



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2020.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince William County
Program Title: Human Rights Student Leadership Council
Program Category: Community & Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Denise McPhail
Title: Outreach and Education Coordinator
Department: Human Rights Office
Telephone: 703.792.4680 Website: <https://www.pwcgov.org/government/dept/hrc/Pages/default.aspx>
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Christopher E. Martino
Title: County Executive
Signature: 



Raul Torres
Executive Director

Human Rights Commission
Curtis Porter, Chairman
Ramunda Young, Vice Chair
Dr. Susan Holly, Parliamentarian
Mohammad Usman
William A. Johnston, III
Tonya James
Dr. Erika Laos
Evelyn BruMar
LaTonsha "LT" Pridgen

1. The Overview

During a Prince William Human Rights Commissioners' meeting held more than five years ago, Commissioners Ramunda Young and former commissioner Ateeb Ahmad suggested the creation of a student council to assist high school students with the understanding of local, state, and federal government policies as seen through the lens of Human and Civil Rights. To support the Commission, Denise McPhail, Outreach and Education Coordinator, and another former Human Rights Investigator, petitioned former Director Phyllis Aggrey to allow them to conduct research and create a plan for bringing to life a student leadership council.

2. The Challenge

Although Prince William County students study Civics and Government, we believe as subject matter experts that we have the needed expertise to bring the pages of their civics and government books to life. Collaboration with local, state, and federal partners, further provides them empowerment, enhance their knowledge and equip the students with real-life and relevant experiences. Our goal is to make them empowered individuals capable of standing up for their civil rights and for the rights of others.

We had challenges in establishing this project. Our Human Rights Student Leadership Council would be the first partnership between Prince William County government and Prince William County Public Schools that would involve aspiring young leaders. Since there were no references within our organization, we conducted extensive research to begin planning our Council. We learned that locally, our neighbors in the Fairfax County Office of Human Rights and Equity

Programs had a similar but limited Fairfax County Student Commissioners program.

Prince William Human Rights representatives conducted in-person interviews with members of Fairfax County's Student Commissioner's team. Support from Fairfax County representatives provided us with pertinent information that helped develop a framework for our student council. On March 29, 2016, we met with Fairfax representatives, Ruba El Hage, Staff Advisor to the Fairfax County Student Commission, Nicole Rawlings, Fairfax County Human Rights Specialist, Fairfax School Liaison, Paige Clark, and Fairfax Student Commissioners.

Fairfax representatives made it clear to us that a critical link to ensuring a successful student council was to secure a partnership with the Prince William County Public School system.

The information obtained from Fairfax inspired us to begin designing the Prince William Human Rights Student Leadership Council focused on the empowerment of students more than a mere educational approach. The Chair of the Prince William County Human Rights Commission, Curtis Porter, former Director Aggrey, and staff worked with our County Attorney's office to create Bylaws for the Prince William Human Rights Student Leadership Council.

Once the bylaws were completed, Human Rights representatives consulted with Prince William County School leaders. Our meeting with Mrs. Custard, Director of Student Services, and Mrs. Deborah Bishop, Professional Development & Program Specialist, provided us with best practices for partnering with the schools. Both professionals also recommended the Council to approach the Office of Student Learning for Prince William Schools. We followed their suggestions and met with Mr. Girvan, Supervisor of History and Social Sciences. Girvan

provided several opportunities to develop a partnership with the schools. His office provided us a meeting space to hold our monthly meetings at the Edward L. Kelly Leadership Center, the administrative headquarters for the Prince William County Public Schools. Furthermore, Mr. Girvan's influence led us to opportunities to present our mission before Civics and Government educators. Participation in our HRSLC as a PWCS Liaison would provide an opportunity for educators to earn recertification points towards their teaching license.

PWCS Liaisons provides visibility and engagement for Prince William County High Schools. They are expected to attend HRSLC meetings and activities. During our first year, Ms. Carolyn Weddel, a Civics teacher at Brentsville District High School, supported the HRSLC as a Teacher Liaison.

During the 2019-2020 school year, we had the full support of Dr. Steven L. Walts, Superintendent of Prince William County Schools. He appointed Ms. Carolyn Custard, former Director of Student Services (Retired), as our PWCS Liaison. Additionally, Dr. Walts encouraged each principal from all our high schools to recruit at least one student to participate in the HRSLC's selection process. Because of the collaborative efforts of the PWCS Liaison, high school principals, administrative teams, high school counseling staff, and the Office of Student Services, we were pleased to have our highest number of students. Thirty (30) outstanding students, representing all Prince William High Schools, were selected to serve on the 2019-2020 HRSLC.

3. The Executive Summary

When the Prince William County Human Rights Commission and staff discovered an opportunity to support our local school system, they were eager to create the Prince William County Human Rights Student Leadership Council (HRSLC). The Council was designed to engage students in community leadership development

opportunities and to participate in dialogues on diversity and understanding an appreciation of the cultural differences of others. Students interact with local, state, and federal human rights professionals in government, community leaders within our region, as well as students from various cultures and social groups. Participation in the Human Rights Student Leadership Council creates a connection between our students and their community, and it impacts their overall success in school as well as productive citizenship.

4. The Program Description

The Prince William County Human Rights Commission and staff created the Human Rights Student Leadership Council for high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled in public, private, and homeschools. The Human Rights Commission, office and partners disseminate knowledge to students about human and civil rights anti-discrimination laws, and empowers them on how to protect and assert their civil rights and the civil rights of others; to develop young leaders for civil rights leadership roles including future human rights commissioners; and to prepare a young generation of students for their roles as prospective employees, tenants, and consumers.

Furthermore, there are five areas of engagement that include:

- **Projects:** Implementing human and civil rights projects in the community.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborating with other organizations to raise community awareness about human and civil rights issues.
- **Events:** Working together with the Prince William community to promote human rights awareness and diversity. To include assisting the Human Rights Commission with its annual Universal Human Rights Day and the annual presentation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) Youth at Work program.

- **Public Speaking/Outreach:** Sharing unique experiences and promoting diversity through conferences, public events, small group discussions, online interactions, oral presentation of issues of concern to the Human Rights Commission in a public setting during citizens' time, and a variety of other events and media.
- **Publications:** Spreading the message of the student council and the Human Rights Commission via written content.

5. How the Program was Executed

The Prince William Human Rights Commission, office and partners launched the inaugural Human Rights Student Leadership Council students, on Thursday, December 8, 2016.

The Prince William Human Rights Student Leadership Council (HRSLC) curriculum was implemented over eight meetings that included our phenomenal students and excellent partners. The meetings are held monthly beginning November through March, 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm at the Edward Kelly Leadership Center, the administrative headquarters for Prince William County Public Schools.

Volunteers support the HRSLC. The Office of Human Rights appropriates \$1,000 annually to provide refreshments and supplies for the opening, closing ceremonies, and snacks for each session. Listed below is the Overview to describe how the program was carried out last year.



Human Rights

Prince William County

Human Rights Student Leadership Council "Keeping Dreams Alive through Equal Opportunities and Leadership Education." School Year 2019 – 2020 | Cohort #4 Overview

Orientation – November:

- Keynote Speaker:** Richmond Hill, 2017 Universal Human Rights Award Recipient, Supervisor of Secondary Counseling & Student Support Services for PWCS
- Mistress of Ceremonies, Denise McPhail, Outreach and Education Coordinator
 - Human Rights Commission History, Curtis Porter; Commission Chair
 - Human Rights Office, Raul Torres; Executive Director Human Rights Office
 - Human Rights Student Leadership Team
 - Dorothy Campbell, Civil Rights Attorney; U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
 - Carolyn Custard, PWCS Liaison
 - Denise McPhail, Outreach and Education Coordinator, Human Rights Office
 - Crystal Athan, Administrative Specialist, Human Rights Office
 - Questions and Answers

Activities

- Program Overview
- Icebreaker
- Photo Session

Session 1 - December: Leadership Trait and Exercise: Intelligence

- Speakers:** Ms. Mindy Weinstein, Acting Director; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Acting Director and Mr. David Gonzalez, EEOC State & Local Coordinator
- **Title VII-Employment Training - Youth @ Work** Presentation by EEOC Reps (Federal Partners)

Activities

- Conduct Elections
- Group Project Discussions
- Identify participants and roles for the Universal Human Rights Day Awards Breakfast Ceremony

Session 2 – January: Leadership Trait and Exercise: Self-Confidence

Speakers: The "Me Too" Movement Panel

- Professor Indigo Ericksen; Northern Virginia Community College
- Mr. Oliver Allen, CEO, Training and Development Strategies, LLC
- Judge Jacqueline Lucas, PWC Juvenile and Domestic Relations
- Ms. Tanisha Holland, pHCLE Equity and Compliance Officer Department of Human Resources, PWC Public Schools
- Ms. Monica Colunga, EEOC Outreach and Education Coordinator

Activities

- Finalize participants and roles for Universal Human Rights Day Awards Breakfast Ceremony
- Final Project work

Outreach Activity - January: Universal Human Rights Day Awards Breakfast

8 am – 12 pm - Sponsored by Prince William Human Rights

- James J. McCoart Building – Board Chambers
 - 1 County Complex Court Woodbridge, VA 22191

Outreach Activity- January: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratorical Contest

8 am – 12 pm – Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and PWCS

- Hylton Memorial Chapel
 - 14640 Potomac Mills Rd, Woodbridge, VA 22192

Session 3 – February: Leadership Trait and Exercise: Determination

Speakers: **Fair Housing Act Training**, Ms. Mahalia "Mally" Dryden-Mason, Fair Housing Training Specialist at the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation; Richmond, Virginia (State Partners)
Summer Job Opportunities, Ms. Tracy Hannigan, Deputy Director; Prince William County Parks, Recreation & Tourism
Job Tips, Dorothy Campbell, U.S. Patent & Trademark Office

Activities

- Universal Human Rights Day Awards Breakfast Review
- Final Project Work

Outreach Activity- March: HRSLC Presentations to the HR Commission

7 pm – 9 pm

- *James J. McCoart Building – Board Chambers*
- *1 County Complex Court Woodbridge, VA 22192*

March: Graduation/Closing Ceremony

Speakers: Mr. Chris Martino, Prince William County Executive
Dr. Steven Walts, Superintendent of Schools, PWCS

- Fair Housing and Employment

Activities

- Testimonials
- Distribute Participation Certificates
- Student/Parent Surveys

6. Results

The Human Rights Student Leadership Council's success is measured by its ability to increase student leadership skills and facilitate discussions that encourage equality, inclusiveness, and anti-discrimination thinking. This year the students were exposed to great leadership through the guest speakers that attended each session. The students were able to interact with the best leaders in our county which allowed them to develop leadership skills through interaction. Mr. Raul Torres, Executive Director of the Prince William County Human Rights Commission has been supportive of the Human Rights Student

Leadership Council since joining the Human Rights office in November, 2018. Mr. Torres' willingness to meet with school leadership to secure a PWCS Liaison as well as his willingness to attend each HRSLC meeting is extremely valuable. Since the inception of the program, we have had the support of Mr. Christopher Martino, PW County Executive, and his staff. Mr. Martino is always willing to allow time in his schedule to speak with the Human Rights Student Leadership Council. Mrs. Carolyn Custard also played a significant role in developing the student's leadership skills. Mrs. Custard, a former principal, was able to share her best practices as a leader and educator and had discussions with students surrounding a leadership trait in each session. As a Civil Rights Attorney for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and member of the HRSLC Leadership team, Mrs. Dorothy Campbell provides a realistic view for students to understand how discrimination complaints are handled on the Federal level.

The most powerful expression of the program's success is found in the testimonies of the participating students. The students brought forth ideas for an imagined positive future for Prince William County based on their conversations and skills developed during the HRSLC sessions in a presentation to the Prince William County Human Right Commissioners.

Cheryl Wilfred, a student from Patriot High School and former President of the HRSLC, was cited in a press release describing her experience with the program. "Serving on the HRSLC encouraged me to engage in more conversations about diversity. I've learned that talking about diversity doesn't have to be a confrontational experience, but that it can be open and educational for everyone involved in the conversation." Another participant, Theodore "Q" Strange, a student from Christ Chapel Academy, explained his ideas based on the conversations from HRSLC in his presentation. In the press release, it notes Q, "talked to the commission about "Mental Health and Video

Games." He believes violent video games contribute to mental health issues and a mindset that could lead to violence in schools and society at large". Q was also able to use his presentation to develop his leadership skills by practicing speaking publicly. Strange shared, "At first, I was kind of nervous, but once I started to talk, and I realized that they were listening and wanted to hear what I was going to say, I felt more comfortable. It made me feel good. It made me feel like I might be helping someone who needed it, and it empowered me, too."

In another presentation, "How Poverty Affects Education," Gianna Jirak examined her imagined future based on a conversation from the HRSLC. She focused on the discrepancies in college preparation between schools with high-income students compared to those with low-income students. Jirak, a C.D. Hylton High School student, said her research led her to determine that poverty can determine college acceptance. Testing, for example, can be a hurdle that lower-income students can't overcome. "Taking the SAT is around \$50, and so is the ACT. ... So, I was suggesting the schools implement free SATs during the school day, which is a program that the college board has, as well as free after-school SAT prep classes."

Following the presentations, the feedback by the students was not taken lightly. Curtis Porter, chairman of the Human Rights Commission, stated, "We want to let these young people know that we took their comments and their time seriously. The worst thing to do is have them go through our leadership program, present to us, and we do nothing".

This is the hallmark and most significant gain we can hope from this program. The Human Rights Student Leadership Council not only met its goals this year but was also a catalyst for change in our communities. The Council develops

our young people to think about a better future for themselves and share with the leaders of today so that they can be leaders of tomorrow. The Human Rights Office hopes to continue to facilitate dialogues on diversity with an anti-discrimination lens to push our community towards an equitable and inclusive county for each of our residents.

As a result of this program, our participants have become ready to participate in defense of their civil rights and the rights of others, and are ready to let their voices be heard in our democratic system of government. Please see the following *One Community United* video link.

<https://youtu.be/83sjCNTMp-Q>