The mission of Pitt-Assisted Communities & Schools is to mobilize University of Pittsburgh resources in ways that enrich the lives of Homewood children and youth, while simultaneously advancing the university’s commitment to transformative teaching, learning, and community impact.
Pitt-Assisted Communities & Schools (PACS) is a program of the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work under the faculty leadership of John Wallace and James Huguley. The mission of PACS is to mobilize University of Pittsburgh’s resources to enrich the lives of Homewood children and youth, while simultaneously advancing the university's commitment to transformative teaching, learning, and community impact. The goal is to improve academic, health, mental health, and social and economic outcomes for the children and families who live, learn, work, and play in Homewood.

The strategy to accomplish this goal is five-fold:
1. Assess the presence and effectiveness of the University of Pittsburgh’s existing programs and activities in Homewood’s Westinghouse Academy 6–12 school feeder pattern network.
2. Coordinate and streamline existing programs and activities in accordance with state-of-the-art evidence-based individual and coordinated program practices.
3. Match unmet network needs with corresponding university resources.
4. Recruit, train, and deploy students, faculty, staff, and other resources to support students and families in the Westinghouse Network.
5. Evaluate the impact of the University of Pittsburgh’s inputs over time, using both formative and summative assessments, to inform subsequent program iterations.

PACS partners with the Homewood Children's Village to provide academic, health, and mental health support at Pittsburgh Faison Elementary K-5, Pittsburgh Lincoln Elementary PreK-5, and Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy 6-12. PACS seeks to serve the students, parents, school personnel, and the community at large.

Our strategy is to engage diverse members of the university community (i.e., students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of academic departments, centers, and institutes) in a variety of ways to advance our work.

Our goal is to build upon our existing relationships with the Homewood Children’s Village, the Pittsburgh Public Schools, and a variety of other private, nonprofit, and government entities to build a feeder pattern-wide network of schools and the community institutions that anchor them, which includes local organizations, churches, and families.
Dr. John Wallace Jr. is the principal investigator on the University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems’ Comm-Univer-City of Pittsburgh Project, an integrated program of research, teaching, and service designed to investigate and ameliorate social problems that disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged children, families, and communities. He received his bachelor’s degree in Sociology from the University of Chicago and earned his PhD and master’s degree in Sociology from the University of Michigan.

Dr. James Huguley is an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems and School of Social Work. His research focuses on school-based interventions that promote positive academic and mental health outcomes for African American youth. He received his bachelor’s degree in English-Secondary Education from Providence College, and both his master’s degree in Risk and Prevention and doctorate in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard University.

Chalis Henderson serves as the Director of University Resources and is responsible for cultivating university resources and securing outside funding and resources for PACS programming. Chalis has worked at universities and community organizations leveraging resources to benefit students and educators. She received her bachelor’s in Organizational Communication from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and earned her master’s degree in Student Affairs Administration from Michigan State University.

Dr. Abel Joshua (AJ) Koury serves as the data analyst. He also serves as an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh. His research interests center on promoting school readiness for underserved students entering kindergarten and summer learning. He received his bachelor’s degree in psychology from George Mason University and earned his master’s degree and PhD in developmental psychology from the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Esohe Osai serves as the Director of University Services and is responsible for strategically deploying and coordinating university resources in the network schools and evaluating the effectiveness of these programs. She received her bachelor’s degree in Education from the University of Michigan, completed a master’s degree focused on youth development programming at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a master’s and PhD in Education and Psychology from the University of Michigan.
America Reads Challenge
The America Reads Challenge program launched at Pittsburgh Lincoln in November 2016. The America Reads Challenge helps kindergarten to third grade students improve their reading ability to enable them to read well and independently by the end of third grade. A team of 8 Pitt volunteers served at Lincoln Elementary and completed over 610 hours of service. The volunteers worked 1-1 with students each Tuesday after school to support literacy development. This program was facilitated in partnership with the Office of PittServes.

Faison Elementary Back to School Event
Pitt’s Department of Occupational Therapy led a fun hands-on activity for the students. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. provided $500 worth of school supplies for students. During the event 120 backpacks with crayons, activity books, and pencils were distributed by the student organization.
Faison Kindergarten Kick-Off
PACS facilitated five volunteers from the University of Pittsburgh to join others from the community to greet kindergarten students on their first day of school with smiles, high fives, pencils, balloons, and stickers.

Lunchtime Support Launches
PACS launched the Healthy Lifestyles Intern program to provide support for lunch and recreational activities at Faison. The goal for the intern and volunteers was to provide positive messaging around both nutrition and healthy activities for the elementary school students. Over 100 volunteer hours were achieved by three undergraduate students over the course of two semesters.

Westinghouse Back-to-School Event
Equipoise, the Black and African American Faculty and Staff Association at the University of Pittsburgh, collected 300 backpacks and school supplies for students in the Homewood community. Supplies included pens, pencils, and spiral bound notebooks & composition books, loose leaf paper, 3 ring binders, highlighters, pocket folders, lunch boxes, and combination locks.

Data Jam
Data Jam is a project developed by Pitt Science Outreach and Pittsburgh Data Works that introduces high school students to big data and data analytics through hands-on learning activities, culminating in a conference-style presentation of a research project. A team of Homewood students worked with team leader, Dr. A.J. Koury, PACS data analyst and consultant with the Homewood Children’s Village (HCV) to choose an important topic, learn descriptive and inferential data analysis strategies, and create a professional conference-style presentation. Students also enjoyed field trips to data companies in Pittsburgh and were exposed to a variety of big data careers and professionals. A total of ten students participated in this initiative, with approximately 30 hours of engaged learning.
College in High School Launches at Westinghouse Academy

Introduction to Social Work, the first Social Work and first non-Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences College in High School (CHS) course, was offered at Westinghouse Academy in 2016-2017. Fifteen juniors and seniors enrolled in the course and had the opportunity to receive three University of Pittsburgh academic credits for successful course completion. This effort was funded by the School of Social Work. The following is a synopsis of the many events the CHS students experienced this year.
Dean Davis Guest Lecture
Dean Larry Davis, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, spoke about his book—*Why Are They Angry With Us? Essays on Race*. Students read excerpts from the book during the week and engaged with Dean Davis about a variety of topics discussed in the book. The students had the opportunity to learn about Dean Davis’ perspectives on the Black community in Pittsburgh and gained insight about the book writing process.

Cecily Davis Guest Lecture
Cecily Davis, MSW and Field Education Coordinator for the School of Social Work, was a special guest presenter for the class. She addressed social work ethics and spoke from her perspective as a lifelong Pittsburgh resident and a social work professional in the community.

Colson Whitehead Guest Lecture
Colson Whitehead, bestselling author and McArthur Fellow, had a conversation with students in the course. He discussed his highly acclaimed book, *The Underground Railroad*. The book was an Oprah’s book club selection and the students were fascinated to learn about his experience meeting Oprah. Students had the opportunity to ask Mr. Whitehead a host of questions about his books, his journey into writing, and his life as writer.

Change Agents Education Workshop
A team of four students from Westinghouse’s Introduction to Social Justice course were selected to participate in a special opportunity called, “Change Agents Education: Students working for Social Justice”. Students received training in human-centered design principles from LUMA Institute and designed a project to create change in their school and community.
University of Pittsburgh Campus Visit
Students participated in a special visit to Oakland and enjoyed a guest lecture by Professor Keith Caldwell – faculty instructor for the College in High School course. Professor Caldwell conducted a lesson on ethics in social work and debated the importance of core social work professional values. The students also enjoyed a visit to the Nationality Rooms in the Cathedral of Learning and a campus tour. After the campus tour, students attended an admissions presentation where they were able to learn about the University of Pittsburgh campuses and also gain general knowledge about applying to and enrolling in a college or university.

College Night and Holiday Party
In an effort to engage the families of students in the course, PACS hosted a College Night and Holiday Party. The event included college informational brochures provided by the Pittsburgh Higher Education Assistance Agency and gifts provided by College in High School and the School of Social Work. The families were able to hear from Dr. John Wallace about the various community and university-based efforts in Homewood that are supporting schools and families.

Amy DeGurian Guest Lecture
Amy DeGurian, School of Social Work instructor, provided a lecture on interventions in social work and strengths-based approaches to working with vulnerable populations. Students also were able to learn about a popular social work course focused on grief and loss. Subsequently, a Westinghouse student joined Professor DeGurian on campus as a guest in her graduate course.

Research Support Campus Visit
Students had the opportunity to visit campus in preparation for their course research project. Keith Caldwell and Marcus Poindexter, Pitt Social Work Doctoral student, provided a seminar on research in social work. After the research support seminar, students went to Hillman Library for a presentation on finding scholarly articles. The workshop introduced the students to the resources available through various library systems and provided insight on acquiring peer reviewed sources through Google Scholar.
Julius Boatwright Guest Lecture
Students heard from Julius Boatwright, a graduate of the Pitt MSW program who works in the mental health field. He recently started his own nonprofit called Steel Smiling. The program provides mental health support in the low-income African American communities in Pittsburgh through a creative strategy of engaging people on the street, asking questions, and pointing them to resources. Julius shared poignantly about his own experiences that led him to this area of work and also provided insight about his unique experiences as an African American male in the field of social work.

Aerion Abney Guest Lecture
Aerion Abney, a Pitt MSW graduate and a program officer at the POISE Foundation, visited the course. Though Mr. Abney has worked in politics and philanthropy since earning his graduate degree, he considers himself primarily a social worker. He shared how he advocates for justice with an understanding of the community and particular issues that are relevant to African American constituents and community members. Mr. Abney also spoke with candor about his experiences as a black male undergraduate at the University of Pittsburgh and how the college experience is formative in shaping one’s future.

Homewood Children’s Village Provides College Prep
The Homewood Children’s Village partnered with the Introduction to Social Justice class to provide college support through their Bridge to College programming at Westinghouse Academy. A Homewood Children’s Village staff member visited the course to walk students through important steps in the college transition process. While the program provides rigorous college-level education, this added resources highlighted the need for tools to ensure students successfully transition to college.

Doctoral Student Provides Research Training and Support
Marcus Poindexter co-taught the research course and supported student research by working with students on their research interests, design, and poster presentations.
Westinghouse Scholars Research Symposium

Thirteen students presented research posters at the University of Pittsburgh on Monday, May 1, 2017. The posters were completed as a requirement of the inaugural Introduction to Social Justice course, sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work.

The program began with an overview of the partnership between Pitt and Westinghouse before a gallery walk viewing of student posters. Poster presentations reflected students' learning in the course and their interests in various social justice topics. Topics included: police brutality against African American males, LGBTQ community concerns, treatment for drug addicted teens, effects of poverty on education, equity in Pittsburgh Public Schools, the mental health stigma in the black community, and the effects of grief on the development of teen spirituality. The students framed social work theory around their topics in social justice and provided recommendations for social workers helping vulnerable populations in their community.

The event was a success, as students confidently presented their research to University of Pittsburgh faculty and staff, Westinghouse staff, community members, and family and friends. Special recognition was given to the students for all of the work they completed and to Dean Larry Davis for supporting this initiative.
Our inaugural concurrent enrollment partnership between Westinghouse and Pitt focused on college readiness. Two important indicators of program success were:

1. Students’ experience with college research
2. Students’ exposure to the university

Survey feedback from the students indicated that this partnership achieved our aims related to supporting college readiness. As depicted in the graph, students reported a positive experience with college research. They experienced a rigorous and systematic research process that is usually reserved for college students. Despite the challenge of the task, students reported that this was the most beneficial aspect of the class. When asked what they enjoyed about the course, one student responded, “Learning how to write a research paper.”

Also depicted above, students indicated that exposure to Pitt was an integral aspect of their experience in this program. One student wrote that the most important part of the class was, “To get challenged on a college level...also to get a chance to expose our youth to higher education.” These outcomes align with research showing that concurrent enrollment experiences are beneficial for students who may feel uncertainty about readiness for the college transition.
Healthy Minds Launched at Westinghouse Academy

Healthy Minds Academy (HMA) is a student-led organization, under the leadership of Simon Yohannes, with a mission to empower youth with the knowledge of health, social and environmental issues that plague their community. In addition, HMA aims to instill in them a desire for academic and professional success. The vision of HMA is to foster a community of student leaders in underserved neighborhoods who will aspire towards academic and professional success. A total of four medical students mentored 12 middle school students throughout the academic year.

PACS partners with Men of the House (MOH), a program for Westinghouse football players that aims to encourage and infuse life, academic, health and wellness skills in the male athletes. MOH visited the School of Medicine on April 24, 2017. The visit included a presentation by medical student, Jamil Alhassan, on the risks associated with drugs and alcohol. After the presentation students participated in a hands-on learning experience of suturing pig's feet and took a brief tour of the medical school's facility in Scaife Hall. A total of 25 Westinghouse students attended the visit.
Health CTE Course Visits Pitt
Students from the Westinghouse Health Careers Technology Program visited the University of Pittsburgh for a unique health sciences learning experience. The day began with workshops coordinated by medical students, Simon Yohannes, director of the Healthy Minds outreach program. Dr. Stephanie Gonzalez facilitated a hands-on workshop on suturing and Dr. Sarah Monaco provided an engaging presentation on fine needle aspiration. Westinghouse students then headed to the WISER Center for a tour of the simulation labs. During this tour, students were able to learn about the unique ways that Pitt trains health and medical professionals.

Male-Athlete Nutrition Study (MANS) at Westinghouse Academy
MANS is a project for the Men of the House, under the leadership of Dr. Willa Doswell, Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing and Affiliate Member of PACS and Mr. Monte Robinson, Head Football Coach and Director of the Men of the House program. This research partnership focuses on nutrition and providing health information for the male athletes.
Jeff Lucchino Guest Presentation
UPMC sports nutritionist, visited Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy’s Men of the House Program. He focused on tips about food and beverages to consume in order to manage weight, prevent disease, and become the best athletes.

Dental Students Provide Education to Homewood
Third year dental students at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine are collaborating with the Homewood Children’s Village on a two-part community service project. As part one of the dental health initiative, the students aim to educate the parents of young children on the importance of oral health and establishing proper oral hygiene practices from a young age. The dental students believe that a healthy smile starts with the parents’ understanding and cooperation. They also want to help them make better food choices as they can impact dental health. To fill in the knowledge gaps, the dental students designed a survey to gauge the current health literacy and tailor learning modules to best fit their needs. Part two of the initiative will entail tentative preventative care such as fluoride treatment and sealants. The prophylactic portion of this program will commence when the students have finished the learning modules and established rapport with the parents and the community.

DiscoverU Day
Pitt-Assisted Communities & Schools hosted 14 Pitt freshmen in Homewood for DiscoverU Day 2016. The students participated in a tour of Homewood which included Westinghouse Academy, Pittsburgh Lincoln Elementary, Pittsburgh Faison Elementary, and Homewood’s Bioshelter. Representatives from The Homewood Children’s Village, Operation Better Block, and The Oasis Project at Bible Center Church gave presentations about their organizations and opportunities for the students to engage in Homewood.
Community Canvassing Event
PACS hosted 16 undergraduate and graduate volunteers from Pitt to canvass in the Homewood community about school attendance. This event was a part of Pitt's annual United Way Day of Caring. Volunteers went to residents and businesses in Homewood and discussed the importance of being a "School H.E.R.O. - Here, Everyday, Ready, and On-time". This event was coordinated by PACS in partnership with the Homewood Children's Village and support from Office of Community & Governmental Relations at the University of Pittsburgh.

Institute of Politics, Elsie Hillman Honor Scholars Program
Through this fellowship program, Pitt student Rachel Bukowitz worked with the Homewood Children's Village, along with a variety of partner organizations, to create a comprehensive resource guide for residents in Homewood regarding healthy food options and gardening opportunities. The aim of the guide is to create a consistent document for anyone who is interested in Homewood's food system. She aimed to make the guide as resident-centric as possible. Part of her approach was to showcase the residents who are involved in healthy food or gardening in Homewood as much as possible.

Student Civic Engagement Center gives to HCV
Volunteers from Pitt's Student Civic Engagement Center within the Office of PittServes provided the Homewood Children's Village with 250 fun winter bags. The bags were distributed to students at Lincoln and Faison Elementary Schools.

Pitt Be a Good Neighbor Day
PACS, in collaboration with PittServes, hosted a group of 34 Pitt students, faculty, and staff for a service project in Homewood. The project invited volunteers to work with the Black Urban Gardeners of Pittsburgh Co-op to prepare the community farm and garden plots on Monticello and around Westinghouse Academy. Volunteers worked diligently, completely clearing enough leaves and debris to fill over 100 garbage bags. The effort was an ideal community-university engagement endeavor, as people from the university and the community worked side-by-side toward a common goal. After the labor was complete, the entire group gathered in the Monticello Street Community House for an engaging "fire-side chat" about the community, the university, and
the phenomenal efforts of the activists involved in the gardening efforts happening in the Homewood community.

![Image of a person with a gardening tool]

**Trauma Workshop for Occupational Therapists**
Debralyn Woodberry-Shaw, MSW, LSW, conducted a 2-day training titled, *Don't be a Trigger: A Trauma Informed Care Approach*, for 50 occupational therapy students at the University of Pittsburgh. The goal of the workshops was to educate occupational therapy students about the experiences that some youth encounter.

**Social Justice Roundtable,**
The Office of PittServes hosted a special event to connect students to specific community partners who’s work relates to the theme of “Social Justice.” The aim of the event was to foster a growing relationship between community partners and students with the intention to positively impact the spirit of service in the Pitt community. Pitt-Assisted Communities & Schools provided an overview of the work that is currently taking place in the Homewood community, discussed our programs and how the work we do is related to social justice. Student participants then had the opportunity to engage with PACS, in a sequence of small group rotations, to ask questions and get more specific information about our programs and volunteer opportunities.

**Race and Community Engagement (R.A.C.E.) Alliance**
R.A.C.E. Alliance is a student-group at the University of Pittsburgh founded and advised by PACS and the University Honors College. R.A.C.E. focuses on the underlying issues in volunteering; specifically placing a magnifying glass on the advantages and consequences of volunteers engaging with communities of different racial backgrounds and histories of their own. Despite initially forming in November of 2016, R.A.C.E. has already made a huge impact on the volunteering community on campus. R.A.C.E. launched with a series of panels and discussions led by students, faculty, staff, and community members.
Community Engagement Centers – Homewood
Pitt-Assisted Communities & Schools provided support in the development of the Community Engagement Center (CEC) initiative, housed in the Office of Community and Government Relations at the University of Pittsburgh. Members of the PACS team have served as advisors and helped shape the launch of the initiative through facilitating the university’s place-based integration into Homewood. PACS will continue to assist in the development of the CEC in Homewood and help connect various opportunities from the University of Pittsburgh to the schools and community partners already working with us in Homewood.

Campus visit to Pitt-Bradford
On May 12, 2017, PACS partnered with the Homewood Children’s Village to transport five students from Homewood to the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. The visit included a welcome from President Livingston Alexander, campus tour and visit to residence halls, lunch, presentations from admissions, financial aid, student support services, student affairs, academic affairs, and 1-1 meetings with admission counselors. One student was granted on-site admission and will be matriculating to Pitt-Bradford to study nursing in the Fall 2018 semester. Three staff from PACS and HCV travelled with the students for the all-day experience and 10 staff from Pitt-Bradford participated in the schedule of events.
Learn more about PACS

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