

WFWPI UN Joins 2025 Unleash Hack USA, Hacking Solutions to Education Crises

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The winning team, Team 4 2 E, composed of Jiawen Li, Julianna White, Edward Chen, Hyowon Barlaan, and Yamcy Fleming, proposed classes for children of immigrant families to help community members preserve cultural values.

New York - Youth leaders in the US participated in a hackathon to provide solutions to problems of the education sector.

The UNLEASH Hack USA 2025 took place in a hybrid format on July 22 - 23, 2025, bringing together young people and community leaders for a two-day intensive, including WFWPI leaders Priscilla Garces, Yamcy Fleming, Hyowon Barlaan, and Shinwon Barlaan.



UNLEASH Hack USA 2025 participants

Organized under the global UNLEASH initiative, a non-profit platform that engages youth worldwide to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, this year's hackathon focused on improving access to quality education in underserved K - 12 communities.

Participants tackled challenges including educational inequities, limited resources, and disparities in digital access, which have been further highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an alumna of the inaugural UNLEASH Innovation Lab held in Denmark in 2017, I was grateful to witness that same spirit of innovation and collaboration alive in this year's hackathon.

Seeing participants come together with creativity, dedication, and a shared passion for education reminded me of why I first joined the UNLEASH movement to co-create solutions that empower communities and give young people a voice in shaping the future.



UNLEASH Hack USA participants and supporters.

Over two days, teams collaborated with local stakeholders to frame pressing issues, generate innovative ideas, and pitch solutions to a panel of judges.

Team solutions addressed a range of societal challenges, including support for diverse cultural backgrounds, financial aid for university students, and access to nutritious meals for elementary school children.

Participants shared their enthusiasm, with winning team member Julianna White saying she "had a lot of fun" working with her team.

Pitches were evaluated by key officials of nonprofits including Merly Barlaan, Rose Cardarelli, Steve Chiu and Jadayah Spencer.

Guided by the UNLEASH Innovation Methodology, the hackathon leverages human-centered design and demonstrates the power of collaboration in shaping practical, community-driven solutions to advance educational equity and inclusivity.

UNLEASH HACK USA 2025 was organized by Aishu Narasimhadevara, Charlene Bornea, Annie Kung, Nina Wu, and Jadayah Spencer. It was supported by Tzu Chi USA, Center for SDG Global Education USA, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Pamana Threads, Readary, International Youth Leadership Institute, UN Major Group for Children and Youth, Youth SPI Platform Science Policy Interface, International Association of Youth and Students for Peace, Brooklyn Story Lab, and CairoSpeaks/CairoWrites.