

# PROJECT SOAR

STUDENT OUTREACH for ACCESS & RESILIENCY

## Project SOAR Fact Sheet

### Overview of Program

Project SOAR (Student Outreach for Access & Resiliency) is a service-learning experience that routinely places over 100 UA undergraduate mentors in under-resourced, public middle schools in the Tucson area. These students are enrolled in either Higher Education (HED) 350 or HED 397B, both of which examine issues of college access. This College of Education program is housed within the Center for the Study of Higher Education in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and Practice.

### Courses Associated with Project SOAR

#### ***HED 350***

HED 350 is an upper-division undergraduate course that introduces students to the major theories and research conducted in areas of college access, outreach, academic achievement, and resiliency. Previously listed as HED 397A, this course has been offered since spring 2005, and has always included the Project SOAR service-learning component, which requires that the students mentor for at least 25 hours per semester. HED 350 is now offered during Fall and Summer I semesters. It has been approved as part of the General Education curriculum and is now a recognized Tier II INDV course; it is also a component of the Adolescents, Community and Education minor.

#### ***HED 397B***

Though this course is a complement to HED 350, HED 350 is not a pre-requisite for HED 397B. Run as a small-group discussion section, this course emphasizes the mentoring experience, while providing supplemental instruction on the major theories and research conducted in areas of college access, outreach, academic achievement, and resiliency. The welcoming classroom environment allows returning students to fine-tune their mentoring skills while assisting classmates who are new to the program, and engages all students in academic coursework regarding current issues in K-12 education and college access. Students are required to spend an average of 1 to 2 hours per week at their assigned schools, for a semester total of approximately 25 hours of service.

### Relationship with College of Science

In Summer 2010, Project SOAR partnered with the College of Science to create a section of SOAR specifically for CoS undergraduates. Beginning in 2011, CoS SOAR students and TAs will be actively involved in the SOAR Science Collaborative, a service-learning component specific to CoS SOAR that both enhances the CoS SOAR curriculum, and is designed by the science teachers and mentors to meet classroom learning objectives. The Collaborative, made up of 12 science teachers from participating SOAR middle schools and CoS SOAR mentors, will meet 5 times per year to design hands-on science activities for MS students, and to share best practices with one another. As participants span 6-8 middle schools and the university, the Collaborative allows members to share ideas and learn from one another in a setting otherwise unavailable. Additionally, the CoS SOAR graduate assistants will work with the CoS outreach centers (Biosphere 2, Flandrau Science Center, Marine Discovery, Steward Mirror Lab, etc.) to engage SOAR middle school mentees in science through campus visits and/or in bringing resources from these centers into the schools.

## **College of Science (CoS) SOAR**

CoS SOAR is a discussion section of both HED 350 and HED 397B specifically designed for CoS undergraduates who are interested in combining science outreach with the mentoring they provide at local schools. The CoS SOAR discussion sections include discussions about science outreach in the middle schools, and the mentor format takes place with small groups of 3-5 middle schoolers on a weekly basis in a science classroom, while doing hands-on (mentor-led) science projects with the students.

### **Impact of Program**

- Over 21,000 mentoring hours have been logged by SOAR students since 2005
- Over 2,000 middle school students have benefited from a SOAR mentor since 2005
- A 2011 mentee survey revealed that 73.3% of the middle school students believed they had a mentor who motivated them to do well in school, believed they could be a success (74%), and had increased their motivation to get good grades (67.9%)
- 72% of the middle school mentees surveyed agreed that their mentors had increased their interest in going to college. Additionally, mentors were credited for increasing their knowledge about getting into college (69.4%) and future careers (67%)

### **Program Leadership**

Project SOAR became a service-learning program in 2005 and was directed by Dr. Jenny Lee, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for the Study of Higher Education, from 2005 through Spring 2009. Associate Professor Dr. Regina Deil-Amen served as director during the 2009-10 academic year. Dr. Lydia Bell, Assistant Professor of Practice, currently serves as the director of Project SOAR.

### **Project SOAR Research Efforts**

Research stemming from Project SOAR has been presented at the annual meetings of both the Association for the Study of Higher Education and the American Educational Research Association. Publications stemming from these research efforts, co-authored by Jenny Lee, Higher Ed. alumnae Michelle Espino and Stephanie Levitt, and current SOAR Director Lydia Bell, have been either accepted for publication or are under review in various education journals.

### **Schools Currently Served by Project SOAR**

Challenger Middle School (Sunnyside Unified School District)  
Chaparral Middle School (Sunnyside Unified School District)  
Hohokam Middle School (Tucson Unified School District)  
Imago Dei Middle School (Independent, tuition-free school)  
Mansfeld Middle School (Tucson Unified School District)  
Roskrige Middle School (Tucson Unified School District)  
Safford Middle School (Tucson Unified School District)  
Wildcat Middle School (Charter)

### **Project SOAR Contact**

Director: Lydia F. Bell, lfbell@email.arizona.edu, (520) 621-1517

### **Website**

<http://soar.web.arizona.edu/>