

Extending Knowledge - Changing Lives

4-H and College Preparation

ISSUE

According to a 2017 Delaware Department of Education report, 41% of high school graduates are starting college without the skills required to be successful in higher education. Although graduation rates have increased over the last few years, students do not possess the life skills required to be successful in collegiate life and often have to enroll in remedial classes to address these missing skills. Youth programs can help address this gap. Tufts University examined the role of 4-H in helping students develop these critical life skills and found that 4-H participation results in improved community engagement and increased positive youth contributions to society. Youth who participated in 4-H were more likely to go to college, 25% more likely to continue contributing to their communities and 41% less likely to engage in high risk behaviors. 4-H participation improves chances of students pursuing college, remaining engaged in their community, and decreasing participation in activities which may result in decreased success in higher academics.

RESPONSE

Delaware 4-H works with an average of 33,000 youth statewide each year. Youth ages five to 19 participate in project activities based around Science, Healthy Living and Civic Engagement. Leadership, Public Speaking and Community Service are the most notable skills. Our program relies on our engaging staff and volunteer leaders, who utilize critical thinking skills and experiences to foster positive relationships, improve acquisition of life skills and allow for application of these skills in hands-on, community activities. Youth gain experiences that help prepare them for college, working in areas that help them choose a career path.

IMPACT

A survey was developed and sent to current or former Delaware 4-H members who were 18- to 29-years-old. The survey requested anyone in this group who currently or previously attended college to respond on how their 4-H membership assisted them in being prepared for their college experience. Participant responses showed attendance at diverse institutions of higher learning, which demonstrated the depth and breadth of their educational goals.

Many of their college majors were service oriented, which is a strong tenet of the Delaware 4-H Program. 86% of the respondents indicated they had or would complete college degree levels of bachelors, masters, and/or doctorate. Participants responded the following 4-H experiences helped prepare them for their time in college/life: Public Speaking (86%), Leadership/Officer Roles (77%), Community Service (75%), and 4-H Club work (69%). 89% of respondents shared that their involvement in specific 4-H project work helped them to identify their course of study or career pathway. Participants responded that the following life skills assisted them in their college or career pathway: Communication (93%), Leadership (91%), Teamwork (86%), Organizational Skills (77%), Time management (75%), Problem Solving (73%), and Self-discipline (70%).