

Abstract

There is a strong need to develop a community-integrated AGRI-STEM pathway program that impacts underserved and marginalized communities in the state of Arkansas. *AR CommUniversity*, a partnership between the University of Arkansas **MANRRS** program and Arkansas Lighthouse Charter Schools, created the annual *Arkansas Lighthouse Summer Enrichment Academy (ALSEA)*.

Background

- In June 2024, 20 **Lighthouse** 7-10th grade students (ages 12 to 16; 5 males, 15 females), and 11 educators, attended a 3-day camp to learn about AGRI-STEM.
- *ALSEA* includes an ice cream social event to welcome students, on-campus residential housing, touring campus and agriculture facilities; visiting laboratories on rice, soil, poultry, plants, and more; visiting with faculty and collegiate **MANRRS** students; touring Simmons Foods Poultry Facility and Crystal Bridges, a public non-profit museum. And finally, presenting and awarding students with a *science white lab coat*, as well as official membership into **JR MANRRS**, currently the only chapter in Arkansas.



Methods

The Young Scholar Intern was able to help in organizing the *ALSEA* program, including welcoming and mentoring students, leading tours across campus and agriculture facilities and spaces; co-assisting in laboratories on rice, soil, poultry, plants, and more where students were introduced to experimental materials and methods to give them an experience of the fun and excitement of experimental AGRI-STEM.



Results

- The Intern was able to develop leadership and mentorship skills by providing opportunities for identity development (True Colors Leadership assessment). The Intern outcomes included measuring the impact of students' sense of belonging, identity, mentorship, leadership skills via Qualtrics surveys (pre- and post).
- Students rated *ALSEA* as Excellent (4.33 out of 5, while educators rated 4.67 out of 5).
- Students indicated their favorite sessions included: Art and Agriculture, Fashion, Cannulated Cow, Frying Chicken, and the Freight Farm on campus.



"This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2021-38640-34723 through the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, under sub-award number Project # EDS23-052, SUB00003117. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture."

