

Phoenix Rising Summer Program

North Lawndale College Prep



Students can enroll in a variety of leadership development and academic programs in the summer to prepare them for college and life afterward

Summer vacation doesn't have to be a time when learning is put on pause. For nearly ten years, students at **North Lawndale College Prep High School** have attended summer leadership development and academic programs throughout the Midwest and beyond, with expenses paid, through the school's Phoenix Rising program.

"To say it was life-changing is not an exaggeration," says Chris Frills, a senior at NLCP, about his time at Morehouse College's Ethical Leader Program in Atlanta last year. Frills, who will attend Carlton College next year, also spent three summers at the highly selective Math and Science for Minority Students program at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. He says the two programs have helped prepare him both academically and in his focus on a future career in politics.

Phoenix Rising provides students with a menu of program choices for the summers before sophomore, junior and senior years, a list carefully created by program coordinator Liz Kuhn. "We work with programs where we've built a relationship with the institution," she says. "It's important that we know them and they know our school—we don't just send our students to any program."

After freshman year, students who wish to participate choose among a variety of leadership programs run by nonprofits or universities, with a focus ranging from outdoor adventures to social justice, from basketball to substance-abuse prevention. For the summer before junior year, students are offered a slate of summer academic programs designed for high schoolers at universities from Chicago's North Central College to Ithaca College in New York, covering a wide range of topics, some for college credit. Before senior year, students can attend another academic program, or be placed in a local internship.

The programs vary in length from a few days to as long as six weeks. For the first year in a leadership program, students typically go in groups of a dozen or so, often with an NLCP teacher as a chaperone; in the years following, students are sent singly or in groups of two to five, depending on the program.

Kuhn says that students are away from home in nearly all the Phoenix Rising programs, and that's by design. "It's a very different experience when the students are away overnight. They use social skills meeting students from outside our school, learn how to budget their money, get experience being in a dorm and eating in the dining hall. We're preparing our students to go to college and be successful there, so getting acclimated to being away is part of what this program is all about."

Phoenix Rising is part of the culture at North Lawndale College Prep, and students hear about the program when learning about the charter high school, at freshmen orientation and at a kick-off meeting in the winter for students and their parents. About half of the NLCP students who are academically eligible participate every year. Students are welcome to join after the first year, but Kuhn says that if they go that first year, "It's very likely they'll participate again."

"If I hadn't participated [in Phoenix Rising], I would have probably been hanging around the house watching TV those summers, and then you go back to school unprepared," says Frills, who will be attending Carlton on a full scholarship. "Without a doubt it helped me."

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Phoenix Rising
www.nlcphs.org/Students/phoenixrising.htm

Farther Foundation
www.fartherfoundation.org

Project Exploration
www.projectexploration.org

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Do It Yourself!



GRADE LEVEL(S)

- 10-12; All students who maintain a 2.0 GPA are eligible

APPROXIMATE EXPENSES

- Costs include travel expenses and tuition, both of which can vary significantly. NLCP expects to pay about \$500 per student for a leadership program and \$1,000 per student for an academic program, before any financial aid
- \$1,000 for printing and mailing of a catalogue of program choices, and to mail in applications

NUMBER OF TEACHERS INVOLVED

- A full-time coordinator
- Teacher or other chaperone for the sophomore programs, especially for larger groups

TIME COMMITMENT

- Most of the coordinator's time, especially in the first years when building the list of program opportunities
- Chaperones are needed for a program's duration, typically a few days to a week

KEY STEPS

- 1 Starting with just sophomores the first year keeps the task of creating a program list more manageable.
- 2 Research appropriate programs—consider a mix of topics and approaches to appeal to a broad range of students.
- 3 Get to know the administrators. A personal connection will pay dividends over the summer.
- 4 Create a catalogue that includes all the key information about each program's dates, location, focus, website, etc.

- 5 Reach out to families to get them interested with flyers, letters, and a kick-off event to answer questions.
- 6 Have each student provide two or three top choices.
- 7 Slot students by interest and what you know about their personality, capabilities, and the dynamics of the groups.
- 8 Gather and submit the applications—you shouldn't leave this task up to the students themselves.
- 9 Be prepared to travel, both in the winter and spring to visit with program administrators, and over the summer to check up on students.

NOTABLE LESSONS

- Many programs have scholarships for low-income and/or minority students. Even if they don't offer a formal scholarship, they might reduce or even waive a fee if you have built a good relationship and can make the case for the benefits to your student body.
- A "survival guide" with information on everything from what to pack to tips on how to conquer challenges helps students who have never been away from family before.
- Students will often enjoy the leadership program so much that they ask to repeat the program. But to begin to prepare for college, request they find an academic program for the summer before junior year.
- Build a relationship with the family as well—many students may be the first to go off to college, and if a parent isn't comfortable with their child leaving home, it can derail participation.
- If students ask to go to a program they've discovered, research its utility and learn how it's run before giving an okay.