

Associate volunteers help make the 2023 multicultural teen corporate mentoring program a success

Novartis's annual mentoring program inspires over 100 students to shape the future of healthcare, offering direct interaction with industry leaders.

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One of the ways that we work toward reimagining medicine at Novartis is to help the next generation reimagine how they can make a difference in healthcare as well. After more than 100 students from several local middle and high schools recently filled an auditorium at the East Hanover campus for the 24th annual Novartis Multicultural Teen Corporate Mentoring Program, they left with transferable skills, career advice and new possibilities for their futures.

The program, hosted by US Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and African Ancestry Cultural Exchange (AACE) Employee Resource Group, returned to an in-person format this year after being held virtually for several years, and gave the students opportunities to connect directly with many of the speakers and associate volunteer mentors.

This included Joel Bervell, best known as the “Medical Mythbuster” across social media, who sat down for a fireside chat to discuss the hidden history of medicine, racial disparities in healthcare and the need to accelerate efforts for equitable access. This was followed by smaller groups for mock interviews, resume writing, networking practice and mentoring sessions led by our volunteers, as well as headshots for the 11th and 12th graders.

Participating schools and organizations such as Novartis US Foundation long-time partner Pathways to College noticed the immediate impact on the students. “Experiences like this present real time experiences with exciting speakers and getting an up-close visual of seeing what success looks like,” said one Pathways teacher. “Students get the feel that school is a pathway that they need to take seriously. Partners like Novartis help show our scholars that there is a world out there where people actually want to help and see you succeed.”

Organizers were also amazed at the positive feedback they received from participants. “This kind of exposure is unique for these students and seeing leaders – who took the time to connect and provide an inclusive environment will help carry them into their futures,” said US DEI Director Wanda Sims. “To see the engagement, growth and transformation of these students was incredible. By the end of the day, they were proud to get up and willingly demonstrate what they had learned.”

The program, which was started in 1994 by Associate Director, Autoinflammatory Disease Adrian Hawkins and the AACE ERG, has mentored more than 2,200 students, of which 90 percent have gone on to higher education. US DEI, AACE, volunteers and students are all looking forward to the milestone 25th mentorship program in 2024!

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