

An Assessment of the 2012 Youth Engagement through Science Program

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Abstract:

The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) conducted a qualitative evaluation of the 2012 YES! (Youth Engagement with Science) program that showed the program has had its most successful year since it was established in 2010. The *YES!* program at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) provides minorities and underprivileged high school students exposure to the sciences by pairing them up with a professional in the field. For 2012, mentors from 19 NMNH departments, the National Zoological Park and the Smithsonian Gardens provided experience for 25 *YES!* students. OP&A staff and interns collected data for the evaluation by observing students' behavior during their internship and conducting personal interviews of students and their scientist mentors. OP&A suggestions for the 2013 *YES!* program include double-checking students' socioeconomic qualifications, better preparation of first-time mentors, a major cut-back in the time allocated to public rotations, providing additional information about the program on Smithsonian websites, extending the program, reaching out to potential participants, and eventually scaling up the program to 75 students.