

# **Virginia School-University Partnership**

## **Report on Student Leadership Conference**

### **2015-2016**

The twenty-fifth VSUP Annual Student Leadership Conference, which was held on Thursday, November 12, 2015, was attended by over 350 students and faculty members from over 40 different schools from around the state of Virginia. Participants responded positively to the conference Keynote session and the opportunity to participate in small group discussions, and enthusiastically embraced the Share Fair Assembly, which was a new feature of the conference last year.

The theme of the 2015 VSUP Student Leadership Conference was “Imagine a Better World” and the goal of the conference was to help students tap into their own imagination and creativity in order to make themselves better leaders and to make the world around them a better place.

The 2015 Student Leadership Conference began with a ninety-minute Keynote Presentation, “Theatre of the Imagination Hypnosis Show,” which highlighted the creative potential of all members of the audience and motivated them to participate enthusiastically in the day’s activities. The Keynote, which was delivered by hypnotist Tom DeLuca, succeeded in energizing and drawing together the diverse group of students from numerous different high schools by giving them an opportunity to express themselves in unique and often hilarious ways that participants were talking about for weeks after the event. The keynote session established a sense of camaraderie among these student leaders from the entire state of Virginia, thus setting a positive tone for interactions with their fellow participants throughout the rest of the conference.

After the Keynote Presentation, all students participated in small group discussions on topics of interest or concern at their high schools. These small group meetings, which were led by seniors who had volunteered to take on the role of Discussion Facilitator, gave all participants the chance to learn from each other and to help each other come up with creative approaches to any problems that their schools were facing.

A new feature of the VSUP Student Leadership Conference last year was the Share Fair Assembly. Eighteen of the high school teams of student leaders chose to make a formal presentation about a program, activity, or event at their school that they were particularly proud of and wanted to share with students from other schools. The Share Fair gave students the opportunity to develop their personal skills as leaders by planning and delivering a 5-7 minute presentation for a large audience. The “success stories” that were shared gave all conference attendees the chance to hear from their peers about ideas which might help them deal with issues that they were confronting in their own schools.

The hope is that all participants in the 2015 VASUP Student Leadership Conference left the day's program with a heightened awareness of their own creative potential, an increased awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of their own educational environment, a fuller understanding of how problems could be addressed, and enhanced skills for taking on leadership roles in their schools and communities.