Civic Scholar Senior Project | Class of 2021

Fair for Emerging Researchers 5.0

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The goal of the FER includes fostering a research-oriented discussion among middle school students. Much like the last four years, our main goal is to have students explore the scientific method and learn how to ask scientific questions and answer them through experimentation. We hope to engage students ranging from fifth to eighth grade in a yearlong process of designing and conducting experiments beginning with the development of a question and a hypothesis. The final goal is to host an in-person or virtual event (this year) where students can describe their work to a panel of judges, who will provide constructive feedback on their presentation and the top researchers will be awarded cash prizes! This year, we planned for a virtual event and I strongly feel that we met our goals because we were able to provide mentoring sessions for 6 weeks and hold virtual breakout rooms where Drew volunteers helped the students with their research and their online posters.
This project and event was successful due to the help of the Drew Civic Engagement Program, the Gamma Sigma Epsilon Chemistry Honor Society, the Tri-Beta Biological Honor Society, and the Research Institute for Scientists Emeriti (RISE) program.

For the 5th year of carrying out this project, we made new partnerships with the Lyndhurst, Netcong, and Teaneck middle school districts. We had 30 participating students from these 3 middle schools!

The project enables Drew to form long-term partnerships with school districts and on-campus partners, along with providing students primarily from underserved communities the opportunity to learn and conduct research.

This project has always been taken over by a promising junior civic scholar and GSE student to handle in their senior year. While last year we were not able to hold an event, the organizers worked hard to bring faculty judges on board to review the student projects and the winning posters were rewarded with cash awards!
This project allowed me to practice my communication and networking skills, but it really helped me enhance my leadership skills. During the last several months, I handled logistics, planning, and organizing mentoring sessions and the day of the event. This project also involved networking and communication in order to reach out to schools. I learned to expand on the goals of this project by making it the first year of organizing weekly meetings with the participants and mentoring them to make them prepared.

On my resume, I would write this as my senior civic project and in the description I would indicate it as planning and organizing a virtual research fair for 4th to 8th graders. Key responsibilities included budget planning, writing emails to schools, reaching out to Drew students for volunteer opportunities including mentoring and judging participants, and bringing together faculty judges and the FER organizers from previous years to judge. I also had to order t-shirts, print out certificates and send gifts to all the participating students and their teachers. This also included keeping the parents informed and addressing their concerns. Finally, planning for the day of the event involved an organized structure and timeline.