



# 4-H Capitol Experience

## Preparing for Active Citizenship

March 21-24, 2010

### Audience

This program is open to Michigan high school teens interested in citizenship programs and state and local government. Total attendance was 63 youth plus 15 adult chaperones from 24 Michigan counties. Grade levels reached were: 15—9th, 19—10th, 14—11th, and 15—12th graders; 37 were female and 26 male. People of color comprised 12.7% of youth attendees.

### Funding

This is a fee-based program. A limited number of partial and full scholarships are available at the county level based on merit and need.

### Objectives

This youth development conference is designed to help youth:

- Discover how to be actively involved in influencing policy decisions.
- Explore different aspects of a policy issue that may affect individuals and communities.
- Learn about the policy process at the state level.
- Increase youths' communication, team work, citizenship, and leadership skills.
- Foster participants' ability to meet new people and make new friends from different places and backgrounds.
- Develop and expand career and personal interests.
- Develop social and academic skills needed for a successful transition to college and life as an adult.

### Description

Youth development and experiential education theory and practice are fundamental to the program's design and implementation. There are 39 intentional contact hours. Teens participate in a nine-hour Michigan Legislative Simulation over the four-days. The students are assigned to an issue group; such as health, education and jobs & the economy, As part of the simulation, they research and propose Senate and House bills; conduct House and Senate leadership position elections; participate in legislative committee meetings; debate and vote on bills; and have their bills signed into law by an acting governor. When not participating in the simulation, the youth spend time with their legislators, observe an actual House and Senate session; and visit community and state agencies, lobbyists and legislative aides.

In 2010 there were 14 MSU faculty/staff, 1 MSU student and dozens of Michigan government experts involved.

### Impacts

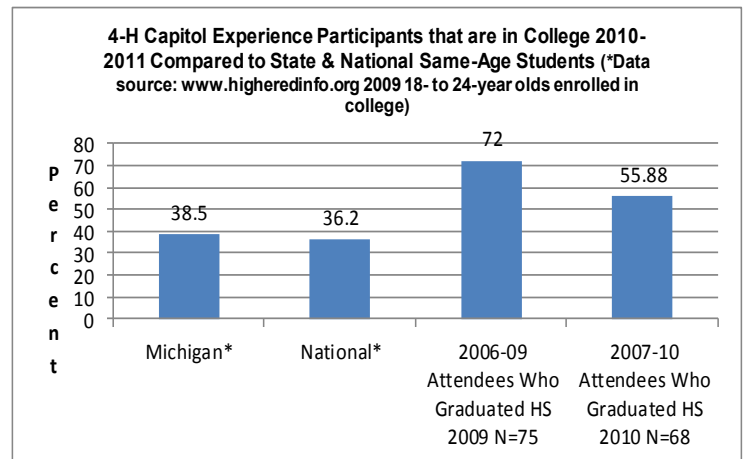
A pre-/post- reflective survey is used to measure participants skills and perceptions. Below are response highlights. "Before" responses are shown in parentheses.

- *I can work effectively on a team* (30%) 61%
- *I can find ways to solve a community problem* (31%) 59%
- *I know who to contact in order to get things done* (15%) 46%
- *I can accomplish goals* (35%) 70%
- *I am good at talking with my legislator* (13%) 70%
- *I think that teens can influence state government policy makers* (4%) 33%
- *TI think that teens and adults working together can influence state government policy makers* (35%) 76%

### Additional Significant Information

- *Being part of the future generation, this experience really taught us about how we can grow up to better our state. —Teen, Branch County*
- *Real life skills are acquired by doing real life situations; Capitol Experience gives us that chance.—Teen Branch County*
- *Capitol Experience gives you the voice in your government that you never knew you had. You leave knowing that you can make a difference.—Teen, Antrim County*

Program alumni attend college at a higher rate than their peers.



### Contact Information

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