

# Transcript

## ViE - Young Scholars Program Panel\_mixdown

00:00:06 - Ashia Skye

Welcome to the Voices in Equity podcast, where we dive deep into powerful initiatives driving equity education and social change. I'm your producer, Ashia Skye, and today we're spotlighting a truly inspiring research institute that's been making waves in Durham, North Carolina, by shaping the minds of the next generation of young scholars. Get ready for an exciting conversation you won't want to miss. Today's episode is all about about the Hank and Billy Aaron Young Scholars Summer Research Institute, a dynamic collaboration between the Samuel du Bois Cook center on Social Equity at Duke University, also known as the Cook center, and Durham Public Schools. But this research institute is far more than just an academic program. It's a transformative journey where high school students gain essential skills in writing, research, and presentation while diving deep into the economic, social, and political forces that shape inequality. Joining us today are some of the key figures behind the Erin Young scholars Summer Research institute. Doctor William A. Darity, junior, known familiarly as Sandy, is the founding director of the Samuel Du Bois Cook center on Social Equity and whose vision has been instrumental in the development of this research initiative. Doctor Iwonosa, Idaho is the executive director for equity and professional development at Durham Public Schools and has witnessed firsthand the impact this program has had on Durham and public schools, students and the community. Doctor Daniel Kelvin Bullock, deputy director of educational programs at we are a non profit working to extend anti racist education brings invaluable insights from his time with DP's equity affairs, where he helped shape the curriculum in its early years. Doctor Gwendolyn Wright, director of strategic initiatives and collaborations at the Cook center, who has been pivotal in evolving and steering the Erin Young Scholars Summer Research institute into the program it is today. And finally, Miss Kennedy Ruff, program coordinator and associate in research at the Cook center, who has journeyed from a student in the program's first ever cohort to her current role as program coordinator, offering a unique perspective on its personal and professional impact. In today's episode, we are diving into the story behind the Erin Young Scholars Summer Research Institute, discovering how it all got started, and exploring how it connects with the Cook Center's mission to fight inequality. Well also talk about why teaching students to research issues of equity is crucial, and well hear personal stories and aspirations from our guests who've been a part of this journey. Plus, well explore exciting future plans and aspirations for the program. Whether you're an educator, a student, or just passionate about making a difference, you won't want to miss this conversation. It's all about empowering the next generation to take on the big challenges of our world. So stay tuned.

00:02:58 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Doctor Bullock and Doctor Wright, can you tell us about the inspiration behind the founding of the Aaron Young Scholars Summer Research Institute and how the idea first came about? I know that I was there, but I think you all have a better set of insights about it.

00:03:17 - Dr. Gwen Wright

I'm happy to start, doctor. So Doctor Bullock and his and extraordinary partner were introduced to us by Kristen Stevens, who is in the program in education. She's now the chair of that program. And she said they have done great work with the Durham public school system and they will be a good collaborator and partner in any kind of initiatives related to KVP. So we had conversations, Professor Darity, Doctor Bullock and then the young Scholars program. The concept of it was born.

00:04:01 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Yes. And I'll just add, at the time, I was serving as the k twelve social studies curriculum specialist for Durham public schools. So I was working with all social studies teachers across the school system. And so when the idea of having a social equity program for at that time, we were thinking about middle and high school students came about, I was like, oh, that's phenomenal. And I had some ideas of some great teachers who would be, you know, just excellent examples and would be able to really help to develop ideas around curriculum instructional practices that would resonate with students. And so that was, we came together around the idea and I was like, okay, I think I have some ideas of some people who would be great to help move this forward and to.

00:04:51 - Dr. Gwen Wright

Emphasize again, none of this would have been possible without that leadership during public schools, because that partnership is at the heart of what makes the Erin Institute for Young Scholars the success that it is.

00:05:08 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

So in that initial partnership, what are some main objectives you all went into for collaboration?

00:05:18 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

So I will say, I want to give so much credit to the Cook center in terms of their leadership as it relates to equity and just creating a space for people to dive deeper into issues of equity and understanding equity. Again, as I mentioned earlier, I was working with social studies teachers at the time. And at the time, public schools did not have an office of equity affairs. And so I had attended a training from the racial Equity institute out of Greensboro. And they were doing phenomenal work in terms of, you know, utilizing data and research to raise awareness around issues of equity. And I was seeing how data and research was also driving the work at the Cook center also. And so our main objectives were to think about how do we share this type of knowledge, how do we share these types of approaches with students in k twelve, particularly middle and high school students at the time. So our main objectives were to in my mind, with students were to raise awareness around issues of equity, which actually, you didn't really need to raise much awareness with students because students are always looking at issues of fairness,

they're always looking at issues of justice, intrigued about how their studies can be used to advance justice, advance equity. So they were familiar with the concepts, but maybe some of the language was new. So, you know, we wanted to raise that awareness and give them the skills to advocate for equity, advocate for justice. And that's, you know, those were some of the initial objectives around the world.

00:07:09 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

So, Doctor Wright, how do you see the young scholars so my research institute growing in the future?

00:07:16 - Dr. Gwen Wright

I think that, well, it has already grown tremendously from the initial program, which was two weeks and only one cohort. We now have four weeks and two cohorts and more than 70 students this particular year who are participating in the program. So I think in the future, we do want to grow, but we want to manage that growth in a way that we don't compromise the integrity and the intent of the program. So I think those are issues to be resolved as we move forward. But we're certainly, I think, at a place that we are comfortable with what we have achieved, and then we have to look very strategically in terms of how we proceed.

00:08:10 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

So are there any specific plans or visions you have just on increasing the number of students, any new curriculum topics or just extending the program's education or duration? Sorry.

00:08:23 - Dr. Gwen Wright

So the Young Scholars program, or the Erin Institute, is very much aligned with the Goals curriculum of the Cook center. And so recently, the Cook center created two new working groups around artificial intelligence and around environmental justice. So I see the Erin Institute really developing curricular activities around those. I mean, we just saw this year that students have research projects that focus on AI and environmental justice. So again, I think that the curricular activities for the young scholars are very much aligned with what we are doing at the Cook center.

00:09:16 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

Okay, so, Doctor Darity, how does the Young Scholars Summer Research Institute align with the Cook Center's mission?

00:09:24 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

The Cook Center's mission is focused on research to investigate the causes and sources of inequality, as well as to the development of remedies for inequality. And the particular categories of inequality that we emphasize at the Cook center include employment, wealth,

health, political participation, and education. And now, as Doctor Wright mentioned, we also have incorporated attention to the disparities that are associated with the evolution of artificial intelligence and the impact of environmental change, particularly climate change, on the wellbeing of our populations worldwide. We have an international emphasis, but we also have a focus that's very directed at not only the United States and North Carolina, but specifically the city of Durham, where we're located and where we have an obligation and a responsibility for being strongly engaged. And so, as a consequence, the summer program is closely aligned with the mission of the Cook center. It provides young scholars the opportunity to investigate the kinds of issues that we have made of our points of emphasis here. And it also provides us with a strong connection to the Durham community. And so it's very significant in that respect. I'd also say that one of our objectives has always been the nurturing and development of new scholars who would be engaged in investigating these kinds of issues in a rigorous and systematic way. And so it's been very, very important that we've been able to involve younger scholars, high school students, in a project of this type. And it's kind of, it's been wonderful to watch students participate with enthusiasm in a summer camp that's focused on research issues. Yeah.

00:11:41 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

Okay. So, Doctor Darity, can you talk a little bit about why it's important to teach high school students the fundamentals of research in studying issues on inequality?

00:11:53 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

So I think it's important for everybody to have some understanding about issues of inequality and have the capacity to critically address research findings that have been produced about issues of inequality so that we can have a country where we do a better job of trying to design the kinds of policies that would help us improve well being. So if we can work with the youngest scholars who can be engaged in this kind of process and get them interested, develop their skills, this can have long term benefits. Whether or not they continue to do this kind of work, they will at least have had an introduction to being able to think critically about these kinds of issues. And so I think it's vital to engage high school students in this type of research.

00:12:52 - Dr. Gwen Wright

I would want to add that Doctor Bullock and Doctor Idaho, from a curriculum perspective at DP's, why is it important to expose students to research, and how does that integrate within the overall curricular activities with DP's?

00:13:13 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

So I think I want to echo what doctor Darity shared in terms of just how important it is to assist students or aid students in developing critical thinking skills. When we look at some of our 21st century learning objectives that we have across the state, critical thinking is one of the skills that's at the core of that. And, you know, we want our students to graduate with being prepared to be effective citizens in the world and prepare for the workforce and things like that. And we

also want them to be able to be able to problem solve and to analyze not only for their own lives and for the betterment of their own lives, but for the betterment of society. And so, you know, with the skills that they're able to develop through this institute. One, it's beautiful to see students sharing those skills at their schools when they get back to school in the fall, but also just to see the impact beyond the school system in their lives and in the lives of others. I think that's so important and great to see.

00:14:27 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

And if I agree with everything that's been shared as well, I think about not only just the academic piece, but in terms of alignment with our strategic plan. Priority two is the whole child, and it's directly aligned with our core beliefs as well. So thinking about how experiences like this not only enhance students academically, but even in terms of social and emotional awareness. So, for me, as an educator, thinking about what this program provides in terms of how students are able to engage, they're able to develop those social skills, presentation skills that not only can be used in the classroom, but when we post secondary plans and aspirations, these skills are able to be transferred. And so, again, thinking just in terms of academically, yes, it's apparent that the research skills that they're gaining here are going to definitely transcend what they're getting in classrooms, but wanting to think about what life beyond high school will look like for our students, so preparing them for that and then also thinking in terms of access and opportunity. And so when we think about students that a program like this is serving our historically marginalized students, we think about access and opportunity, what this program provides for them in terms of exposure and opportunities to explore new topics. And so really wanted to make sure that we're creating that and supporting that foundation for them as well.

00:15:49 - Dr. Gwen Wright

So as a follow up to that, we've talked a lot about the impact on students, but what about on the teachers in DP's? What have you seen in terms of that process?

00:16:03 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Yeah, I will say I have seen. So when we started the Billy Aaron Hank and Billy Aaron Young Scholars program, we were bringing in teachers that, and we still are bringing in teachers that are exemplifying just phenomenal teaching skills and, like, just strong, culturally relevant pedagogy. Right. But here they are, given the space to just really go above and beyond with, I guess, less limitations in how in the content they're able to address. So, you know, with the timeline or the pacing guys that we sometimes have in education, you know, you kind of have to touch on a topic and kind of quickly move on. But here teachers are able to have more time and space to dive deeper into issues that really matter to them and to students. And then they're able to take those skills and take them back into the classroom and have new ideas for projects that they might use in the classroom and also engage more students through that. And I've seen it firsthand in visiting some of the teachers who have taught here and then being able to visit their classrooms back in the schools. And so, you know, I want to give pay respect to our teachers because they're already coming in with some phenomenal skills, but this is like just

ground for them, being able to cultivate those skills even more and then being able to utilize them in their classrooms.

00:17:47 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

And I'll add on. As you all know, DP's has some of the greatest teachers in North Carolina.

00:17:51 - Dr. Gwen Wright

Yes.

00:17:51 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

And so this space, similar to what you were saying, Doctor Bullock, it gives teachers an opportunity to also develop as learners. And so when we think about what it means to be an educator, part of that is being reflective in your practice. And so not only does it give educators a space to share their expertise, but they're also learning and taking these experiences into the classroom. And you're right, those limitations in the classroom can be a beast. And so when we think about just how teachers are able to explore even just this short amount of time, you know, they're able to explore topics that they're passionate about and they develop those passions in their students. And so it's a beautiful sight to see every year. And so I completely agree. They're bringing in, you know, elements of culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy, what it means to be liberatory educators and seeing that manifest not only within the program, but then throughout their schools. And so when we talk about shifting cultures and shifting mindsets, teachers here get an opportunity to not only develop the skills and how to do that, but they serve as trailblazers at their schools. And so, yeah, it's beautiful to see.

00:18:55 - Dr. Gwen Wright

Go ahead.

00:18:56 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

I just wanted to say one more quick thing, because this is an excellent professional learning opportunity for teachers too, to be able to be in this space and to hear, you know, a lecture or presentation from a doctor Darity or, you know, these aren't common things that educators get access to. So, you know, being able to cultivate their skills as teachers, that's invaluable. But also just the knowledge and information that you gain from being in a space like this with graduate students, you have postdocs you have all these different types of presentations of information that you have access to. And you know, again, as lifelong learners, as reflective practitioners, you need these opportunities to continue to grow in your understanding so that you can share those in the classroom.

00:19:46 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

I think the teachers are supremely valuable to this program. We could not have a good program without the strength of their skills and creativity. But that's also attributable to the fact that we have very high expectations in this program in terms of what the students ultimately produce. We in particular want them to do research projects where we have subjected them to the same level of criticism that we give our Duke undergraduates, and they live up to the challenge when they're pushed to do that. So that's very important. And then one of the things that Doctor Wright has initiated is an opportunity for the students to actually publish their work. And so we definitely want published work to look really good. So the teacher's capacity to encourage the students to develop projects of that quality has just been, it's been invaluable, I think so.

00:20:55 - Dr. Gwen Wright

And just to kind of build upon what Doctor Bullock has said, this intersection and engagement with research and the curriculum development between the teachers and the postdoc, I think is at the heart that makes this program a little different because they are both sharing knowledge, because a lot of them don't have experience teaching. And so this becomes this living laboratory where you have these different levels of the academy that's engaging with one another to produce these really extraordinary projects. In looking at this program, how do we take this program on the road? Are there thoughts about that? Because we understand that Dei, we understand that african american history are all under salt. And so how does this program, how can we replicate this program in other cities, in other states and across the United States? How do we take all that we've learned and explore other areas where this might be beneficial? It's a big question.

00:22:17 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

It is. Well, I'll say you definitely been in my head because that's what I've been thinking. When you think in terms of what it means to be a researcher, you're also thinking in terms of replication. And so a big part of that, simply put, would be wanting to replicate this in the form of a consortium. And so what does this look like in terms of establishing consortia across the state, across the country where, similar to what you shared before in terms of how this program was developed using that same model? And you have, again, thinking about our historically marginalized students taking that same model, exposing those students to the same opportunity to engage in research deeply and then thinking in terms of it, thinking in terms of access and opportunity and really digging deeply into what that means for our students and our communities. And again, this directly aligns with DPS's strategic plan in terms of community engagement and community partnership. So I'll be glad to continue that conversation.

00:23:18 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Doctor Bullock, Doctor Wright, I'm going to try to be short and succinct because you said a lot in your question as far as the assaults on Dei and the, the teaching of african american history, you know, the acknowledgement of histories of various historically marginalized communities. So I'm going to try to stay focused on the question about replicating what has been created. And I think Doctor Idaho has really spoken to as far as a consortium approach. But, and I also think the, you

know, the development and the creation of kind of solidifying the model that's being used here in terms of materials that can be used for professional development. Essentially, that's where my mind goes as far as replicating, like being able to articulate the creation of the program, the structure of the program, and providing professional learning for other educators so that they.

00:24:21 - Dr. Gwen Wright

Can replicate in other places indoctrinarity as from a public policy perspective as you're looking at this, and replication, because as a scientist, replication is an important aspect of your research. So how do you see this program being replicated in other places and spaces?

00:24:44 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Well, I think that the most important prospect for replication is dependent on the interests that folks in other locations have in doing a program of this type. I'm hoping that the podcast of this type will be heard widely and might encourage folks to think about setting up a similar program in their communities. And I certainly would want the Cook center to be available to provide suggestions, advice and guidance about how you can most effectively set up program of this type.

00:25:22 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Yeah, I was just going to add, and we may speak to this at another point in the podcast too, but I think emphasizing the why of the program and helping people to understand the benefits of a program like this. If we are in the work of trying to enhance our democracy or move our country forward in a way that is going to create a more just, a more equitable country, a more equitable world, then this type of program can and should be at the heart of that type of movement. And I just, I hope that we can help to communicate to people just how essential this is to the betterment of our world.

00:26:15 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

Yeah, and I was going to also add in terms of the spirit of what it means to be in Durham serving as pioneers in the Cook center serving as a pioneer and wanted to add on to what Doctor Bullock was saying in terms of the professional development piece. I think it's also important that the package for the model for student engagement is also packaged because this program does that well in terms of what it means to set high expectations, to have a student centered approach, and then thinking about, again, solutions to the issues that we are wanting to address lie within our students. And how can we take this opportunity to tap into that? Angela Davis has a quotation, and I'm not going to quote it for the cameras because I'm going to mess that up, but she speaks to the idea of having children stand on our shoulders. And so thinking about the foundation is here. What does it look like? What does it mean for students to stand on the shoulders of pioneers and leaders to continue to move this work forward?

00:27:12 - Dr. Gwen Wright



I think you've hit on something really important, and that is the community, the village. And for this program to thrive and to grow, we need the village, we need the community partners. And I think when we first started out, DP's was just so wonderful. But now we have all these, these other partners and places that are interested in being a part of the young scholars. We even get now requests from across the country saying, we really want to know more about this program. I've heard about it. Can I send my child? So I think the community engagement and the community partners are going to be critical and the replication and moving forward. So thoughts about how we bring in the other villagers, the other partners, the other community aspects to replicate this partnership?

00:28:17 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Well, I mean, the first thought that's coming to my mind. So I have transitioned from Durham Public schools, and I would now work for a nonprofit entitled Working to extend anti racist education, or we are, for short. And just thinking about being in the nonprofit space has allowed me to see just the phenomenal work that's going on with different organizations that are connecting with communities in a different way, and particularly with, we are, we do summer camps for kids and rising first through fifth grade, and it's based on healthy racial identity development, understanding structural racism, things of that nature. And so we have a model we've developed for kids in rising first through fifth grade. But just thinking about, like, we are not, we're unique in that, with the group of children that we work with around racial identity and structural racism. But we're not unique in that there are so many community partners here in Durham and beyond who are doing just amazing work on behalf of historically marginalized communities and have models that they have created, working with educators to engage different families that we struggle to engage sometimes in schools. So when I think about the village now being in the nonprofit space, I just see Durham has a beautiful village, and I know that there are similar resources across the country who can play a part in helping us to move the work forward. The last thing I'll say on that note is one of the things that I learned through the racial Equity institute training is just, it really benefits us to have kind of an interdepartmental, interagency approach to addressing issues of equity. So I always told people with our work in the school system, you know, yes, it's beneficial for us to do this work in schools, but how much more powerful is the work when we connect with healthcare, when we connect with the justice system, when we connect with. There's another key. Well, I'm thinking about economic opportunities, of course, you know, and I think that's another beautiful component of this program, that students are looking at equity in various different spaces. So, you know, I come in, I'm very passionate about education, but when a student says that they really want to dive deep into environmental racism, sure, go have at it. And let's look at the connections between what we see in the school system and what we see in housing disparities or where certain communities are placed and things of that nature like. And again, as we look at these things in that kind of multifaceted way, we can move things forward and create a more equitable justice society.

00:31:36 - Dr. Gwen Wright

And I think that is the key. And it amazes me when you engage with the students in this program, how sophisticated they are and how aware they are of what's going on around them. And I've seen a level of sophistication rise as the years go by. And maybe that's part of the social media impact. The way that they are thinking about their world, the way that they are thinking about each other has changed and how they want to be active in making this a more just world for everyone. So that is something that I've seen over the, I guess, since 2015 when we started the program. So that level of sophistication and awareness has certainly deepened the quality of the projects and the students that are taking this program.

00:32:37 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Yeah, we actually benefit as old head scholars from the students originality and from their recognition of a new set of issues and concerns that we frequently have not even considered. They also interrogate their own experiences as high school students. You know, what are the policies and practices that are taking place in the schools that they attend that affect not only them individually, but affect all the other students. And we've also had some work that was done that was critical of a program at Duke University. They used to have a program that they called the Talent Identification program. And one of our students did a critical analysis of that program. So these are things that would not have happened if we had just proceeded with our own research agendas. So we've gained a lot from the students. So, Miss Ruff or Kennedy. Yes, I know you better. You have some unique insights about the summer program, in part because you are the only person who was a member of the first cohort of the program in 2015, served as an intern in the program, and now are serving as the director of the program. So I'd love to hear your observations about your initial experiences and how you've observed the evolution of the program.

00:34:10 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

So, sorry. So my initial reaction for the program, my mom signed me and my sister, who was also in the first cohort of the program, up and didn't tell us. And so she had called me and was like, so and so is going to call you and ask these questions. I need you to pick up an answer. And so we did. And so she told us just a little bit about the program and just was like, well, this is the first year of the program, so just go in and learn and see what you enjoy. And so my first day at the program, I felt so excited. It was just a phenomenal experience. Before I moved to Durham, I did not have a really good experience with education. Some of the microaggressions and some of the educational things we were talking about, I personally experienced. And so I just remember being at a place where I wanted to be around people who looked like me. And we're talking about these issues and working towards these issues and just not knowing where I wanted to be in life. And so when I started the program talking about this, I was like, this is me. Like, we're talking about me. And so, like, finding people who also are passionate about it. And during public schools, other students and instructors made me feel so, so much better and so much happier. And I think just seeing some of the scholars and learning that people with PhDs looked like me and they were doing research to help students who looked like me was something that led me to want to look at research because I had no experience or any idea of what research was

or how it can impact people. And so during the program, I just enjoyed the discussions, working with other students and the instructors and even hearing doctor Darity come and present and other people from the Cook center. And so I think after that first year, I was starting to get more confidence in what I wanted to do in life and where I wanted to be, that it was just. It made me want to keep coming and being around students who look like me as well. And so when I was in the program, it was a three year model. And so when I finished the program, we wrote a paper, and my paper was on mental health in the black community. And I was like, I didn't realize this was going on. And it kind of piqued my interest. And so after that, I was super passionate about mental health and the education system and how that goes hand in hand sometimes.

00:36:52 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Could you comment a bit on how you've seen the program change over time?

00:37:02 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

So when I started in 2015, that was when Instagram and Snapchat first came out. And so my experience with learning social equity topics was either through my parents or from news, like the actual local news. And so I didn't really see these things, like, every day. And so it wasn't until later on in high school when that became more prevalent, social media became more prevalent. And so now we have students coming into the program who know these topics. They see these topics every day on Instagram or TikTok, and so they see these things, and they have an idea of what we mean by racial bias or, like, healthcare experiences or microaggressions. They have those ideas of what it is coming into the program, whereas some students don't. And I think social media has definitely impacted the knowledge that students have before the program starts. Another thing that I've noticed is just, I think these past few years, having students who want to learn more about social equity and are social equity driven because some of them experience those things themselves. So they're like, yes, we're talking about this because I see this on a daily basis and coming to the program and being super passionate to be there, passionate about their research topics, passionate about their research presentations, has definitely grown for more and more students to be more passionate about doing that and coming into that space.

00:38:42 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

One other question comes to mind immediately for me, which is, in the context of how the program has evolved, we actually have some activities for the students that take place outside of the summer months. And could you comment on those?

00:38:58 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

Yes. So, after the students complete the first cohort, they come during the school year and do writing workshops to prepare for their research papers. And so we will meet with them throughout the school year, and they'll learn about what is research? What is quantitative research? What is the qualitative research? What is the layout of the research paper? And so

then they'll actually start writing that, and it'll be tools to help them be able to write that in the summer. But a lot of them use those same tools in their classes. So they take those tools and they're like, miss Rough, this has helped me with my english paper, or this helped me with my presentation at AP because I already knew these things. So the writing workshop is to help them get some tools to support them in the program, but also in their classroom. And after high school, Kennedy, you raised.

00:39:50 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

A really good point as far as in the impact of representation when you talked about having access to or seeing, you know, black PhDs or PhDs of color. And so that resonated with me because that was my experience, too. So you think about growing up, going through or having your k twelve experience and being the only one, and then feelings of being othered. And so to hear you say that and seeing or hearing about how this has influenced your own academic journey, that's powerful to hear. And, you know, thinking about our district's racial and educational equity policy, you know, a big part of that not only focuses on access to advanced and rigorous courses, but then also thinking about systems that have been in place right, when we think about making the connections for students between home and school and again, home and life after high school. And so hearing about and seeing over the years and how you've been able to share how it's evolved over time, how the program continues to address those issues that we've mentioned in our policy. Again, it speaks to just the strength and the power of this partnership and then what we're able to do after this, just in terms of future direction. So thank you for lifting that up.

00:41:10 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

And to that point as well. I think a lot of the goals and mission of the Cook center is also reflective in guest speakers that we bring to the program. And so with that in mind of representation, I always make sure that the guest speakers are very representative, not just with the research they're talking about, but sometimes, you know, where their backgrounds where students can relate. And this summer, I've had students come up and were like, you know, I want to go to medical school. Or a student came up and said, I heard Doctor Darity's presentation and I didn't know these are what economists do or what an economist were and what research they do. I thought it was just about math. And so making sure that guest speakers come in who look like them and doing the work that they want to do is so important. Just having that connection and collaboration with the Cook center and having postdocs and, like, even you guys coming in makes the students feel like, okay, I can do this later on in life, and I can reach for those goals and aspirations. So part of the recruitment process for the program is reaching out to counselors here and during public schools and connecting with the assistant principals, principals, doctor Idaho and her office to recruit all students in Durham public schools. And so I've gone to a lot of different in person events connected with counselors and teachers who want all of their students to have access to this program. And so the diversity in the program has changed so much from when I was in the program to having students from all over Durham, but all over Durham, and some of their topics reflect where they're from. We have students doing projects

on mental health in the hispanic community, how the impacts of these norms, how the impacts of some of these social norms for Asian Americans are not very inclusive, or the harm that it has on some of those students. We have students talking about educational disparities in terms of AP classes and who has access to them. But we have a wide range of topics from a wide range of students from Durham public schools. And so that's the credit doctor Idaho, from the work that her office is doing and just helping with the recruitment and making sure the students who are in this space feel welcomed and are comfortable with presenting topics that reflect them and their interest.

00:43:52 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Yeah, and I would add to that, I mean, you have some students exploring topics related to LGBTQIA identity, you and, you know, and I will name when. Since the foundation of the partnership is with Durham Public Schools. About 80% of the students enrolled in Durham public schools are students of color, predominantly black and Latinx. But you just have a great diversity of black, latinx, asian, white, multiracial students represented in the program. And so I do. I appreciate the fact that it feels fairly proportional to the school system, so that, because, again, you do want to make sure that students from historically marginalized communities are getting access to opportunities like this, but, you know, again, not in a way that is going to exclude people, because, honestly, we need everyone to have these types of learning opportunities. You know, those who may be coming in who have been marginalized and those who may be coming in with a little. They may have access to some social financial capital. You know, I mean, through. It's important for them to learn about these types of issues, too. So, yeah, it's a strong, diverse representation of students from different backgrounds here.

00:45:28 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

And if I can speak to that, too, coming in to the programs each year, it really is. You just kind of scan the room and you're like, wow, this looks like DP's thinking about our demographics. It really does look like that. And so it's beautiful for me to see, but then also thinking about what future partnerships or partners can come in and see and how the work that they're doing. We're not only thinking of it in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, but then also diversity of thought. And so what this program does, it gives students an opportunity to explore those topics that they may not have a space to do, to do so in classrooms where, you know, their class may not represent or reflect their experiences outside of class. So this again, echoing what's been said.

00:46:19 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Yeah, we have multiple programs at the Cook center that are related to trying to foster the development of younger scholars. So one of those programs is known as the Diversity Initiative for Tenure in economics, where we focus on economists from underrepresented groups who have faculty positions. We provide them with a mentoring experience to move from being untenured assistant professors to being tenured associate professors. We have a significant number of postdoctoral fellows at the Cook center. At the present moment, I think upwards of nine. We also have graduate students who work with us, as well as undergraduate students from

Duke. And then the program that we have with the youngest array of students is the Erin Institute, and those are high school age students. But, Doctor Bullock, you're involved in a program that we are, has students who are in first through fifth grades. So my question for you is, what's the earliest stage at which students can start learning about these kinds of issues?

00:47:38 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

I mean, we at. We are believed, not believe, but the research shows that students start understanding and making sense of topics of race and gender at very young ages. And so by the time students are entering school, typically, you know, at five years old, they're already developing some ideas around race, around gender, etcetera. And so we think it's very important, honestly, even as children are being raised and thinking about the books that parents may be reading to them in the womb and even at birth, you know, makes a difference as far as, you know, diverse identities being affirmed. You know, as students are growing up, particularly for us, as it relates to race, we just think that's very important. So. So, yeah, we start our summer camps with rising first graders. And really, that's honestly because of the way our curriculum is currently structured. But we're developing a pre K play based curriculum also to think about how do we get kids involved in thinking about topics of race in a healthy way at even younger ages?

00:48:54 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

When the Cook center first introduced this program, the Erin Institute, we actually had middle school age students also. And I'd like to see if we can find a way with sufficient resources to tap into that age group as well.

00:49:12 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Again, and I mean, to that point, research shows that when we look at sometimes the segregation that we see in high school, depending on who's taking which classes and who's enrolling in which track in high school, a lot of those structures are set in place, are kind of solidified in middle school. So you go into high school, the courses that you take or the spaces you feel most comfortable in, that that has already happened through your experience in k eight. And so, you know, so, yeah, I just say that to say that, you know, this, the earlier we can start, the better. Exactly. Exactly.

00:49:59 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

So, Doctor Adohor, can you just speak to the specific needs and challenges of current DP's students and how. I'm sorry. Can you speak to the specific needs and challenges of current DP's students that this program aims to address?

00:50:16 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

Sure. And I think throughout our conversation, we've kind of addressed it already, thinking about, again, the experiences of students in terms of access to rigorous and advanced courses and what those experiences are like. And so thinking about specific needs, I think this program

supplements what students are already getting in school in terms of, again, exposure to opportunities where, you know, students of or from historically marginalized identities have a chance to explore those topics deeply. I think this program provides a sufficient space and an opportunity to do that. So that's the deepening of that question. But I think we've kind of spoken to it already. But again, what makes this partnership so rich is the fact that there's support here and there's access to resources. And again, just the exposure piece is huge. And so I love the fact that we're able to be a part of this partnership where students have a chance to explore in that way.

00:51:18 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

So when we think about future developments or expansions with the young scholar Summer Research Institute, I know one of the initial goals or purposes of the program was to connect, or is to connect students research to policy and thinking about how their research can be, you know, used for real time, real life advocacy around policy. And so doctor Idaho mentioned earlier how DP's has the racial and educational equity policy. And I just, you know, throughout the years going back to 2015, I just see the ways in which students research has continued to inform their work and their purpose in life. And I think about a previous student. I think he may be studying for a PhD in oceanography or something right now. And so, like, thinking about environmental justice, that's something that he kind of started to think about as a high school student here and has carried on with him. And so I just, I do wonder about the potential, the continued potential around advocacy, around policy. And we had talked about publishing papers, and I definitely think that's vital. But from policies here in the city of Durham to policies across the state or even on a larger scale, just for students to know that this research, it can go as far as they want it to, that it can impact policy, and to know that policy makes a difference in the outcomes of people's lives. And so that's one of the things that I continue to wonder about. You know, how directly can we draw the connection between the research that students do here and opportunities for policymaking?

00:53:21 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

And if I can add on to that, too, I'm glad you brought that up, because I also think about this space. You mentioned policy, but I'm thinking in terms of just, like, practice and programming, how we've been able to tap students who've been a part of this program after listening to their research presentations. And we've been able to tap students for different opportunities that may be available not only within the district but across Durham to serve on committees, to serve as panelists. And so, again, going back to what you were saying, this program definitely provides that opportunity to really think about how we continue to move this work forward in that sense.

00:54:00 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

Yeah. So I just want to say, I think to some degree that work is already happening. I remember there was a cohort a few years ago where they took their research topics and they hosted their own symposium at their high school for other people to come and learn about the research that they had done. And so, you know, I just, they are doing phenomenal work here. The students are

doing some phenomenal work. And I just think one of the things that we have seen in our equity advocacy with the school system is we constantly tell people, just talk to the students, just listen to the students, like, they will tell you exactly what's happening, what's not happening, and how to fix it because they're directly impacted. So, yeah, so those are just some thoughts I have.

00:54:51 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

And to that point, we also had one capstone. A student had looked at an elementary school curriculum that can help support STEM learning. And so she had drafted up a handout and, like, passed it out at the capstone and it included like the estimate. Like, this is how much it would cost, this is how to implement it even on a small scale, just for people who are in that room, for like DBS officials, but even people from all over the state who came to the capstone. And one of the highlights that she told me was just being able to have people ask her about that and just listening to what she was saying and how to implement those, even on a small level, even if it's just a nonprofit organization or just like a little club at school, but just listening and actually being able to see people say, I want to implement this at my school or implement this at my organization. So that was something she said that was memorable.

00:55:44 - Dr. Iwinosa Idahor

And that's awesome because the program, I also think of it as a place, a program that fosters that identity of being not only a critical consumer, but a producer of like, new knowledge and just how empowering that is, right? To see someone walking away with your handout, that's big time as a high schooler. Like, it's official at that point, you know? So echo everything that you said, for sure.

00:56:08 - Dr. Daniel Kelvin Bullock

And again, thankful to the Cook center for being a space that listens to our students. Doctor Darity, you mentioned earlier how, you know, students are, when we listen to them, they'll come in with new topics of equity that may not have been on our radar. AI wouldn't have been something that I brought up as, you know, a primary equity issue because, I mean, I'm just getting to know AI myself because I'm behind. I'm a little behind on things, but these are things that our students, they are paying attention to. They're on the cutting edge of what's going on in the world. And we need to listen to them. And I think this is a great space for giving ideas and giving knowledge, giving them some things to think about and also for us, learning, you know, about some things to be on our radar in the years to come.

00:57:07 - Ms. Kennedy Ruff

I would say for current and future participants just coming in with an open mind and being receptive and just enjoying meeting and networking and learning different peers who also have experienced certain things or also are passionate about social equity as well. I will also say to advocate while you're here in this program, it's a space for you to learn and grow. And so as you're learning these things, if some feelings come up, it's okay. That's normal. And just



advocating for, like, hey, like, this is how I'm feeling. How can I work through this emotion? But I think just for any students who are looking or interested in social equity and they're doing that work. Just continue your passion and keep having an open mind, being receptive, and connect with people who are doing the work that you do.

00:58:07 - Dr. Gwen Wright

You've been listening to voices in equity from the Samuel du Bois Cook center on social equity at Duke University. For more information on how the Cook center is pursuing a more just and inclusive society, visit [socialequity.duke.edu](http://socialequity.duke.edu) to amplify our message. Please be sure to follow this podcast and share it with your network. This podcast is edited and produced by airfluence. Thanks for listening and we'll see you again soon on voices in equity.