

## ALISON MILLER



**D**uring high school, Alison's civic service efforts focused on malnutrition in Haiti. She began her work just a few weeks after the earthquake hit Haiti in 2010 with the initial desire to fill any necessary position in the emergency victims' hospital. After a week of being a physical therapist's assistant and witnessing minimal improvement among the injured, Alison noticed that a lack of nutrition must be a factor. Upon returning to the United States, she met with food scientists, protein bar manufacturers, and nutritionists to formulate a protein gel that would act as a meal supplement and ultimately relieve the Haitians of malnutrition. With the collection of \$200,000 in donations, Alison and the team were able to create the Hope Gel, an orange creamsicle-flavored protein gel that would taste good and provide the necessary fat, vitamins, protein, and calories to fight off malnutrition. The Hope Gel is continuously being shipped to hospitals and orphanages in Haiti, with 100,000 gel packs transported to date. As a Cognitive Science major at Penn, Alison's civic engagement efforts have focused mainly on the local Philadelphia neighborhood as she volunteered at various schools in both South and West Philadelphia, tutoring, mentoring, and conducting research to improve academic achievement in various contexts. The inspiration for Alison's capstone project began at William L. Sayre High School, where she worked as a co-instructor for a program called Leaders of Change, teaching students job skills to help their transition into their post-secondary school lives. Inspired by the students, she continued to volunteer at Sayre's after-school version of this program. Experiencing both global and local outreach, Alison has learned the value of civic engagement from both the Hope Gel venture and the students she has worked with in Philadelphia.

# CAPSTONE PROJECT

## **THE LEADERS OF CHANGE PROGRAM AT WILLIAM L. SAYRE HIGH SCHOOL: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRANSITION BETWEEN SUMMER AND SCHOOL – YEAR PROGRAM ITERATIONS**

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This thesis explores the Leaders of Change program at William L. Sayre High School, and the ways in which the program has worked to engage its students in Youth Participatory Action Research. Utilizing anecdotal experiences, conversations with key actors at the school, and speaking with the students themselves, it is possible to consider the degree to which the Leaders of Change program has prepared students to successfully participate in reflective civic action. Program administrators had not examined the challenging transition of settings and circumstances from the summer program into the academic school-year program. The thesis explores the extent to which Leaders of Change students become civically engaged during the school year through the extension of the summer program. In a set of recommendations, namely curriculum proposals for the after-school version, the study seeks to empower students in becoming critical researchers by expanding their academic and civic identity development as they learn to implement social change in their communities.