STEM Ambassador Program

Synergistically bridging scientists with other communities

http://stem-ambassadors.org

Premise

Just as U.S. Foreign Service trains ambassadors to interact positively with people in other cultures, STEM Professionals can engage as "STEM Ambassadors" to science-inattentive public groups if they receive academically appropriate rewards, contacts, and training.

Leadership Team

Co-PIs:
Nalini Nadkarni, University of Utah
Shelley Goldman, Stanford University
Becky Menlove, Natural History Museum of Utah

Senior Researchers:
Dennis Schatz, Pacific Science Center
Sue Allen, Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance
Becky Carroll, Inverness Research Associates

Program Manager:
Natalie Toth, University of Utah

Project Implementation

We have designed research to investigate 3 NSF-funded informal science education models to create a new model that more effectively engages STEM Professionals in the venues of science-inattentive publics.

1. Portal to the Public (PoP): Assists informal science education institutions to bring scientists face to face with the public in informal science institutions

2. Design Thinking (DT): Helps solve "wicked" problems through empathy, creativity, and prototyping

3. Research Ambassador Program (RAP): trains ecologists to engage non-traditional groups, such as urban youth and faith-based groups in community venues.

Research Questions

Addressing Changes in Identity

1. How can the STEM Ambassador Program integrate existing informal science education models to shift the self-identity of:
   - STEM researchers to STEM communicators?
   - STEM-inattentive publics to science-learning publics?

2. How can these interactions be shaped to be synergistic and sustainable?

Audiience/Communities

"Science-inattentive" public audiences—those who are unaware of, or hostile to science or who do not physically have access to informal science education institutions.

Audience/Communities

STEM Professionals from the University of Utah who seek to effectively connect their research with society.

Creating Connections

STEM Ambassadors will connect with community groups via:

- Common interest in science topic
- Common hobbies/personal interests of the STEM Ambassador
- Engaging groups with whom we have already connected (e.g., inmates, refugees, etc.)

Intended Outcomes

- 50 STEM Professionals trained on best practices to engage science-inattentive publics
- 100 outreach events in Salt Lake Valley communities
- A suite of case studies research and participant evaluations
- A STEM Ambassador Program website and database network
- A systematic, authentic model and training that result in scientists advancing informal science education activities
- A potential model for other universities and communities
- Answers to our research questions about shifts in science learning and communication identities

Students observe and record details about the weather in their school yard.

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