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| |  | | --- | | **YES Mission**  The mission of the Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies program is to provide students, through study and action, a critical understanding of the role youth can play in social change in urban communities. The overall goals of the YES program are to contribute to making real community-based change in our local urban areas, especially the City of Philadelphia, and to develop "change-makers": individuals who have the skills and knowledge to contribute as citizens, including increasing educational and political access for themselves and others.  **RUCCAS Mission**  The mission of the Rustin Urban Community Change Axis is to support the building of power for Southeastern PA metropolitan communities, specifically but not exclusively global majority/communities of color and low-income urban communities, through providing together new and mid-career urban community change professionals-- particularly urban youth workers, artists, and cross-sector racial and economic justice workers-- credential-bearing educational pathways and supportive, healing spaces and opportunities for renewal.  “No one ever said you can’t have hella style while unionizing” – a Twitter reply to Chris Smalls, Amazon Labor Union lead organizer and the OG of UnionDrip | |  | |  |  | |  | | --- | | YES Graduate Cording Ceremony | |  | | May 4, 2022 | |

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| Cording Ceremony  **WELCOME!**  Enjoy the music & refreshments  **OPENING REMARKS**    Dr. Hannah Ashley, Director, Rustin Urban Community Change Axis, Professor, Community Change Studies, English      **FACULTY SPEAKER**    Dr. Laquana Cooke, Associate Professor, Community Change Studies, English, Digital Humanities    **PRESENTATION OF HONOR CORDS**    Graduates will have honor cords laid on them by either YES faculty or one or two people from their personal, school or professional lives. Those individuals will have the opportunity to say a brief word of private commendation, a wish, a blessing or intention to the graduate, to carry forward in their work and lives toward healing the world alongside young people and urban communities. |  |  | Ana Zavalamartinez, Spanish Education/YES  |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | I will be graduating with a major in Spanish Education and a minor in YES. During my YES courses I felt free to vocalize my ideas and concerns about real world events, our society, and the youth. A quote from my YES program that resonated with me is, “'Knowledge is power.” As an educator I want to provide youth with the support, resources, and skills they need, to be agents of their own development. My goal is to use and share my knowledge and experiences to best teach the youth on how to use their voice as their power. I am proud to soon be a part of the small percentage of Latinas holding a bachelor's degree. I hope to further my education while also advocating for education in higher ed institutions to become more accessible for all. | |
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| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Brenna Holycross, Early Grades Education/YES  |  |  | | --- | --- | | Image preview | I will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Education for Early Grades degree, and a minor in Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies. The YES program made me more passionate about education. I learned that educators must implement pedagogy that helps and empowers youth to dismantle the systems that are harming everyone. Education can help us free each other. Following graduation, I hope to become an elementary school teacher in an urban school district. I am so thankful for the YES Program because it shaped me into the educator I am today. |  Brielle Ridgeway, Interdisciplinary Studies/YES/WGS  |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | YES to me was a space where I met faculty that were doing youth work in very unique and exciting ways I had never before thought about. I am thrilled to be leaving WCU supplied with the skill set this program has provided me with. | | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Keyirah Bortley, Psychology/YES  |  |  | | --- | --- | | A person smiling for the camera  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | The process as an undergrad is anything but easy. There are plenty of times I just wanted to give up, especially once COVID hit in 2019. But it’s important to remain disciplined and resilient no matter what life may throw your way. The YES program has taught me a lot about the struggle and never giving up. This program means so much to me and has shaped me into a better person, facilitator, and activist for change. I intend to help within my community, probably starting off as a school counselor, as I plan to go back and earn my master’s degree. Here’s to the class of 2022! Stop at nothing to leave your mark on this world! |  Grace Soldacki, Anthropology/YES/LAS/GS  |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | I have really enjoyed the YES minor as well as the professors and their passion for advocacy. The passion I have witnessed during their classes is actually why I decided to minor in YES. I was inspired by the way our readings and lectures spoke of youth empowerment and how important it is to listen to and lift youths' voices for social justice and change. I am not sure exactly what I am doing post-grad, but I would like to travel during the summer and just experience different cultures and meet new people! I hope with new experiences and perspectives, it will help broaden my understanding of social justice issues and how to make an intentional and positive impact for change whether it be getting a job right away or going back to school! | | |
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