Tyson Bryant
Evaluation of Bridging the Gap Mobile Food Pantry Program

The study, conducted in cooperation with Catholic Community Services, evaluated the effectiveness and perception of the Bridging the Gap mobile food pantry program implemented in the 2014-15 school year. The program provided two bags of food to children at four local elementary schools one day each month with the aim of providing adequate food for the weekend, when many low-income children may not be eating. The goal of the Bridging the Gap program is to increase services, increase access to healthy food, and improve students’ quality of learning. Two surveys were administered to assess the program’s success in these goals: one to parents of students in Spanish and English, and one to educators in the four schools in English only. On the whole, parents were satisfied with the program. Parents who filled out a Spanish survey were more likely than those who filled out English surveys to report the program was beneficial on questions related to food security, academic performance, and use of community resources. The greatest source of dissatisfaction with the program was that it was difficult to opt out for those who did not need the food. Teachers were also satisfied with the program.

Kyle Seljaas
Evaluation of WSU Prep’s Summer Program: Does It Help Academic Performance

WSU PREP, a STEM summer program was implemented for 7th through 9th grade students who showed academic excellence. The program is unique in the fact that it offers additional help to students who are already high achievers. A look at pre and posttests showed significant improvements in logic and engineering content knowledge. For example, the median score on the logic pretest was 2.5%, compared to 77.9% on the posttest. The median score on the engineering posttest was 77.8% compared to 31.8% on the pretest. A survey distributed to the students after last summer’s program also showed differences in the mindsets of males and females participating in the program. Specifically males were more likely to report that engineering is useful in solving everyday problems (88.2% for males vs. 56% for females). Also, males were more likely than females to report that they would definitely take more engineering related classes even if they didn’t have to (76.5% for males vs. 40% for females). Student mindsets were also positively correlated with neighborhood income, r = .476 suggesting that demographics may play a role in student success within WSU PREP.

Chris D. Valdez & Tyson Bryant
Weber State University Venture Program: Breaking Barriers One Student at a Time

The Community Center for Engaged Learning (CCEL) at Weber State University has long held community involvement and research as a top priority. Research students of the Community Research Extension (CRE) work with partners to develop, collect, and analyze data and provide results and information to improve the community. One such partner is Venture, a program modeled after the National Humanities Award winner Clemente course in the humanities. Venture provides a yearlong introductory humanities course to low income community members that have had little to no college experience. Community educators provide courses in literature, American history, art history, philosophy and writing/critical thinking. Our initial partnership with Venture focused on the pilot evaluation of surveyed data from initial participants. Program review focused on four surveyed categories: critical thinking, written communication, ethical reasoning and civic engagement. Analysis of the surveyed information indicated an under representation of ethical and civic engagement categorical indicators. Researchers suggested improvements on questions involving ethical implications and community involvement. Findings within this investigation helped guide Venture in the following year’s program to
improve accuracy of results. This opportunity provided student researchers with practice in statistical analysis, report building, and communication skills.