The Mountainview Youth Project was launched in the fall of 2004, with the first “Mountainview student” entering Rutgers in the fall of 2005. Since the fall of 2005, fifty-one students have been admitted by the University through the Mountainview program. Three additional students, whom were originally admitted into Rutgers on their own, have joined the Mountainview program as part of their re-enrollment after being in custody. Thirty-four “Mountainview students” are currently registered for the fall 2011 semester. A number of the “Mountainview students,” as they are identified at Rutgers, have performed remarkably well in school. There have been multiple instances of “Mountainview Students” graduating with perfect GPA(s), and continued distinctions/honors as recently as this spring semester. Another current student just received the University’s Academic Excellence Award along with an invitation to join the honors program at Rutgers. In addition, several students are on the Dean’s List for academic excellence. Only one current student is in immediate danger of academic dismissal.
First day at Rutgers:

Those in attendance:

September 15th Meeting at 2:30 in 301 Van Dyck, the Department of History building

34 of our current students were in attendance along with Dr. Donald Roden, Chris Agans, Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Dean Vicki Brooks (who has worked with this program since its inception in 2004), and the Rutgers School of Arts and Science (SAS) Dean for...

Topic discussed on the agenda:

1) The standing of Project Rebound within the administrative structure of San Francisco State. The ties between Project Rebound and the SFSU student center
2) Recruitment of students and admissions procedures
3) Orientation programs for new students
4) Academic and programmatic expectations for all Project Rebound Students
5) Sample agenda for meetings among Project Rebound students. How do you guarantee attendance at these meetings?
6) Project Rebound policies toward students with poor grades
7) Project Rebound policies toward students who violate parole and return to custody
8) Fundraising for Project Rebound beyond University support
9) Administrative staff lines for Project Rebound within SFSU. Does the university fund these staff lines? Members usually former students in the program?
10) Course selection and selection of major study fields among Project Rebound students
11) Career development programs (Can Project Rebound graduates teach in the California public schools? Should we collaborate in getting the laws changed in New Jersey and California?)
12) On-campus and/or off-campus housing arrangements for Project Rebound students
13) The Mountainview student organization and its plans for the future. Does Project Rebound sponsor lectures and other programs on campus?
14) Support from students and faculty beyond the immediate participants in the Project Rebound program.
15) Proposals for future collaboration between our two programs. How can we forge an institutional partnership? Could we have student exchanges under existing parole regulations
Topics Discussed

1. Welcome back Remarks by Don Roden with Greeting from SAS Executive Dean Douglas Greenberg and SAS Vice Dean for Undergraduate Education Michale Beals.

2. Self introduction of all present beginning with our co-Chairs Walter Fortson and Jonathan Wewer.

3. Continuation of discussion from Thursday’s meeting.

4. Discussion of college programs within New Jersey’s Youth Correctional Facilities and Halfway houses: Project Inside, the Princeton Prison Teaching Initiative, the Center for Prison Outreach and Education at the College of New Jersey, and the Next Step Program at Essex County College which appears similar to the Second Chance program at the City College of San Francisco.

5. Discussion of halfway house and parole issues as they impact both programs: The Roles of Newark’s Kintock Group Facility, Talbot Hall and New Jersey State Parole. The links between Project Rebound and California parole representatives. The problem of expunging judicial records for Rebound and Mountainview students: The Fugitive Safe Surrender Program and Office of Student Legal Services at Rutgers.

Community Outreach initiatives for both programs:

7. The challenge of establishing the Mountainview Program as a vehicle for Community Outreach: How can we build upon the successes of Project Rebound? What types of outreach programs could be realistically extended to the prisons? What programs can best serve our surrounding communities? How can we generate favorable publicity and press coverage?

8. Discussion of future Project Rebound/ Mountainview collaboration: What concrete steps can we take to establish a partnership with national implications?

Closing Remarks.

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Those in attendance:

September 16th Meeting room in the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis

Most of the Mountainview students attended this meeting along with Christopher Agans, Dean Brooks, EOF Dean Wally Tarian and Don Roden. People from corrections who helped with this program attended. Nick Stefano, the college program advisor at the Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility, Wayne Fletcher, the Director of Education at the Kintack Group halfway house in Newark where many of our Mountainview candidates and students reside attended. Dawn Gross, the education advisor at the Talbat Hall Assessment center. (Unfortunately the Department of Corrections Project Pride coordinator was not able to attend and the students explained that special community outreach program.) In addition, the coordinators of the prison-outreach programs at Princeton University and the College of New Jersey attended. Many of our candidates for the program have taken classes in these programs. The Community Programs Director of New Jersey State Parole also attended.
In his own words: C. Jason Bell

Although the trip to Rutgers was very intense and at times overwhelmingly loaded with stimulating discussions, the experience was amazing. The entire university showed us so much love that we could not help but to represent the Associated Students and San Francisco State University to the best of our ability. There were close to 34 formerly incarcerated students or perspective students in attendance who deeply admired the accomplishments of Project Rebound’s staff and students alike. As we shared what our experiences have been during the process of our individual transitions from prison to a university lifestyle and culture we did not neglect to mention the bad things that go hand and hand with our positive experiences. On a personal level, I found that the New Brunswick group of both men and women have similar ideas of success as each and every one of the Rebound staff and students. That same power to see ourselves beyond the depressing walls of prison is exactly what motivated us to get our lives together in a way that once seems so insurmountable.

The New Brunswick/Mountainview group asked the members of Project Rebound to come to Rutgers University to educate them on what it’s like to run a program on a daily basis in a university setting. In that regard we gave them a detailed layout that explained everything from making people aware of Rebound to dealing with a perspective student’s denial’s in admissions. In lieu of our program educating the up and coming group at Rutgers, we learned quite a bit from our newly found east cost comrades. There are some things that are very different from the CSU system in California. As we spoke with them about the methods that the Associated Students run things at SFSU we found they have something called Rutgers University Student Assembly (RUSA) that basically functions that exact same way. We expressed that the Rutgers group must have some sort of permanent supportive entity on campus in order to be safe in a university setting. We also discussed the importance of having a central location, at the time they were floating around to different offices; we explained the most viable way would be to have a home base. A central location is paramount for the cohesion of the campus family. Shortly after we left New Jersey they were able to procure a location to call their own on the Rutgers campus. We are developing some powerful plans for future collaborations and some possible east coast west coast student exchange. The benefits of such a ventures could be multi-faceted. There could eventually be more funding for such collaboration, we could save more lives, and we could also be responsible for pioneering something that has never before been done.

In his own words: Airto Morales

Our brief stay at Rutgers University was an enlightening process that built cohesion between a population that struggles to reintegrate into society. With the recidivism rate ranging anywhere from 75-80% across the nation, Project Rebound and the Mountainview Youth Project have come forth and truly represented the even greater minority of those 5%-10% who push past all the barriers and utilize the educational system to transform their lives. Present at the meetings were inspirational formerly incarcerated men and women who in the midst of their studies were also willing to develop a program and gateway to enter into the university setting to establish a path for others to follow. During the meetings at Rutgers I witnessed a tremendous support system for the men and women in the Mountainview Youth Project ranging from professors, staff, and administrators. Some of the administrators had come not only from Rutgers but also from local community colleges and even Princeton University. All of the people came to assist in the process of stabilizing a program that could provide real change in the community.

I personally feel that we in the “Golden State” could do well to ascertain a greater support system to help alleviate our huge incarceration problem in California, which is the highest in the nation. The meetings allowed me to recognize the seriousness and importance of what Rebound offers/does and how each student who has successfully discharged parole or probation has figured out a formula for success and has a key to greater freedom awaiting them. I look forward to the next meeting and future collaborations.
In his own words: Eric Durnell

The significance of the Project Rebound trip to Rutgers University was the realized dream that epitomizes and embodies the long term vision of both programs to reducing recidivism and change lives for the better. Through access to higher education both programs facilitate an active process of allowing members of a potentially deficit population the opportunity to redefine themselves via a quality education.

The brunt of this work can eventual have pitfalls, (burn out being at the top of the list) that can hinder and eventually cease the momentum of a cause (speaking specifically about incarceration) that faces an abundance of obstacles. Having the opportunity for fellow members of the academic community to demonstrate through action and ideas a shared passion for social reform using Project Rebound as the standard of excellence was inspiring. I am hopeful that the required and continued support of ASI will propel over incarceration and its immediate affects to the national stage. It was and continues to be my absolute pleasure to serve and work within an organization that truly defines the word innovative.