

IWES Spring Internship

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My name is Mati Mugore, and I am currently interning at the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies (IWES). IWES is a non-profit founded in New Orleans that protects and advocates for women of color and their families. IWES works on several different key issues, including HIV prevention, youth development, reproductive health, and mental health. The program that I am working with specifically is called Creating a Future Together (CrAFT), an initiative that works to institutionalize comprehensive sex ed in schools in Louisiana. The CrAFT team has trained over 100 educators in sex education schools, in addition to training hundreds of students in advocacy.

As a public health major, it has been really valuable for me to learn about trauma informed approaches to sexual health education, and to observe the mechanics of non-profit organizing. IWES is a very collaborative environment, and every person who works there brings a new skill to the table. It is the most diverse environment that I have ever worked in, and the wide variety of backgrounds and personalities within the organization is really emblematic of the interdisciplinary nature of public health. My supervisor has been very helpful about making sure I learn as much as possible during the internship, and I even attend staff meetings so that I can understand all the different initiatives that the organization is working on.

My project specifically is called My Dream Sex Ed, and it involves hosting focus groups and round tables with students of color in New Orleans, where they can discuss what their aspirations for sex ed are. Information and themes from these discussions will be featured in a booklet that IWES can use as an advocacy tool. This project is a really exciting opportunity to develop qualitative research skills, and to learn about focus group facilitation. I have been reaching out to students on Tulane, Dillard, and Xavier campuses, and I am excited to engage in meaningful group discussions.