Oral History Project Unites — and Transforms — Students

Thanks to a $95,000 grant from the State Farm Youth Advisory Board, students from all walks of life will learn more about themselves...and each other.

The grant will support a partnership with the Sonoma-based nonprofit Listening for a Change to develop oral history projects between youth and community members. Listening for a Change will train Dominican students in the use of oral history techniques to help at-risk youth come to know themselves, their families and the community at large through their stories. The youth, in turn, will be trained to initiate and accomplish the process of “history taking” with their peers.

Youth in Marin County are sharply divided by income and socioeconomic and academic opportunities,” said Julia van der Ryn, Director of Service-Learning at Dominican. “This grant will enable us to create and implement projects that will transform young attitudes and understanding. It will also allow us to address the need to increase access to higher education and enhance educational equity for at-risk youth in our community.”

The project will benefit all involved, van der Ryn added. “About 40 percent of Dominican’s students come from minority backgrounds,” she said. “Many of our students are the children of immigrants themselves and have struggled with a variety of challenges to arrive on our campus.”

“Giving them, and others, a broad range of experiences and responsibilities will help them develop practical and critical thinking skills they will need in an increasingly complex world. In addition, recognizing inequity and working against it are crucial for cultivating a sense of civic responsibility in the next generation.”

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— Julia van der Ryn

Teach with Africa

San Francisco-based nonprofit Teach with Africa has awarded Dominican a grant in support of a pilot project to develop and implement an ongoing summer teaching program in association with the LEAP School in Cape Town, South Africa. The LEAP School is a groundbreaking educational initiative that has enjoyed remarkable success in educating the most economically and socially challenged students in grades 9 through 12.

A team of students and faculty from Dominican’s School of Education and the Dominican Center for Sustainability will work on projects in Cape Town this summer. The goal is twofold: to help boost science and mathematics skills for disadvantaged children while advancing their awareness of a sustainable future.

Teach with Africa, established to address the dire teacher shortage and educational crisis facing South Africa, sends American-trained teaching teams to South Africa.

As the only privately funded MST (Math, Science and Technology) school in South Africa, LEAP has focused on creating and maintaining a structured learning environment for students. The school’s aim is to enable students to gain access to additional study opportunities, increase their potential to be successful in their chosen career paths and become socially responsible citizens of South Africa.