



# DIVISION OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT - VPSE

**2024**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**





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“Profound change once again defines our times. Faith in the promise of democratic self-government has eroded. We must contend with climate change and manage powerful technologies like generative artificial intelligence. We stand on the cusp of revolutionary changes in medicine and health. The gap is wide between those who have a lot and those who have too little. Hate and bigotry persist. And we require leaders—broadly and deeply learned, service-minded, and bearing all the other hallmarks of an excellent education. Penn is called upon to join in reaffirming and advancing the values that so shaped our founding, predicated on humanity in all we do. Like the moment our founder declared, Let the experiment be made, this is Penn’s time to stand tall on our principles and put them into practice for the future.”\*

*\*In Principle and Practice: Penn’s Focus on Tomorrow.* University of Pennsylvania, 2024, [in-principle-and-practice.upenn.edu](https://principle-and-practice.upenn.edu).

*VPSE Communications Leadership Council*

*Salvador Galvez  
Dann Truitt  
Andrea Walkup  
Aubrey Woodward*



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# A Message from the Vice Provost

**VPSE** is the Division of the Vice Provost for Student Engagement at Penn. Our charge, on behalf of the Provost, with the Deans and faculty of the 12 Schools and other senior University partners, is to markedly increase access, participation, engagement, and outcomes of students from under-resourced backgrounds, and other cohort groups of students who have had limited opportunities critical to their success in baccalaureate, graduate, professional, and post-doctoral education, by expanding their skills, knowledge, confidence, motivation, and preparedness to successfully navigate relevant application, enrollment, and graduation processes.

In 2024, although many members of our service populations have continued to move through the profound impact of local, regional, and national challenges, VPSE was able to expand our work to:

- Convene pipeline program connections and community, across all of Penn's 12 Schools and divisions;
- Markedly increase University collaborations amongst programs that promote access, participation, engagement, and outcomes of students from under-resourced cohort groups in K-12, undergraduate, graduate, and professional education;

- Nurture engaged, multimodal, mentorship for University pipeline program participants, from Penn undergraduate, graduate, and professional students; postdoctoral students; faculty; staff; and alumni;
- Provide free, Act 158-compliant: workforce skills development, college prep, and career exploration; capstone project and service-learning experiences; and internship/externship opportunities, both during the summer and year-round; and
- Curate specific "Penn Local" opportunities for learner community introductions to, engagement with, and immersion in, Penn and Philadelphia educational, research, arts, and cultural institutions/initiatives for Penn K-12 pipeline participants and undergraduate, graduate, professional, and post-doctoral students.

We are so very grateful to all of the Penn family, community, City of Philadelphia, national, and global partners who have worked so tirelessly with us to help secure the futures of those we serve in VPSE.

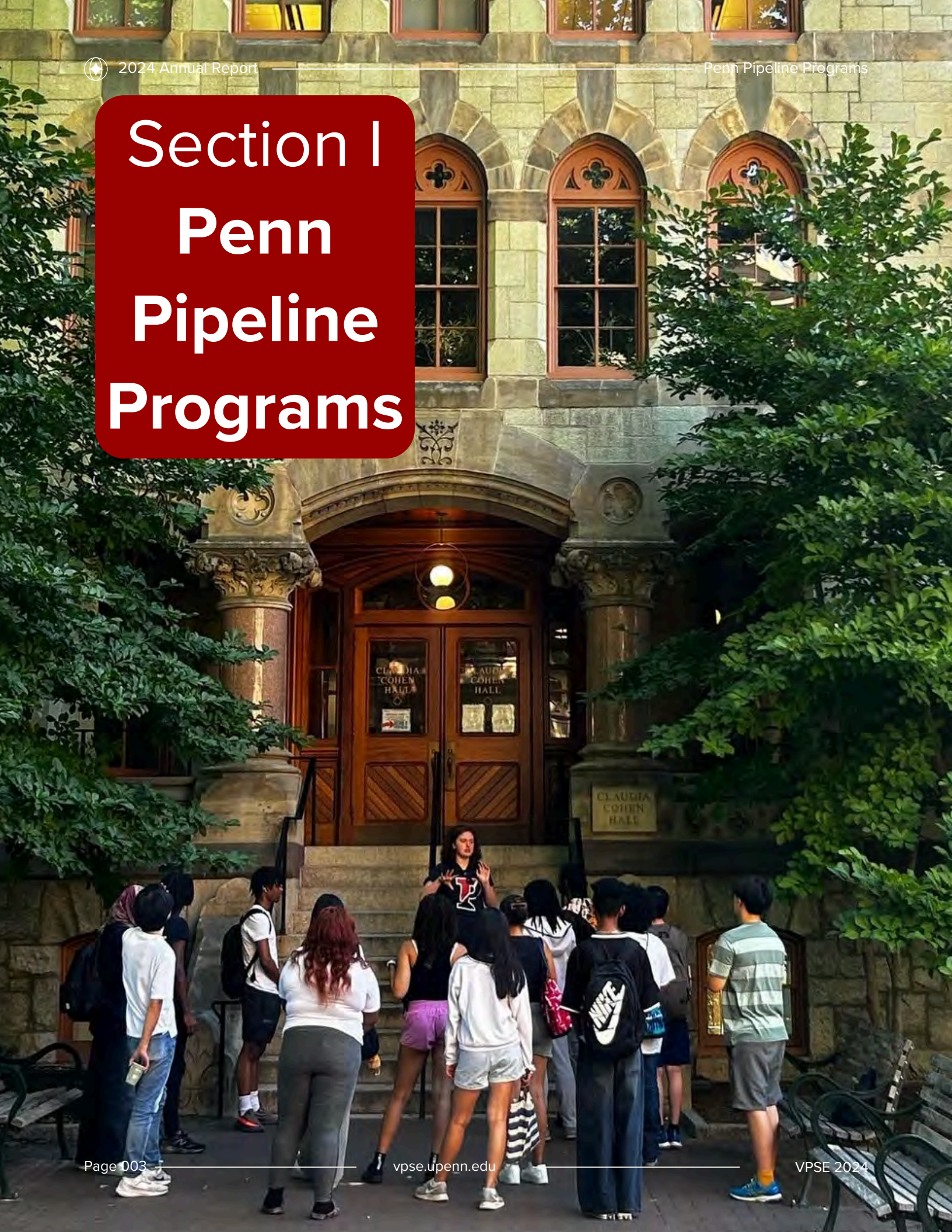
Sincerely,



**Dr. Valarie Swain-Cade McCoullum**  
*Provost's Distinguished Senior Fellow  
Graduate School of Education  
Vice Provost for Student Engagement  
University of Pennsylvania*



# Section I Penn Pipeline Programs





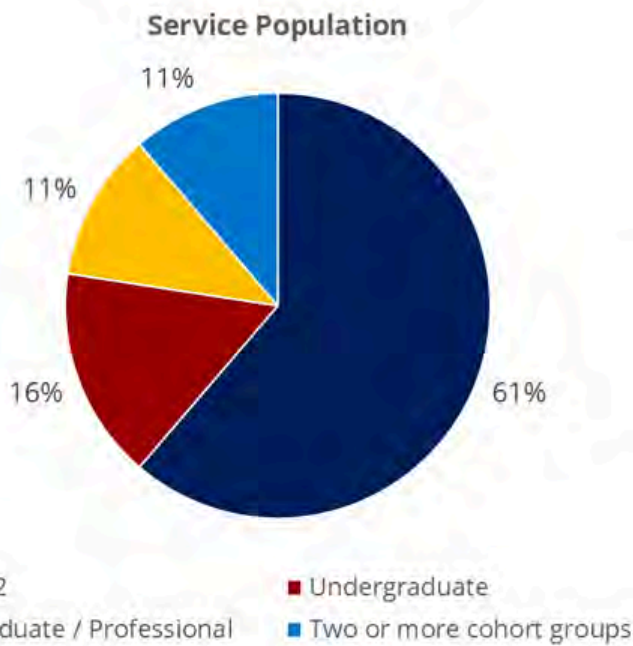
# By the Numbers

## Penn Pipeline Programs

### What is a Penn Pipeline Program?

PIPELINE PROGRAMS encompass those that are designed at all levels of education for groups under-represented in U.S. higher education professional programs, disciplines, and industries. These programs aim to recruit, enroll, retain, and support students to THRIVE - academically, socially, and emotionally - in their chosen ambitions, fields, and careers.

Penn's 12 Schools, University divisions, and centers provide high-quality learning experiences that promote introductions to, and immersion in, Penn, Philadelphia, and global scholarship, research, arts, and cultural initiatives. Following are data that illustrate just a subset of the many programs and initiatives supported by the University in 2024.



UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA 2024 PIPELINE CENSUS



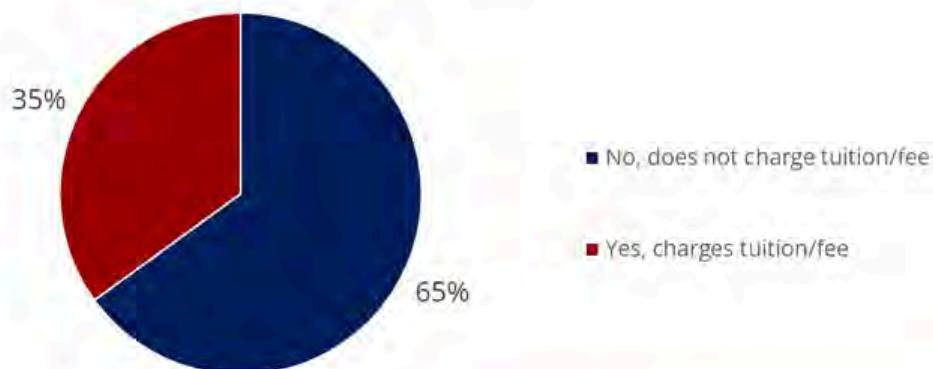
# By the Numbers

## Penn Pipeline Programs

### Program Duration

Program Duration	%
Summer Only (May-August)	60
Academic Year (AY) Only (August-May)	26
Both (year-round)	16

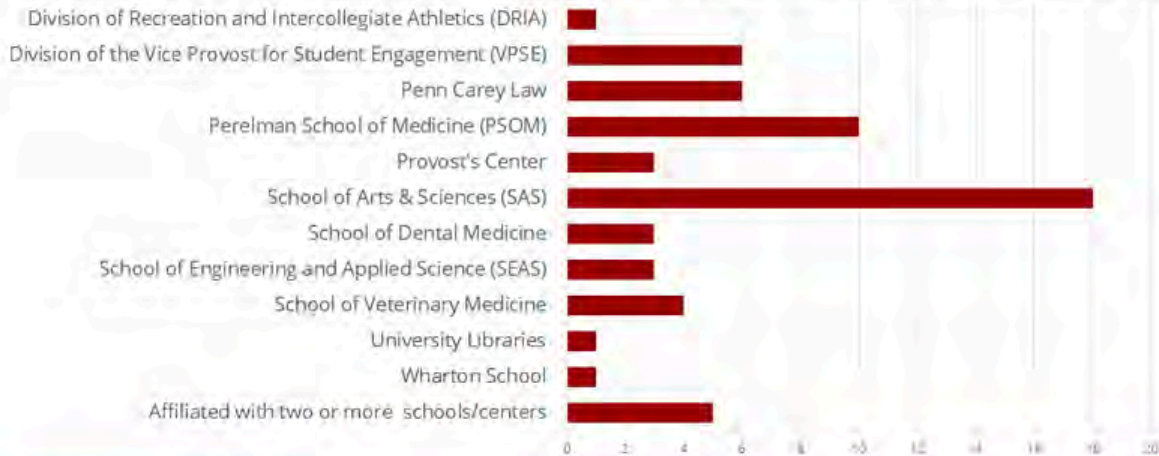
### Tuition/ Fees Charged



# By the Numbers

## Penn Pipeline Programs

### Program School/ Center Affiliation



### Program Funding Sources

Program Funding Source(s)	%
National Science Foundation	12
Private foundations	2
University departmental / divisional operating budget funds	17
University grant and/or gift funds	2
US Department of Education	3
Two or More Funding Sources	41
Other sources (e.g., private, federal)	22





# Pennsylvania Graduation Requirements

## Act 158

In 2022, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania put into place a graduation mandate called Act 158. This means that in order to graduate, high school students must meet graduation requirements that include the opportunity to have an experience (during grades 6-12) that qualifies as either a service-learning capstone project or an internship. In Summer 2024, the Division of VPSE provided 15 Act-158 capstone project/service-learning electives for School District of Philadelphia middle and high school students, led by Penn undergraduate and graduate students.





# Section II

# VPSE

# Programs



# VPSE: By the Numbers

➤ **3,896**

K-12, Undergraduate, and Graduate  
Professional Student Enrolled Participants

➤ **299**

City of Philadelphia Schools  
Served

➤ **293**

University of Pennsylvania Pipeline  
Programs (all Schools, Divisions,  
and Centers)

➤ **191**

Penn, Philadelphia, Regional,  
and National Partners

➤ **6** 

Emmy Award Nominations

➤ **2**

Fulbright Fellows



# Section III VPSE Outcomes

*“What an incredible experience this was for my daughter. She will be forever transformed because of this opportunity.”*

*Parent of a Provost’s Summer Mentorship Program participant  
University of Pennsylvania*

VPSE STEM  
Junior CEO Program  
Summer, 2024 Pitch Competition

# FIRST PLACE WINNER

JULY 17, 2024



**VPSE JEVS  
2CL-PHL**

**University of  
Pennsylvania**

# VPSE Student Spotlight

## Angelina Jala

### Journey through VPSE

In 2019, I was in the medicine cohort of the Provost’s Summer Mentorship Program (SMP). I grew up in Northeast Philadelphia and attended New Foundations Charter School from kindergarten to 12th grade.

When I applied to SMP, I went in with only the idea that I liked science and wanted to go to college. Four short weeks later, I knew I wanted a career in medicine and I was inspired to push myself academically and personally as I grew up.

In April 2021, I was admitted to the University of Pennsylvania, where I am currently a cognitive science major with a concentration in neuroscience. With an interest in the pre-medical track, I also have a background in the basic sciences.

Even after getting to college, the support from VPSE did not end. After reaching out to the division with my thanks, I inquired about possibilities of supporting SMP. I was hired as a program assistant for SMP, and I have been working there since my freshman spring semester in 2022.



### Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists (ABRCMS)

My research fellowship and scholars program, Penn First Exposure to Research in the Biological Sciences (PennFERBS) encouraged us to apply to present at ABRCMS. In early September 2024, I submitted my research abstract to be reviewed for a poster presentation in the discipline of biochemistry and molecular biology. My abstract was accepted, and I received a partial travel grant, which covered my cost of registration for the conference. The research I presented began in summer 2023 when I participated in an internship in the Perelman School of Medicine’s Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. I was a member of the inaugural cohort of this 9-week research program (now called PennLab Summer Internship) where we worked directly with a mentor to conduct a research project, attend professional development workshops, participate in lab and social engagements, and present our final research. I was paired with Dr. Bradley Johnson and Dr. Qijun Chen to investigate the relationship between telomeres and several causes of age-related dementia, particularly Alzheimer’s and primary age-related tauopathy (PART).





# Penn

## Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF)

Est. 1989

Since 1989, the Penn MMUF program has a 100% Penn graduation rate and a 91% graduate matriculation rate. 39 Penn MMUF fellows have earned their Ph.D.s and joined university faculties across the globe.

## Program Summary

The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) program, since 1989, has worked to increase access, participation, and outcomes for first-generation students, students who come from under-resourced backgrounds, and other students who have had limited opportunities critical to success in entering and completing Ph.D. degrees and joining the professoriate. The MMUF program also promotes the value of multivocality in the humanities and related disciplines, elevating accounts, interpretations, and narratives that expand present understandings. Penn MMUF has a 100% graduation rate with a 91% Ph.D. matriculation rate.

Group activities also help to bond the fellows as a cohort develop as scholars. This year, in addition to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference at Cornell, the students attended the play, *Zooman and the Sign*, followed by a group discussion with dessert! The fellows also attended a book talk by former Penn MMUF Graduate Coordinator Dr. Julius Fleming on his book: *Black Patience, Theatre, Civil Rights and the Long Wait for Freedom*. One program meeting was convened in the Van Pelt Library to support Logan Saenz, who worked on an exhibit on Latin American/Latinx Revolutionary Art.



*In September, the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program 2024 Fall Retreat in Washington, D.C. invited scholars to the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement.*

Penn MMUF convenes mandatory weekly Fellowship meetings throughout the academic year. These meetings consist of a range of activities including directed readings, critiques of writing samples and personal statements, research presentations, panel discussions and other activities as needed to promote academic success. This year, in addition to preparing for the graduate school application process, there was also a focus on publishing in academia and grappling with race, identity and self-care in academia. In addition to the weekly meetings, fellows are required to meet individually each week with the graduate coordinator and periodically with Dr. McCoullum and/or Dr. Beavers.





Adeoluwa Fatukasi submitted articles to the MMUF Journal and the Penn Africana Studies Undergraduate Journal. She also co-authored an article published in the Howard Journal of Communication in July 2024.

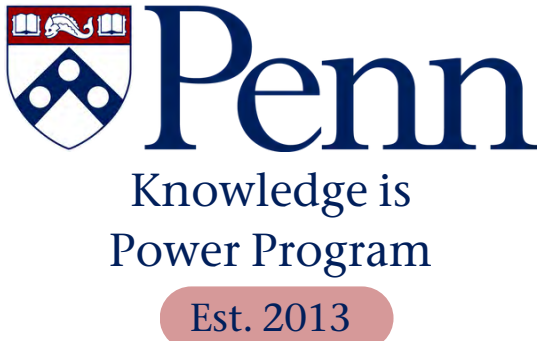
Two MMUF Fellows received Fulbright Fellowships for 24-25. Vernon Wells (CAS'24), an anthropology and sociology major, received the Fulbright U.S. Student Award to conduct cultural anthropology research in the Philippines. Carlos Montes (CAS'23) received a Fulbright Research Fellowship to study decolonization in Brazil! Montes will begin PhD study in Anthropology at Columbia University in Fall 2025.



Read more information on Wells' Fulbright U.S. Student Award in the Philippines in *Penn Today!*



Penn MMUF Alumna, Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar, is an acclaimed scholar of enslavement with a specific interest in the experience of women. She recently joined Emory University's Department of African American Studies. Her award-winning book, *Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge*, has resulted in the unveiling of a permanent historical marker in honor of Judge at Philadelphia's Independence Square. Dr. Armstrong Dunbar is also in her third year as the historical consultant and co-executive producer for HBO's "The Gilded Age." In September 2024, the show was nominated for six Emmys at the 76th Primetime Emmy Awards. Dunbar is also a distinguished Charles and Mary Beard Professor of History at Rutgers University.

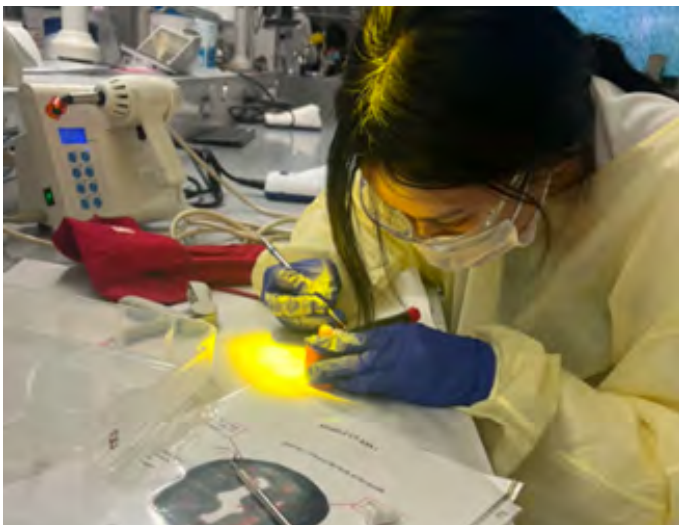


“  
 PennKIPP [turned] my doubts  
 and discomfort into  
 confidence and reassurance  
 [during my] time at the  
 University of Pennsylvania  
 Zaynab Sylla, PennKIPP Participant  
 ”

## Program Summary

PennKIPP is an innovative partnership to recruit, support and train academically talented graduates of Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) charter schools nationwide. The diverse community of scholars may also identify as first-generation and/or low-income. Since the partnership began in 2013, 82 students have participated in PennKIPP. More than 46 students have graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, and 12 PennKIPP alumni are enrolled in Penn graduate or professional School programs.

PennKIPP was established as a persistence model aimed at empowering KIPP alumni who enroll at the University of Pennsylvania to thrive and succeed in an Ivy League environment. This mission is realized through the careful implementation of tailored support, which plays a crucial role in helping students achieve academic success and career readiness. The program fosters mentorship connections with faculty and professionals, guiding students as they navigate their academic journey and connect with opportunities for research or internships.



*PennKIPP students gain hands-on experience in preclinical coursework through an introduction to dentistry summer program.*

Through targeted workshops and skill-building sessions, PennKIPP enhances students' critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills. Above all, PennKIPP is dedicated to cultivating a resilient community and fostering personal growth among its students.

In AY 2024-2025, 31 KIPP students were actively enrolled as undergraduates at the University of Pennsylvania. They represent the following academic levels:

- 1st Year: 8 students
- 2nd Year: 9 students
- 3rd Year: 6 students
- 4th Year: 8 students

Daniel Trebejo-Ariza, a senior marketing student at Wharton, received support to travel to Los Angeles, CA, where he attended the All Access Fest conference. This included coverage of conference fees and software tools to assist in preparing a proposal for submission to A&R representatives.

Jayla Rhodes, a senior majoring in architecture, received support to travel to Oakland, CA, to advance her research on Walter Hood. Her study explored the cultural inflection points reflected in Black architecture and design within urban landscapes. As part of her research, she visited significant historic sites such as Splash Pad Park, the Bayview Opera House, and San Pablo Avenue, all renowned for their rich contributions to the intersection of culture, history, and urban design.



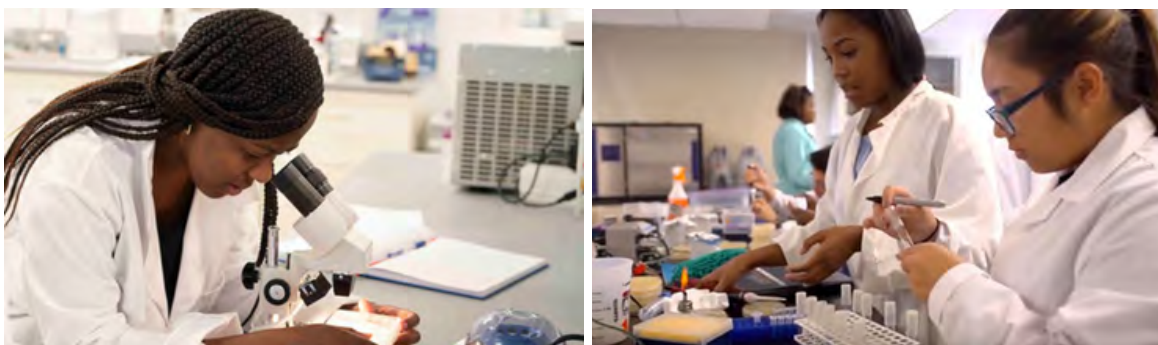
*PennKIPP students collaborate to master an escape room.*

“The PennKIPP community has been an invaluable guide, helping me navigate UPenn and discover resources I wouldn't have found on my own. It has provided me with a supportive network of individuals who offer guidance and encouragement. I am deeply grateful for this program, which is instrumental in helping me become my best self and reach my full potential during my college years at Penn.” — **Arleene Marte**, The College, Class of 2027

“PennKIPP has been a really transformative aspect of my time at Penn. Having an office that understands the educational background, philosophies, and systems I have come from is a privilege that cannot be understated. I am especially grateful for Dr. Thomas-EL, whose fervent efforts in introducing us to opportunities and bestowing upon us bits of wisdom and knowledge has straightened my otherwise crooked Penn path much earlier than anticipated.” — **Chidinma Esielem**, The College, Class of 2027

### Putting Their Knowledge to Work!

Academic research enriches undergraduate education, making it more dynamic, engaging, and impactful. PennKIPP students contribute to their respective disciplines by exploring unanswered questions and proposing innovative solutions. Beyond the curricula research requirements, PennKIPP has supported students who have expressed intensive interests in science and art professions.



*One PennKIPP student was selected to participate in FERBS, a specialized undergraduate fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania in the Department of Biology that focuses on training and developing high-achieving undergraduate students in the biological research sciences.*





## Rising Scholar Success Academy

Est. 2020

### Program Summary

The Penn Rising Scholar Success Academy (PennRSSA) is a completely free, online program open to all 14,000+ rising seniors attending School District of Philadelphia public, parochial, and public charter high schools.

### Summer Program 2024

This year's summer program was designed over the span of six months, beginning in January 2024. This extended planning period, combined with the advantages of running the program for a fifth year, allowed the program to revamp courses, extend the content of the capstone project, provide detailed guidance to partners, engage more directly with alumni volunteers, and spend more time thoughtfully preparing for in-person sessions with student.

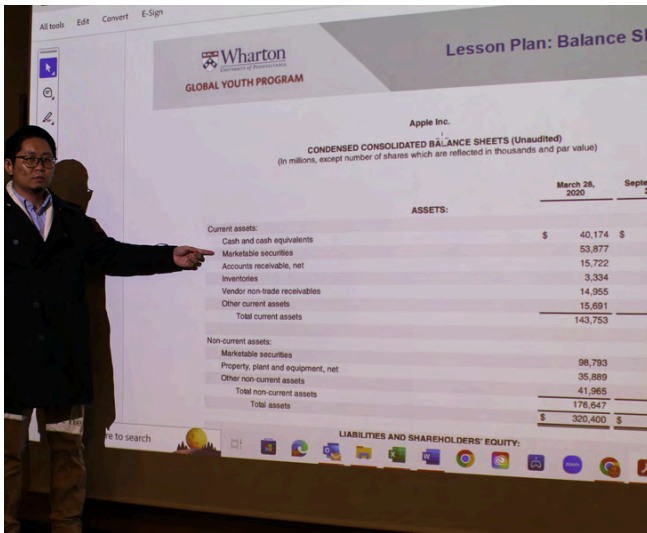


*Students participate in a live in-person session of the Applying to College 101 course.*

PennRSSA students gathered on campus each Monday and Friday of the summer program. In partnership with Penn's Office of Undergraduate Admissions, PennRSSA updated and launched the Canvas version of their *Applying to College 101* course and was also able to provide in-person *Applying to College 101* sessions by June 17th. The course covered topics such as financial aid, college fit, and application materials.

## Wharton Global Investment Competition

PennRSSA expanded its program offerings for the 2024-2025 academic year by inviting 98 high students to participate in the 9-week Wharton Global Investment Competition. Three scholars (Robert Jala, Deion Bazemore, and Marwa Ali) volunteered to deliver their investment strategy pitches with a guest presenter.



Wharton Global Youth Program instructs students using a lesson on balance sheets.



PennRSSA students collaborate in teams to create presentations for their investment challenge.



# Penn

Provost's Summer  
Mentorship Program

Est. 2004

“  
Thank you for believing in me and for providing such a supportive and enriching environment.  
”

2024 SMP participant

## Program Summary

The Provost's Summer Mentorship Program is a summer college and career preparatory experience offered to Philadelphia rising 10th and 11th grade students. Admitted students are paired with one of five affiliate University of Pennsylvania Graduate and Professional School partners to gain firsthand exposure to careers in their field of interest. In addition to hands-on experiential learning, participants gain educational enrichment in areas related to financial literacy, Study Skills and Time Management, SAT test preparation, personal statement-writing, and other information required to be successful in the college application process.

## Program Highlights

- SMP organized a summer college fair that included more than 75 colleges, universities, and community-based organizations from around the region. An estimated 300 students from VPSE programs and across the Philadelphia region attended the event.
- 81% of SMP participants received stipends in the amount of \$1,320 for successfully participating in the program.
- Each cohort sponsored engaging field trips around the city and region to provide context for career learning.
- SMP created a memorial award, in honor of the former director who unexpectedly passed away a few months prior to the start of the program. The student recipient was recognized at the Closing Ceremony and presented with a certificate and monetary gift.

There were 857 applications received as follows:

School	# Applicants	Accepted	Acceptance Rate
School of Dentistry	63	16	25%
Engineering and Applied Science	232	40	17%
Carey Law	129	20	16%
School of Medicine	249	20	8%
School of Nursing	184	20	11%
Average Admit Rate			14%



The Provost's Summer Mentorship cohort from the Perelman School of Medicine practice the art of suture.



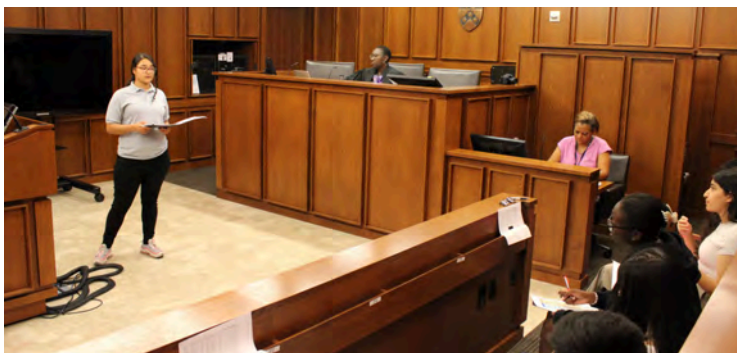
The 2024 Provost’s Summer Mentorship Program (SMP) supported the career and educational interests of 112 Philadelphia-area high school students. Students participated in hands-on, experiential learning, through creatively designed curricula developed to highlight and offer exploration into various careers through Penn’s Perelman School of Medicine, the School of Nursing, the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, the Carey School of Law, and the School of Dental Medicine. The SMP culminated with its 5th annual college fair, attracting more than 75 colleges, universities, and community organizations, and high school students from across the Philadelphia region.



*SMP Nursing cohort students practice how to use a stethoscope.*



*Students engage with college representatives at the 5th Annual SMP College Fair in Houston Hall, University of Pennsylvania.*



*SMP Law students participate on a mock trial at the Penn Carey Law School.*



Est. 2003

“  
 The program taught me to advocate for myself and reach out when I need help.  
 ”

Ayesha Mallick, Talent Search Participant

## Program Summary

The Talent Search Program is designed to help 583 eligible students complete high school and enroll in postsecondary school. Talent Search provides students in grades 6-12 with support services that instill a college-going culture and promote the academic and personal development necessary for their entry into and success in higher education.



Talent Search participant Jonah W. reads his poetry at The Second Annual MLK Jr. Exhibition.

In partnership with Penn’s Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs, Penn Talent Search hosted its Second Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Exhibition, where scholars read original pieces of writing connected to the theme “Radiant Stars, Infinite Hope.” Their writing took inspiration from Afrofuturism and the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and explored topics such as identity and belonging.

Penn Talent Search hosted scholars on campus for a three-week summer program exploring different subject areas: Environmental Science, Digital Communication, and Health & Wellness. Led by staff at Fairmount Water Works, scholars participating in the Environmental Science session tested water from the Schuylkill River and learned about how pollution and environmental factors impact water quality.



Two Talent Search summer participants test water quality at Fairmount Water Works.

## Highlights and Achievements

- The program received 13.5/15 PE points for APR submission on 2022-2023 programming year.
- Six Talent Search seniors enrolled in Ivy League schools this fall, including four at Penn.

### Total Number of Participants Enrolled

- 583 officially enrolled and reported (2022-2023 School Year)
- 799 served (2024 Calendar Year)

### Breakdown by K-12 Grade Levels

- 153 Middle School (6th-8th Grade)
- 71 Freshman in High School (9th Grade)
- 124 Sophomore in High School (10th Grade)
- 108 Junior in High School (11th Grade)
- 127 Senior in High School (12th Grade)



Talent Search students visited the Comcast Center on May 20 and experienced an immersive show inside the Universal Sphere.



## Talent Search Student Success Story

“Penn Talent Search was such a blessing in my college journey ... As a first-generation college student, I didn’t know where to begin when it came to applying to schools, and Penn Talent Search stepped in and provided me with the guidance I really needed. I was able to get support with study skills, time management, and even my college essays and personal statement. The program taught me to advocate for myself and reach out when I need help, which has been a game-changer. It deepened my connection to the University of Pennsylvania—I got to explore the campus, research colleges, and truly fall in love with the school.”

### Ayesha Mallick

Talent Search Class of 2024, University of Pennsylvania C’28





Est. 1979

“  
*Upward Bound has given me the knowledge and resources to open the door to college opportunities.*

Miraqle Banks, UB Participant

## Program Summary

The University of Pennsylvania High School Upward Bound Program is a college preparatory program designed to motivate and prepare students for the successful pursuit of a four-year college education. The program provides 106 high school students with academic, career, and cultural enrichment resources. Access to these resources helps students to graduate from high school and increase the rate at which low-income, first-generation college students matriculate and graduate from postsecondary institutions.

### Select Highlights and Achievements

- The program successfully nominated three students for the 2024 Council for Opportunity in Education's National Student Leadership Congress.
- The program developed a new partnership with Penn MindCore, coordinating a College Prep Saturday workshop and a visit to Pennovation Works. During the visit to Pennovation Works, UB students visited the Penn Smart Aviary, General Robotics, Automation, Sensing & Perception (GRASP) Lab, and the Penn Vet Working Dog Center.
- The program surpassed college enrollment rates from previous years.



*A Penn Upward Bound high school student observed the behaviors of male brown-headed cowbirds at the Penn Smart Aviary as part of a visit to Pennovation Works.*

### College Tours & Trips

- College Visits/Fairs: North Carolina week-long summer college tour (University North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, Wake Forest University, Duke University, and University of North Carolina at Charlotte), Stevens Institute of Technology, Lock Haven University, Columbia University, West Chester University, Temple University, Provost's Summer Mentorship Program College Fair, and Philadelphia National College Fair
- Community Service: Cradles to Crayons and Mighty Writers
- Trips: Rutgers University Camden basketball game, Pennovation Works visit, Mural Arts Tour, Carrowinds Amusement Park, and rock-climbing trip

## Spring Break Basketball Tournament

Penn Upward Bound hosts an annual basketball tournament in collaboration with local Upward Bound Programs (Harcum College and Community College of Philadelphia). In 2024, the annual tournament brought together 42 students from four different Trio Programs (Penn Upward Bound, Penn Talent Search, Harcum College Upward Bound and Temple University Upward Bound) for a fun-filled basketball tournament.



### Pennovation Works Trip

During a trip to the Smart Aviary at Pennovation Works, Upward Bound students studied the behaviors of cowbirds under the guidance of Biology professor Dr. Marc Schmidt. The visit was featured in Penn Today. Scan to read the full article.

## Penn Upward Bound Student Success Stories



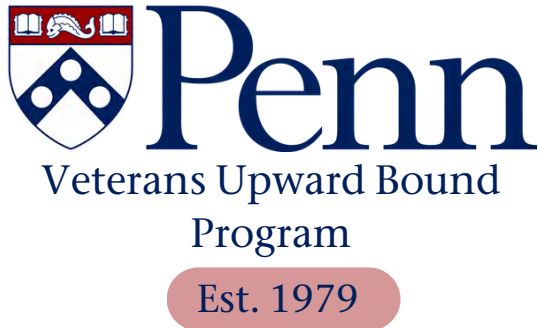
### QuestBridge Finalist

UB student Malaou Sy was named a 2024 QuestBridge National College Match Finalist! Malaou, a senior at West Philadelphia High School, was one of 7,288 students selected of over 25,500 applicants. She plans to major in Political Science and African American Studies in college.



### Senior Year Only Program

UB student Miraqlle Banks, a senior at Overbrook High School, was admitted to the highly selective Senior Year Only Program, which allows high school seniors to matriculate in full-time dual-enrollment college courses and graduate from high school with up to 27 college credits. Miraqlle plans to study Computer Science and pursue a career in software engineering.



“  
 With support from the VUB program and staff, my experience transitioning into college has been less challenging.  
 ”  
 Jazzmere Weathers, VUB Participant

## Program Summary

The Veterans Upward Bound program is a free, college preparatory program for 160 eligible veterans funded with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The program offers college preparatory services to include academic assessment, advising, and counseling; non-credited academic classes and tutoring; college access; and educational support services. The program seeks to encourage, empower, and acclimatize college-bound veterans to the rigors of postsecondary education and training. The primary goal is to prepare eligible veterans to enter or re-enter the college of their choice and graduate from their selected postsecondary program.



### Veteran Education Fair

VUB Scholars attended the program’s inaugural Veteran Education Fair, held on Friday, April 26, at Houston Hall’s Hall of Flags. Participants connected with more than 25 top universities and training programs tailored to veterans.

### L’Salle Harvey Veteran Scholarship

In Spring 2024, VUB announced its *L’Salle Harvey Veteran Scholarship* competition. The award is given in honor of L’Salle Harvey, a former Veterans Upward Bound Program participant, and made possible through a generous donation from his family.



Jazzmere Weathers, 2024 La’Salle Harvey VUB Scholarship recipient, attends the Community College of Philadelphia



## New Initiatives

- “VUB Mini-Lessons” led by the graduate students twice a month to offer college entry skills in a short, no pressure format. The times changed for each session to test offering programming at various times of the day and gauge interest. Mini-Lessons were promoted on social media that attracted new interest. Between Mini Lessons, the graduate students were available by appointment for one-on-one tutorial sessions.
- The VUB program continued to try new advertising which included newspaper/magazine print ads, SEPTA bus signs, and direct mail. The VUB program will continue to look at new and innovative ways to promote the program (e.g., social media trends, event sponsorship etc.)



*VUB Scholars attended the 2024 Veterans Expo, held in Bucks County on October 18, where VUB continued to recruit new scholars and build relationships with non-profits working with veterans.*



## VUB’s Impact

VUB Scholar Lennie Carter recently completed an HVAC course at Camden County College in New Jersey. He is excited to continue his education at the Community College of Philadelphia in the spring. He extends his heartfelt thanks to the entire VUB staff for their unwavering support and dedication to veterans.

Lennie Carter attended the program’s Washington, D.C. walking tour of the Korean War Veterans Memorial and other sites.



## VPSE STEM Program

Est. 2023

### Program Summary Description

Philadelphia middle school and high school students enhance their knowledge of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) with the help of Penn graduate students. Each week students learn the basics of different STEM disciplines with exciting hands-on activities from building rockets to learning code.

#### Junior CEO Program

Six different teams of students participated in creating business plans for their startups.



Home-it: Junior CEO start-up presentations July 2024

#### 2024 Middle School Team Projects

- **AeroDash:** A drone delivery service that focuses on the fast and efficient delivery of packages.
- **Hyacinths:** Scented jewelry designed to help reduce anxiety and stress. Users can receive help from the therapeutic scents released by the jewelry.
- **Smartie:** A smart wheelchair designed with advanced features to improve mobility for individuals with disabilities.
- **Peekaboo:** Stuffed animals that include nanny cams, allowing parents to monitor their children while they play with the toys.
- **Home-It:** An app that allows users to design and decorate their homes. This interior design app offers a user-friendly platform to plan home layouts and decor.
- **Dreamwise Realty:** A real estate company that specializes in selling homes to recent college graduates and new home buyers, and provides services to decorate those homes, in partnership with Home-it.

## Spring 2024: 3M Young Scientist Challenge

During Spring 2024, the VPSE STEM program worked with students in grades 6–8 to develop individual entries for the 3M Young Scientist Challenge. This premier science competition gave students the chance to change their world with a single innovative idea. Students selected a project from one of six key areas of impact—Robotics, Home Improvement, Automotive, Safety, AR/VR, and Climate Tech—and developed their own projects for submission.



Junior CEO visit to the Franklin Institute, June 2024



## Fall 2024: First LEGO League

The Fall 2024 season of the VPSE STEM Academy focuses on the First LEGO League, engaging Philadelphia students in grades 6–8 in a robotics and coding competition. Participants work in teams to build and program LEGO robots that complete specific missions while also creating innovative projects to address real-world challenges.

At the end of the season, students compete in one final competition, showcasing their robot game and innovation projects against other teams from the Mid-Atlantic area.

## Battleship CAD Design Program

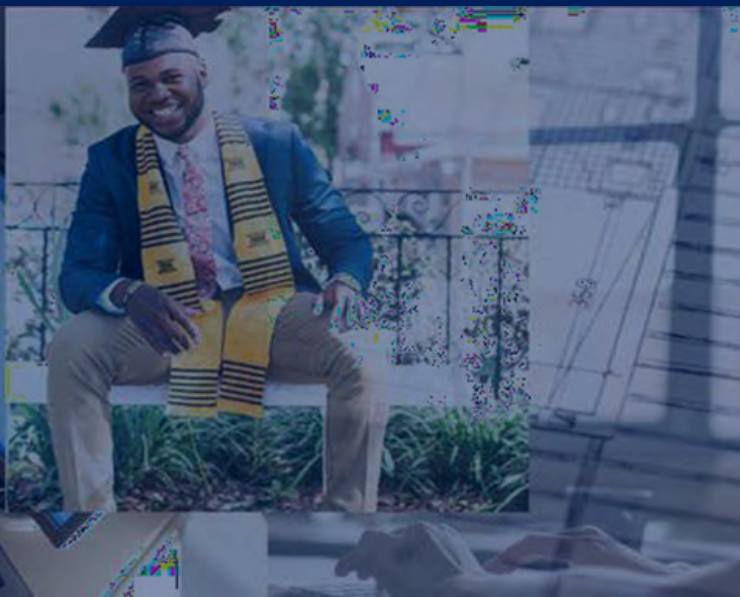
Students in 6th through 12 grade focused on virtual battleship design during this two-week summer course held from July 29 - August 9.

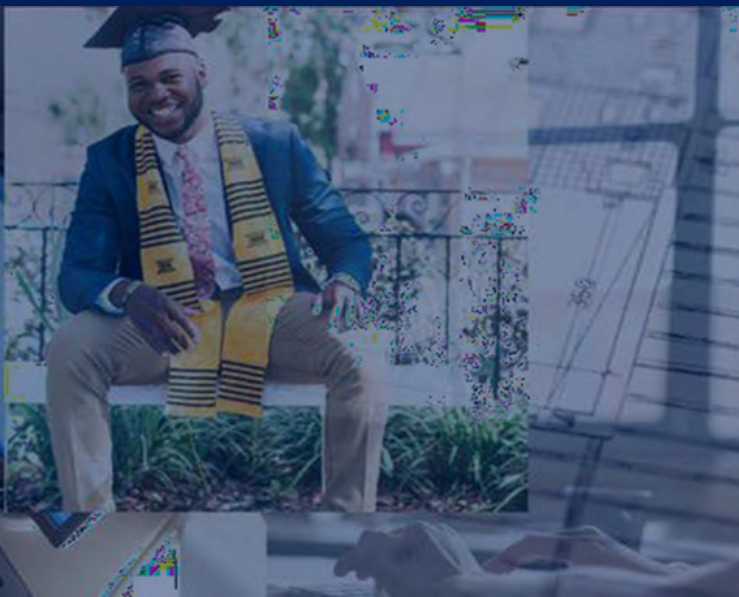






In 2024, the VPSE was awarded a grant by JEVs Human Services, the fiscal and contracting intermediary working with Philadelphia Works, the City of Philadelphia, through its Office of Children and Families and Department of Human Services, and the School District of Philadelphia, to offer Career Connected Learning PHL (C2L-PHL) activities to youth across the City. Students enrolled in VPSE programs were able to earn up to a maximum stipend of \$1,320 through completing VPSE STEM, PennRSSA, or SMP.





 [vpse.upenn.edu](http://vpse.upenn.edu)

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