



INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP & BUILD COLLEGE READINESS FOR UNDERSERVED YOUTH

The Student Diplomacy Corps (SDC) was founded in 2013 to close the achievement gap for underserved high school students. SDC's educational travel and pre-college academic programs challenge young people to develop college readiness, enhance social emotional learning (SEL) skills and build the confidence and resilience needed to succeed in higher education and our increasingly interconnected world.

The SDC Model

Our non-fee-for-service model is scholarship driven, student centered and built on sustainable partnerships with educational institutions across the nation and around the world dedicated to empowering youth and building civil society through educational opportunity.

- **Scholarship Driven** – Over the past decade, donors have invested over \$11 Million to help youth from historically marginalized communities become Student Diplomats.
- **Student Centered** – SDC programs are designed specifically for underserved high school students, most of whom will be first in their family to attend college. Our application and interview process prepares students to apply to college. Application workshops and family information sessions help students navigate the challenges of being away from home. Our pedagogy and curricula introduce students to critical global issues, college-level academic skills, and inspires civic engagement in a safe, nurturing environment.
- **Sustainable Partnerships** – SDC's partners – a collective of leading youth serving organizations – nominate students. Our worldwide network of international NGOs, colleges and experts help build and support programs to ensure cultural authenticity, place-based learning and safety.

Programs

Each summer, students engage in month-long field-based experiential and academic programs.

- **International Experiential Learning** – In groups of 10-12, students connect with the history, culture, economy and language of a particular place. Over the past decade students have explored twenty countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania and The Americas. Program structure includes a cross-cultural orientation, thematic seminar, family-stay, field exploration and 'journey's end' reflection.
- **Academic Pre-College** – Started in 2021, the Student Diplomacy Experimental College (SDXCO) offers professor-taught college credit courses. Students earn three college credits, an understanding of the power of higher education, and the joy of living among a community of scholars. These programs take place in a variety of venues. On a college campus in The Berkshires of Massachusetts, we welcome 50-70 participants where students take one of seven courses. In Alaska, the SDXCO course explores human geography and climate change, where students develop data analysis and STEM research skills. SDXCO's Instituto Ibérico courses in Spain offer immersion in Spanish language while studying history, pluralism and literature with Spanish professors.

Student Diplomacy by the Numbers

- **1600** students from **40** US States, nominated by partner youth service organizations.
- **350** experts, professors and practitioners in a variety of fields including: anthropology, art history, biology, ethnomusicology, Indigenous rights, and traditional ecological knowledge.
- **15** languages taught, including Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Mayan and Tlingit.
- **28** visiting professors from a variety of universities, including Brown, Berkeley, and Northwestern.
- **258** students have earned **774** college credits on SDC pre-college academic programs.

A DECADE OF IMPACT

1600 students from **40** States

120 programs in **21** countries

70%+ college graduation rate
Nearly 7 times the national rate for low-income students

Outcomes

By the end of a Student Diplomacy Corps program, our students;

- Develop writing, interview skills and confidence to prepare for the college application process.
- Build cross-cultural competencies, language skills, independent living and critical inquiry skills.
- Earn college credits, learn time-management, study skills and gain academic confidence.
- Adjust and adapt to cultures of countries in Africa, The Americas, Asia and Europe.
- Explore issues in the arts, sciences, ecology, sustainability, anthropology and history.
- Work with renowned international musicians, scholars, historians and civic leaders.
- Live with host families, take part in college seminars and engage in experiential field projects.

The SDC Difference

According to *The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education*, over 60 percent of students from wealthy families graduate from college, while only 11 percent of low-income, first-generation students complete degrees. Recent data show SDC alumni matriculate at top 150 colleges 50% more often and receive 2.5 times more scholarship support. These SDC alumni have a college graduation rate of over 70% - 7 times the national rate for their income bracket.

Program Examples:

International Experiential Programs

- **Italy: Slow Food Rich Culture** - Explores biodiversity and the nexus between food and culture at the birthplace of the Slow Food Movement. Students study at the *Agenzia di Formazione Professionale* culinary school with Piemontese chefs. During their field exploration, they live in a 15th century Umbrian farmhouse in a sustainable community.

Other examples: Albania - Human Geography in the Balkans; Canada - Traditional Ecological Knowledge in British Columbia; and Morocco - Ethnomusicology and Culture in the High Atlas.

Academic Courses for College Credit (3 credits)

- **Latinx Migrant Narratives in The United States:** Focused on the experiences of Latinx migrants in the United States, this course engages in migration scholarship through an anthropological lens. (SDXCO Massachusetts)
- **Environmental and Cultural Sustainability in Alaska:** Interdisciplinary course exploring climate change and the landscape of indigenous cultures of Southeast Alaska to illustrate the interconnectedness between major forces that have shaped our planet and how its inhabitants live their lives amongst changing ecosystems. (SDXCO Alaska)

Other examples: Picasso y Flamenco, a study of Spanish national identity through art, music and dance and Poetry of Resistance (SDXCO Spain) and Human Rights in the Pacific Islands (SDXCO Massachusetts).

Youth Serving Partnership Examples:

- **Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, New York City.** A college access organization that transforms public high school students into college graduates through academic support and mentorship.
- **Roaring Fork PreCollegiate, Colorado.** A college access and preparation program for college-bound low-income students in the western slope of Colorado who will be the first in their families to go to college.

Other examples: Academy Group (Chicago, IL), University Academy (Kansas City, MO), Ann Richards Leadership HS (Austin, TX), Rainier Scholars (Seattle, WA), Tongue River HS (Dayton, WY), Cristo Rey Schools (New York, Houston, Philadelphia).

International Program Partner Examples:

- **World Youth Japan.** Sapporo based intercultural exchange organization that builds thematic programs exploring traditional music, indigenous Ainu culture, sustainability, and culinary arts.
- **AIPC Pandora, Spain.** A training and cross-cultural empowerment organization. AIPC Pandora annually hosts multiple SDC groups, including college-credit bearing SDXCO programs taught entirely in Spanish by Spanish professors.

Other international partners: CEI Club des 4 Vents in France, LAMAT in Mexico, Potiki Adventures in Aotearoa, and Thaqafat Association in Morocco.