

Diversity Innovation Grant Final Report

Due no later than December 31 (Note: Photos are encouraged!)

Project Name: COVID Vaccination Access in the Black and Latinx Communities

Team Members: Luis Quintero, April Tune, Matthew Bonner, Cynthia Millikin, and Beth Boyle

Project Overview:

Our initial proposal was to work in collaboration with current initiatives of other groups in JHU. We wanted to promote synergies and amplify the impact of our actions. In particular, we were in contact with Dr. Kathlee Page, Associate Professor of Medicine, and Dr. Sherita Hill Golden, Vice President, and Chief Diversity Officer, leading work on vaccine health equity, especially on Latinx and African American populations. This work would have included setting up vaccination sites in the exact locations where they are providing tests. We were also in contact with Dr. Risha Irvin, Assistant Professor of Medicine, leading work with the Center For AIDS Research (CFAR). As part of their efforts to alleviate the effects of the pandemic and the performance of vaccine distribution, they will begin working with community members through doing community education on COVID-19.

We wanted to use the grant funds to contribute to the work led by Dr. Risha Irvin. By helping people who participate in COVID-19 vaccination, explicitly addressing the needs and issues of minority groups. However, after visiting one of the sites managed by Dr. Page and speaking with her about her work, we found that her work and the efforts led by Dr. Risha Irvin were both already well funded. And that our grant dollars would better serve smaller non-profit organizations in the community that often get overlooked.

Explanation of the Problem

Minority groups have expressed high distrust regarding COVID-19 vaccination and the authorities distributing it. Historical practices of the medical community have impacted people of color in the Baltimore community, including the atrocity of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Latinx community has experienced targeting from authorities, particularly in recent years, due to increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric.

JHU has been a source of data and information for local communities and the global community at large concerning COVID. This proposal focuses on building trust within the local community, especially towards vaccination. Although we could not pull off what we originally wanted to, we helped by supporting two organizations providing meals for those being vaccinated and spoke with members of the community about the importance of getting vaccinated.

Current project status: Completed

Project highlights:

The team supported two Baltimore nonprofit organizations in the 21226 and 21217 zip codes, The Well and Payne Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Team members attended onsite COVID vaccination events to support community nonprofit organizations in building COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence by staying and talking with those receiving the vaccine and volunteers.

Matthew Bonner and April Tune were interviewed on a local radio station at the May 22, 2021, vaccine clinic to talk about the JHU Diversity Innovation Grant.

We purchased prepared meals with grant funds to distribute at the vaccine events to those receiving the vaccine—many who experience food insecurity challenges and provided lunches for volunteers.

Long-term impact:

JHU Shown to be a willing and trusted partner in the community.

JHU can help bridge the resource gap for distribution and communication around COVID-19 vaccinations and other areas where access to healthcare and equity have barriers and is a challenge.

What was learned:

Many larger churches and nonprofits received many financial resources, attention, and support to help with COVID vaccine access and distribution. At the same time, some of the smaller organizations struggle to get help because they do not have the connections.

Smaller organizations are doing the work and meeting the needs in their communities.

Plans for the future: To continue to work with smaller non-profits and to help increase their visibility and support their needs.

If your grant only covered part of your budget, specify which aspect the grant covered: