

Report of Grant Activity: Experiential learning for the WCU Urban Teacher Track 2.0 2023/2024

Our Innovation in Diversity grant money was used to fund two outings: 1) visit to The Colored Girls Museum and lunch at Brotherly Grub, a black owned, black cuisine restaurant, both in the Germantown section of Philadelphia; and 2) a Mural Arts Tour followed by lunch at Cray Taste, also a black owned, black cuisine restaurant both in Center City Philadelphia.

These outing were intended to promote a greater understanding of social identities, inequities, multiculturalism, inclusion, and social justice for students, faculty and in the Urban Teacher Track as well as alumni currently teaching in urban schools. These experiences were designed to further the cross-cultural competence training that ran through WCU’s new [Urban Teacher Track](#) that began in Fall of 2022. The Urban Teacher Track is a series of courses for Early Grades, Middle Grades and dual major students who have an openness to teaching in urban, racially, economically, linguistically, culturally marginalized communities and for engaging with issues of equity, social justice, and racial justice in education.

Responses to a survey regarding the Colored Girls Museum tour and Black cuisine restaurant (N=7)	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much
To what extent did the tour of the Colored Girls Museum and lunch at Brotherly Grub increase opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and/or learning among students and faculty?			7
To what extend did these experiences provide educational opportunities for you to have a greater understanding of social identities, inequities, multiculturalism, inclusion, and social justice?		1	6
To what extent did these experiences create and enhance opportunities to build self-awareness, knowledge, and skills to interact effectively with aspects of diversity, inclusion, culture, and global differences?			7

Here are some comments from the survey on the Colored Girls Museum and Brotherly Grub restaurant:

“To start, Brotherly Grub was an excellent choice for a restaurant. It was a good kick start to the day knowing that the next activity was the Colored Girls Museum. It was nice supporting a Black owned business, and it was a wonderful opportunity to talk to my peers who have similar experiences in our area of study, while also getting to know faculty. I would recommend the Colored Girls Museum to continue as a field trip. There was a lot of rich history and inspiration behind the artwork in the museum. The museum really captured the Black experience. It was nice being able to relate to pieces in the museum, as well as my peers and the museum serves as a great educational opportunity for all.”

“I loved the whole experience!”

“I think that this experience is vital for everyone and that it should be advertised to a larger audience.”

Responses to a survey regarding the Mural Arts Tour and (n=6)	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much
--	-------------------	-----------------	------------------

To what extent did the Mural Arts Tour lunch at Cray Taste increase opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and/or learning among students and faculty?			6
To what extent did these experiences provide educational opportunities for you to have a greater understanding of social identities, inequities, multiculturalism, inclusion, and social justice?			6
To what extent did these experiences create and enhance opportunities to build self-awareness, knowledge, and skills to interact effectively with aspects of diversity, inclusion, culture, and global differences?			6

Here are a few comments from students who joined for the Mural Arts tour and lunch at the Cray Taste Restaurant

“My experience at the Mural Arts Tour was amazing. It was great to get a closer look at all the murals that are in my city. Even though I am from Philly, I am not too familiar with the murals that we have here. In addition to this, it was great to learn about how murals are made. I always thought that murals were just painted on the brick walls, but through this tour, I learned that murals can be partially painted on the wall and partially painted on fabric that the artists hang on the wall depending on the size of the art piece.”

Lunch at Cray Taste was also a great experience as well. It was not only great to eat at a black owned restaurant that I never knew about, but it was also great to connect with my professors on a personal level. It was also great to connect with other education majors that I have never met before. “

“This was a great networking experience, and I would love to experience something like this again! Thank you for the opportunity!”

“I am extremely grateful for Urban Teacher Track sponsoring a trip to Philadelphia to learn about the murals painted in the downtown area. I have always passed murals in the city not knowing the in-depth process of creating the artwork or knowing what they mean. It was really interesting to learn that most murals are done on a cloth material but the bottom of the wall it is painted directly on the wall. It is easier to repaint the mural if it is done directly on the wall, but the cloth is less expensive and is a smoother canvas for the artist to use. Followed by the tour, we had brunch at Cray Taste. The food was amazing, but I also enjoyed getting to talk to Dr. Sylvester about my future path in teaching! We discussed how I learned about the Urban Teaching Track and ways to promote the track more to other students. Overall, I would suggest that education students take the opportunity to go on trips such as this to not only learn about new things, but to also be able to connect with professors and fellow WCU students.”

As with our previous year’s tours, the one aspect of the tours that was disappointing was the lack of alumni participation. One of my goals for the Urban Teacher Track is to build relationships across education students who are in the early stages of their work, those who are student teachers and those alumni working in Urban Schools. There are many reasons I want to connect to alumni but two of the

most important are to gain wisdom about what has worked for them as early career teachers and to gain information about what schools can support them if they are employed there. Alas, first year teachers are very busy.

Thank you for supporting this work. It was great success.

Paul Sylvester, Early and Middle Grades Education

Co-PI's:

Daris McInnis, Literacy Department

Tiffany Bennett, Early and Middle Grades Education Dept.