sense of work-place accountability.	66.67% (14/21)	
	I am proud of what I accomplished through this program.	80.95% (17/21)	
	This program taught me about self-correcting and taking ownership of mistakes.	90.48% (19/21)	
5. Develop networking and relationship-building skills through interactions with their supervisor, program coordinator, fellow interns, and community partners. They will know how to listen actively and ask engaged questions. Students will gain knowledge of the importance of professional networking.	This program helped me to professionally connect with people in my field of interest.	80.95% (17/21)	95.24% (20/21)
	I am still connected to at least one person I met during in this program.	80.95% (17/21)	
	This program helped expose me to the importance of professional networking.	66.67% (14/21)	
	This program helped me develop and practice networking and relationship-building skills.	80.95% (17/21)	
6. Learn to present themselves and communicate their work in a professional manner in multiple public forums. They will learn how to speak clearly and concisely about their experiences and the importance of their work.	I still discuss my past work as an intern today.	90.48% (19/21)	100% (21/21)
	I have discussed this program in professional interviews (job interviews, admissions interviews, etc.).	90.48% (19/21)	
	The experiences I had presenting my work as an intern helped prepare me for future presentation experiences.	66.67% (14/21)	
	I feel comfortable talking about the importance of the work I did through this program.	90.48% (19/21)	
7. Develop knowledge about the landscape of reproductive rights/health/justice/politics in the United States, Louisiana, and New Orleans. They will understand what organizations exist in New Orleans and what work they do. They will gain knowledge of which issues are most pressing on the local, state, and national level and what pieces of legislation could or do govern these issues.	This program increased my understanding of reproductive rights/health/justice/politics in Louisiana.	90.48% (19/21)	100% (21/21)
	I stay up to date on the latest developments in Louisiana's or the United States' reproductive rights/health/justice/politics landscape.	95.24% (20/21)	
	I am currently involved in reproductive rights/health/justice/politics work or volunteering.	42.86% (9/21)	
	I feel informed enough about reproductive rights and reproductive health issues to talk about them in a professional matter.	90.48% (19/21)	

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Appendix C. Continued

Learning objectives for interns	Measurements for objective	Percent that strongly agreed or agreed	Percent that chose at least one option for the objective
8. Increase their understanding of the complex interlinking of social inequalities (according to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.) and develop their senses of social justice and empathy toward marginalized communities.	This program inspired me to get more involved in social justice issues.	85.71% (18/21)	95.24% (20/21)
	I am currently involved in social justice work or volunteering.	66.67% (14/21)	
	This program taught me relevant information about social inequality in America.	90.48% (19/21)	
9. Further their understanding of how to engage with institutions and systems of power (i.e., the local and state government, dominant discourse, etc.) to create change around reproductive issues.	This program helped me to better understand government and legislative processes.	76.19% (16/21)	76.19% (16/21)