



2024 Annual Report

Carnegie Mellon University's LEAP Program

JULY 2024





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A Note from the Program Director

Dear friends,

2023-2024 was a transformative time for LEAP. The third year of the program brought changes in staffing as we welcomed two new School Coordinators and hired our first LEAP Workshop Assistant. New partnerships were formed with members of CMU and the greater Pittsburgh area, including our first community partner organization - the National Opera House. For the first time, we had students from previous LEAP cohorts return to

Highlights of LEAP's impact:

- 100% of seniors graduated high school in 2024 and are continuing their education
- 85% of students said that LEAP significantly helped them feel more comfortable on a college campus
- 100% of students agreed that art was a powerful tool for creating positive social change

participate as seniors, scaffolding their learning across multiple years. We also created a logic model and formal curriculum as well as a new system of evaluation for the program.

The core of LEAP remains constant: students' voices, expertise and experiences are at the heart of our work and guide our decision-making. The art they create, the skills they cultivate, and the relationships they form inspire us and give us hope for a brighter future. We know that these young people will play integral roles in transforming the world into a more just, beautiful place for all.

LEAP is only made possible by the remarkable people who have supported us, including our students, school partners, community leaders, funders and advisory board. To all those who have contributed to the program this year: thank you. We are deeply grateful and excited to continue building LEAP together.

In community,
Sarah Ceurvorst



About LEAP

LEAP is an educational program that uses storytelling to empower under-resourced high school students to become agents of social change. It provides a supportive learning environment for students to engage with issues of equity and justice in their lives and communities.

In this year-round program, students are paid to learn with local artists, activists, and scholars who are working to create positive change in the world. They participate in hands-on learning experiences focused on personal reflection, artistic expression, and civic engagement. Students work individually and collectively to cultivate self-efficacy, a love of learning and creating, and the confidence to envision and build a better future.



What we believe:

- We believe that the transformational power of the arts, humanities, and social sciences can create change in our lives and communities.
- We celebrate the knowledge, resources, talent, and power that each student possesses. We embrace that we can learn with and from our students. We know that students' time and experience are valuable and therefore compensate participants in the LEAP program.



What we do:

Launched in Fall 2021, the LEAP program features:

- Year-round mentoring from CMU staff and faculty. Students are given individual guidance to achieve their personal, academic and professional goals. Whether writing a letter of recommendation for college, discussing student artwork, or introducing internship opportunities, the LEAP team is there to support students.
- Monthly gatherings on CMU's campus with faculty, mentors and Pittsburgh community members. Students guide the learning process by sharing what they are passionate about. In these gatherings, students can suggest areas of focus, lead workshops themselves, or open themselves up to learning about new subjects and expanding their horizons.
- A week-long intensive academy on CMU's campus. Students spend full days in workshops focused on breaking down educational inequity through the lens of the arts, humanities

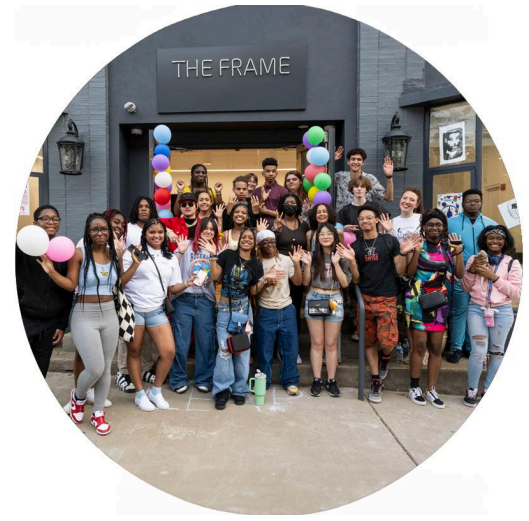
and social sciences. They create art, think critically, and engage in dialogue with one another.

- Public events created by LEAP students. These public events are opportunities for LEAP students to showcase their learning and directly address issues of equity that they are passionate about.
- Regular assessments through pre- and post-participation surveys and journaling.
- Monthly payments to students for the time they've spent in the LEAP program.

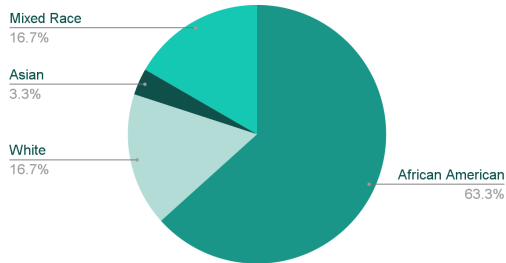


'23-'24 Student Cohort

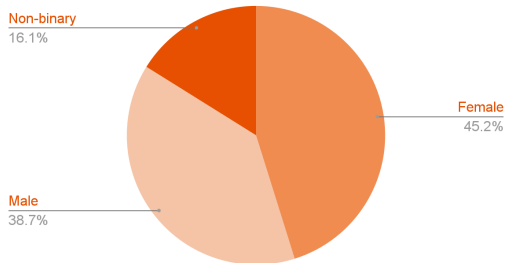
The '23-'24 Student Cohort consisted of juniors and seniors from City Charter High School (CCHS), a high-performing public charter school that attracts students from across the greater Pittsburgh region. Students applied to the program by writing essays about their interests in the arts, humanities, and social justice and were selected by CCHS faculty and staff.



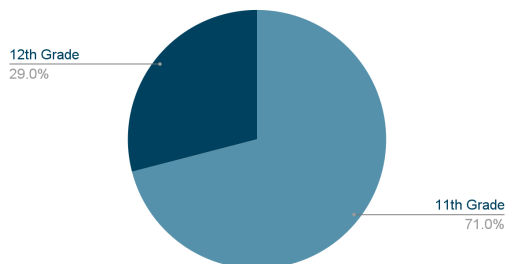
Race



Gender

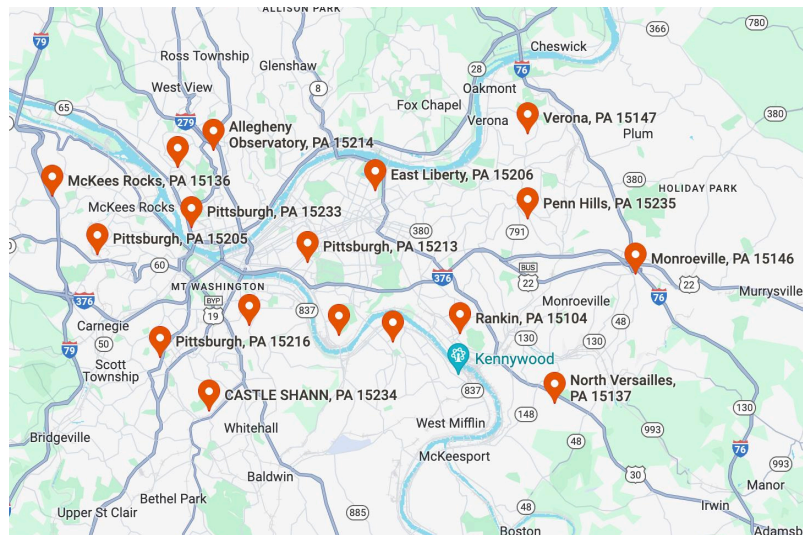


Grade Level



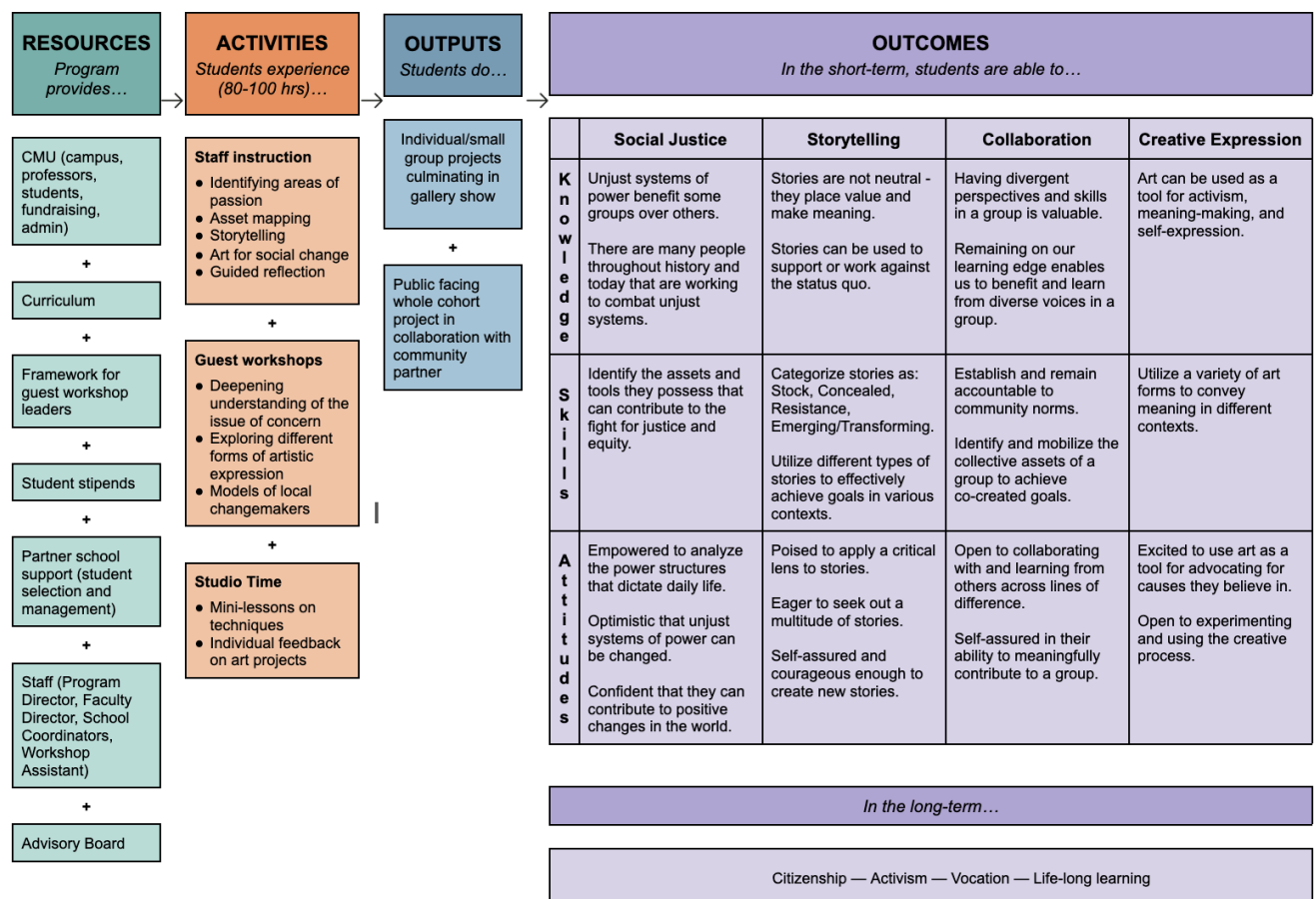
The '23-'24 LEAP cohort at a glance:

- 31 students were admitted to the '23-'24 LEAP Student Cohort (a 24% increase from '22-'23)
- 71% were juniors
- 29% were seniors who participated in the LEAP program as juniors in '22-'23
- 83.3% identified as BIPOC
- 16.1% identified as non-binary or gender non-conforming
- LEAP students live in 17 different zip codes
- A majority of students live in low-income households



Curriculum

In the summer of 2023, LEAP's program director, Sarah Ceurvorst, spearheaded the creation of a [Logic Model](#) for LEAP that clearly articulated the program's resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes. This was created in consultation with an educational consultant, Dr. Catherine Nelson, as well as with Dr. Nico Slate (LEAP faculty director) and Ayana Ledford (chair of the LEAP board of advisors).



The logic model served as a guide for writing [a comprehensive curriculum](#) for the LEAP program. The curriculum provided instructions for each lesson, including materials, workshop procedures, reflection, assessment, and learning objectives that were scaffolded throughout the program. It also described how each lesson helped students grow their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in four categories: social justice, storytelling, collaboration, and creative expression.



Workshops

As part of the LEAP curriculum, students engage in a wide variety of experiential learning workshops led by artists, activists and scholars. Workshop leaders teach students about creating positive change through storytelling in the arts and humanities. Some highlights of the '23-'24 workshops include:

- Screen printing shirts, bags, and posters at Artists Image Resource to help raise awareness of The National Opera House.
- Writing first-person essays with journalists from PublicSource.
- Creating paintings and collages that will be incorporated into a mural for a local hospital.



LEAP students have the opportunity to work with a diverse array of experts including:



Scott Andrew

artist, curator, instructor in CMU's School of Art and University of Pittsburgh's Department of Studio Arts



Amanda Pagniello

Dispatch Coordinator, 412 Food Rescue



Ari Brazier

CEO and President of ATL Parent Like A Boss, Inc.



John Peña

artist and adjunct professor in CMU's School of Art



Stephan Caspar

Director of Askwith Kenner
Global Languages & Cultures
Room; professor in CMU's LCAL
Department



Feliks Pyron

artist, Artists Image Resource,
Production Manager



Jill Chisnell

librarian, artist



Ramon Riley

artist, author and educator



Emily Davis

archivist in CMU Libraries



Jon Rubin

artist, professor in CMU's School
of Art



Kathleen Donahoe

archivist in CMU Libraries



Becca Simon

Food Donor Relations Manager,
412 Food Rescue



Erin Foley

artist, Artists Image Resource,
Operations Manager



Jonnet Solomon

executive director of the National
Opera House



Emma Folts

Journalist at PublicSource,
storyteller



Lisa Tetrault

historian, professor in CMU's
Department of History



Clarence Grant II

musician, drummer



Mary Tremonte

artist, educator, DJ mary mack,
member of Justseeds Artists'
Cooperative



Jayashree Iyengar
chef, founder, and owner of
Popping Mustard Seeds



Alexa Waugh
GFP Kitchen Manager, 412 Food
Rescue



Lajja Mistry
journalist at PublicSource,
storyteller



Miso (Cheng-Yu) Wei
assistant teaching professor,
CMU's School of Drama

In addition to working with these workshop leaders, students in the '23-'24 LEAP Cohort also learned alongside the following student groups:

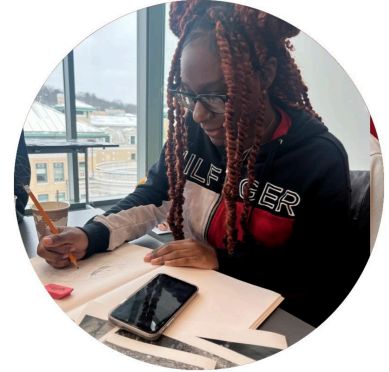
- CMU students in the Dietrich Community Engagement Fellowship Program
- High school and college students on the Phipps Youth Climate Advocacy Committee





Our Impact

The LEAP leadership team (Sarah Ceurvorst, Dr. Nico Slate, and Ayana Ledford) along with educational consultant, Dr. Catherine Nelson, designed a robust evaluation process for assessing the impact of LEAP on an ongoing basis. This included both summative assessment (in the form of pre and post program surveys) and formative assessment (in the form of written reflections that students completed after every LEAP meeting).



Students expressed LEAP's impact in writing:

- *"LEAP has made me want to explore my community and see what opportunities to help the world are out there."*
- *"I feel so at home at LEAP"*
- *"LEAP has taught me that creating a community and unity with those around you is very important when it comes to making changes, learning patience with others, and more importantly to be accepting of everyone"*
- *"LEAP has affected me by showing that we have resources all around us that can help us make a positive impact on the world or even our community"*
- *"It has given me a learning experience I can use for college"*



Some highlights of LEAP's impact on students:

- 100% of seniors graduated high school in 2024 and are continuing their education
- 85% of students said that LEAP significantly helped them feel more comfortable on a college campus
- By the end of the LEAP program, 100% of students agreed that art was a powerful tool for creating positive social change

Surveys showed that LEAP had the following impact on students in the '23-'24 cohort:

Goal / Learning area	% of students who said LEAP impacted their learning in this area <i>(some, a lot, enormously)</i>	% of students who said LEAP <u>significantly</u> impacted their learning in this area <i>(a lot, enormously)</i>
Learning about different art forms	100%	78%
Learning about social justice issues	93%	74%
Making deeper connections with other students	85%	52%
Getting better at speaking with adults I don't know	89%	52%
Getting more confident in expressing my ideas	96%	70%
Knowing I can make a difference in my community and the world	81%	56%
Being willing to take risks/try something new	96%	67%
Knowing what I want to do after high school	78%	33%
Feeling comfortable on a college campus	100%	85%



Finances

LEAP is committed to transparency and accountability in managing our finances. We know that financial health is tantamount to our ability to make meaningful change for our students and our community. We are very grateful for our donors, partners, and supporters for their trust and investment in LEAP.



Total Expenses in FY24: \$143,000

Expenses per student in FY24: \$ 4,600

Our largest expenses this year were:

- 1) salary/benefits for LEAP staff
- 2) stipends for students

Other expenses included stipends for guest workshop leaders, food, and art supplies.

We have approximately \$290,000 in net assets going into the next calendar year, the vast majority of which is from two large grants from the PNC Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY).

The CCNY grant was a one-time gift, but we hope to reapply to the PNC Foundation at the end of the next academic year.

Our main financial goal is to build up an endowment from private donations that we can use to help assure the long-term sustainability of LEAP. We are very grateful to our private donors, two of whom (Mike Mayer and David Lehman) serve on our advisory board. We are also grateful to the PNC Foundation, CCNY, and the Grable Foundation for their support.



Looking Ahead

Below are some of our goals for the future of LEAP:



Scaffolding learning for 12th grade students

Now that a formal curriculum has been written for the first year of LEAP, we will create a second curriculum for students who return to the program in their senior year. This will allow students to build their learning over time, rather than repeating the same lessons from the introductory year at LEAP.



Deepening connections with CMU students

We will intentionally connect LEAP seniors with students at CMU who represent first-generation and historically resilient populations. Together they will explore ways to thrive in higher education. While the LEAP students will get to learn more about college, they will also share their perspective with CMU students and teach them how to seek out stories of people who are often pushed to the margins in Pittsburgh. In this way, CMU students and LEAP students will both serve as experts.



Expanding our school partnerships

City Charter High School continues to be a remarkable partner school for LEAP. Their patience, trust, and cooperation has enabled us to grow the program, and we are now at a point where we can begin to scale the LEAP model and expand into other schools. Over the course of the 2024-2025 LEAP year, our program director will lay the foundation for new relationships with other local schools which we hope will join LEAP alongside City Charter High School in the 2025-2026 academic year.





LEAP Advisory Board



Ayana Ledford
Advisory Board Chair
Executive Director of PROGRESS,
Associate Dean for Diversity and
Inclusion at CMU's Dietrich College



Nico Slate
Faculty Director
Professor and Department Head,
Department of History at CMU



Sarah Ceurvorst
Program Director
Academic Pathways Manager at
CMU's Dietrich College; Art21
Educator



Angela Welch
School Coordinator
Education Director of City Charter
High School



Dara Ware Allen
Advisory Board Member
CEO and Principal of City Charter
High School



Mark Barga
Advisory Board Member
Education design specialist at
Kay-Twelve



Elizabeth Keller
Advisory Board Member
Associate Head of School for
CMU's School of Art



Marlene Williams
Advisory Board Member
Director of Operations for the
Center for Shared Prosperity at
CMU



Miguel Alvarez
Advisory Board Member
Associate Director of Admission,
head of the Access and Diversity
Initiatives team in the Office of
Undergraduate Admission at CMU



Mike Mayer
Advisory Board Member
COPD Foundation board member,
former leader at General Electric,
Honeywell (formerly Allied Signal),
& Aramark Corp.



David Lehman
Advisory Board Member
Partner, K&L Gates LLP