

DOLLARS AND SENSE

How “Career First” Programs Like Year Up Benefit Youth and Employers

By Terry Grobe, Elyse Rosenblum, and Todd Weissman



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

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JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

Jobs for the Future identifies, develops, and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states, and the nation compete in a global economy. In nearly 200 communities in 41 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school and *Back on Track* diploma-granting and GED secondary programs to postsecondary pathways that lead to family-sustaining careers. As a strategic thought partner with Year Up, JFF works closely with the organization on its expansion and growth strategy.

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CAREER FIRST

JFF's Career First model describes a "thirteenth year" pathway designed to address the forced choice facing too many youth looking for entry into decent paying employment after high school. They can obtain a college credential, which can take years, especially for those needing remediation before they can enter credit-granting technical programs. Or they can seek short-term training opportunities, which are typically disconnected from employer needs or not intensive enough to develop needed academic and workplace skills needed for career advancement. Through close partnerships between employers and education and training providers, *Career First* programs offer streamlined and flexible credit-bearing curricula that integrate remedial instruction into technical and professional skills classes. These come with ongoing student counseling and supports in order to prepare program completers to pursue advanced degrees or certifications in high-demand occupational areas or enter career-track employment in high-demand, high-wage occupations that pay at or near the state's median wage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Despite earning a high school diploma or GED, millions of young people across the United States are stuck. Unable to continue their education or find a decent job in a knowledge-based economy that demands postsecondary credentials, they fall outside the economic mainstream with little realistic hope for a financially self-sufficient future. At the same time, many employers struggle to find a steady, reliable, and affordable stream of talent. The current economic climate has not improved this situation.

Against this backdrop, an unusual partnership has emerged involving some of the nation's leading businesses and demonstrating tremendous success toward bridging the gaps for both young people and employers. Year Up, an intensive, year-long education and workforce training program, illustrates the feasibility of establishing effective career pathways for a large and growing group of vulnerable young adults. Over the past decade, it has placed 2,100 low- and moderate-income young people into internships with more than 100 employers across the country, including Fortune 500 companies such as American Express, JPMorgan Chase & Co., and State Street Corporation. More than 90 percent of these youth have successfully completed their internships, three-quarters of whom have been hired into full-time jobs, and the vast majority of Year Up employers plan to continue taking interns.

This report describes the Year Up model, highlighting its extraordinary employer commitment and participation. It explores why employer partners have been willing to make such significant investments, particularly in a difficult economic climate. It explains the key elements of the program and reviews evidence of its impact. In interviews with partnering businesses, employers explain why they offer internships to Year Up students—youth who lack postsecondary credentials and have limited work experience—in positions often reserved for college graduates. Finally, the report discusses what we can learn from the Year Up experience. It looks at how stronger employer involvement could strengthen postsecondary career track programming and improve employment pipelines for employers.



KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL

HOW YEAR UP GIVES URBAN YOUTH A LEG UP

Year Up trains 18- to 24-year-old high school graduates and GED earners in technical, academic, and professional skills that prepare them for entry-level jobs and further training in high-growth sectors, such as financial services and information technology.

Founded in Boston with 22 students, Year Up now serves more than 1,000 students each year and has expanded to Atlanta, New York, Providence, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, with a seventh site slated to open this fall. The year-long program combines technical and professional skills training with internship placements that, combined, provide marketable job skills, college credit, and a variety of supports to help place participants on a viable path to economic self-sufficiency. Throughout the program, students earn an educational stipend based on their performance, attendance, and attitude—up to \$260 per week during the internship phase.¹

Applicants submit a written application and essay, as well as letters of reference, a high school transcript, and attendance records. While grades and test scores are considered, the screening process focuses more on each applicant's work ethic and commitment to making the most of the program's opportunities. Year Up staff interview qualified candidates, then assess their computer and writing skills. New cohorts of students, ranging from 24 in the newest sites to 143 in Boston, begin each September and March.

BY THE NUMBERS: YEAR UP STUDENTS

- > 1,575 students have completed internships as of January 2010
- > 1,014 students will be served in 2010

Race/Ethnicity

- > Black, non-Hispanic: 57.9%
- > Hispanic: 25.7%
- > White, non-Hispanic: 6.1%
- > Asian or Pacific Islander: 3.7%
- > Native American: 0.6%
- > Other/Unknown: 6.0%

Household Income

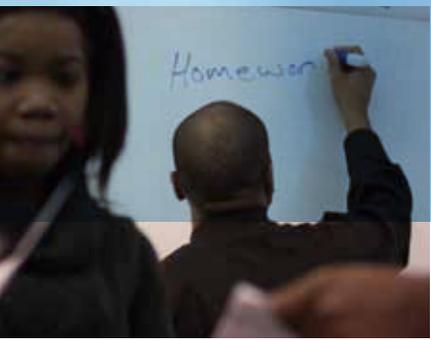
- > Median household income of incoming students: \$27,000
- > Students living in public housing: 30%

Education of Incoming Students

- > High school diploma: 84%
- > GED: 16%

Gender

- > Male: 59%
- > Female: 41%



During the first half of the program, Year Up participants attend classes full time, Monday through Friday, and focus on building a foundation of knowledge and skills to succeed in entry-level salaried positions in the financial services and information technology fields. The core curriculum combines technical and professional skills training and is designed with employer input. Professional and communication classes cover a variety of skills, such as business writing, time management, teamwork, problem solving, and conflict resolution and negotiation. Through dual enrollment agreements in which local colleges approve the curriculum, Year Up students earn an average of 16 credits at the partner college.

For the second half of the program, students who successfully complete all of the required coursework are placed in internships at leading U.S. companies, where they have the opportunity to put into practice and refine the skills they learned in the classroom. Positions commonly include help desk or desktop support roles, portfolio accountants, fund administrators, and trade reconciliation roles. Throughout their internships, participants attend a weekly class in which they share experiences and prepare to enter the job market. Students practice writing resumes, engage in mock job interviews, and research ways to continue their education toward earning a postsecondary credential. Meetings with mentors from the business community, as well as Year Up advisors, social workers, and tutors, provide additional support.

BY THE NUMBERS: YEAR UP EMPLOYERS

- > 104 employer partners as of 2010
- > \$27.4 million in employer contributions since 2004
- > 97% of current employer partners say they plan to take another Year Up intern in the future
- > Nearly 75% of Year Up graduates are employed within four months of graduation

Currently, 104 employers across the six cities host interns, contributing up to \$22,750 to Year Up for each intern, the equivalent of up to \$875 per week over six months. This funding supports the intensive classroom training and college credits Year Up students receive, and accounts for approximately 50 percent of Year Up's operating costs; the rest comes from a diverse base of philanthropic contributions and public funding.

IMPRESSIVE OUTCOMES

INCREASING BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT, IMPROVING STUDENT SUCCESS

Employer demand for Year Up's services has consistently grown. Even during the worst economic downturn in decades, employers have continued to increase their interest and investment in Year Up. In 2009, the number of internship placements expanded for the seventh straight year, growing by 35 percent from 2008. Year Up has fueled this growth by adding new employer partners, but also by strengthening its existing relationships; in 2010, the average partner will host six interns, up from four in 2005. In a 2009 survey, 95 percent of employer partners indicated they would recommend the program based on their experience with their interns and Year Up; 97 percent plan to take an intern in the future.

Year Up has achieved remarkable results compared to other postsecondary workforce training programs, particularly those targeted at students from low-income backgrounds. Historically, students from low-income backgrounds have been least likely to enroll and persist in a postsecondary degree or credential program. Nationally, only about 63 percent of low-income high school graduates enroll in postsecondary education, and just 27 percent complete a credential within six years. In comparison, 91 percent of their more economically advantaged peers enroll, and 61 percent eventually complete a credential.²

The numbers are far worse for GED holders; overall, 47 percent enroll in a postsecondary program, just 4 percent of whom earn a postsecondary credential. As a result, these young people are often unable to access jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. In contrast, more than 70 percent of students persist through the entire Year Up program, earning an average of 16 college credits, in some cases just a few classes shy of a credential. To date, one-fourth of Year Up students have gone on to enroll in further postsecondary education.

In addition, nearly 75 percent of Year Up graduates are employed within four months, hired into jobs with an average starting wage of \$15 per hour, just slightly below the national median wage. A recent survey of Year Up Boston alumni found that 95 percent of those who had graduated between 2002 and 2004 were still employed. These alumni had an average starting wage of \$13.74 and are now earning an average of \$19.69 per hour, well above the national median.³

The vast majority of Year Up students (84 percent) are African-American or Hispanic, recruited primarily from urban public high schools, community-based programs, word of mouth, and targeted advertising. The only academic requirement is that they hold a high school diploma or GED. Nearly half (49 percent) test below the ninth-grade level in reading when they enter Year Up, and nearly two-thirds (62 percent) test below the ninth-grade level in language scores.

EMPLOYER BENEFITS

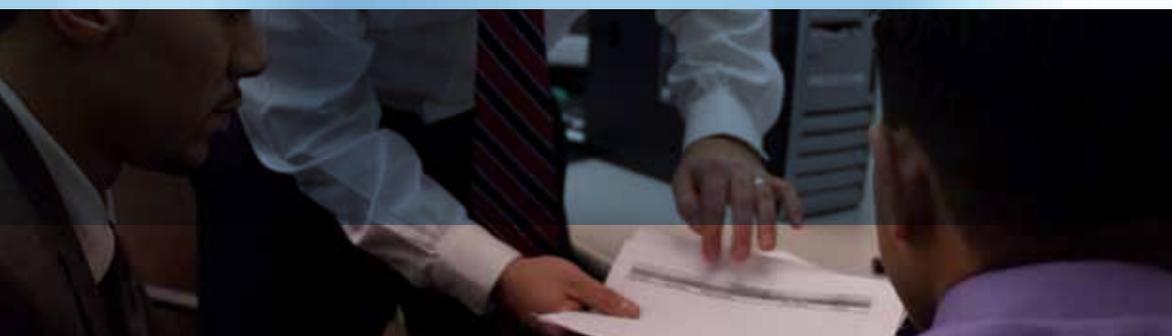
WHY PARTNERS INVEST IN YEAR UP

Employer partners invest significant financial and human resources to work with Year Up interns and staff. In contrast, many programs that work with older youth have found it difficult to secure internships and other work-based learning opportunities—particularly those that provide stipends for participation, provide extended time on the job, or lead to placement in career-track positions.

To better understand why employers make such a considerable investment in Year Up, Jobs for the Future commissioned a series of interviews with Year Up’s employer partners in the spring of 2009 designed to learn more about how they view the value of participating in the program and what they believe are the major benefits and payoffs of this involvement. Interviews were held with 17 business executives from 10 employers who provide internships to Year Up students. Employers were representative of Year Up’s partners in terms of sector, size, and scope of the partnership. In most instances, interviews were conducted with multiple corporate representatives, including senior-level executives responsible for managing the partnership as well as frontline managers who interact with interns on a daily basis.

Findings reveal that four key features contribute to Year Up’s appeal to business partners:

- > Year Up offers a “value proposition” that aligns well with the core business objectives of its corporate partners.
- > Interns enter their workplace poised to develop the full range of skills that will ultimately make them valuable contributors and quality employees.
- > The internship is structured to be low-risk and high-reward.
- > Year Up responds to employer feedback, continually adapting to meet employer and industry needs.



“

State Street’s partnership with Year Up started as a great community service opportunity, but it turned out to be a real win-win from [an employee] sourcing perspective.

”

- John Giurleo, Vice President, Global Human Resources, State Street Corporation

> YEAR UP OFFERS A “VALUE PROPOSITION” THAT ALIGNS WELL WITH THE CORE BUSINESS OBJECTIVES OF ITS CORPORATE PARTNERS.

For many companies, the initial decision to work with Year Up is grounded in a desire to give back to their communities and serve as good corporate citizens. However, employers report that they quickly realize the strategic value of partnering, as it also helps to support key business goals: accessing a pipeline of future talent; increasing diversity in the workplace; training to enhance the skill of interns; and supporting career growth. In fact, providing a reliable and affordable source of future talent has become a key element of the Year Up value proposition to employers. AOL Chief Technology Officer Ted Cahall underscores this point, noting that engagement with Year Up “enables AOL to develop a pipeline for cost-competitive, entry-level, diverse talent.”

From the start, Year Up founder Gerald Chertavian—himself a former CEO of a successful technology firm—has presented employer partnerships as a business proposition, and Year Up makes this case directly to company executives. Gaining this access to corporate leaders has become easier as Year Up’s reputation has grown. It is not unusual for a current business partner to introduce Year Up to a prospective partner’s CEO, chief operating officer, or chief information officer, who then typically “champions” the Year Up partnership. The champion continues to support the Year Up partnership while assigning logistical management to a mid-level manager to oversee the day-to-day work.

“SELLING” YEAR UP TO EMPLOYERS

A major client of JPMorgan Chase & Co. opened the door for Year Up leadership to meet with JPMorgan Chase’s chief technology officer. Similarly, the chief information officer at CVS, the largest employer in Providence, Rhode Island, entered into a partnership with Year Up in 2005 after a group of his peers introduced the program to him. He was interested in the model because it offered a chance to act on his belief that anyone could succeed in a corporate setting, given the right support, opportunities, and motivation. CVS hired five Year Up graduates for full-time work in 2009.

GETTING BUY-IN FROM THE CEO OF AMERICAN EXPRESS

When Year Up was launching its New York City program, founder Gerald Chertavian approached Ken Chenault, the CEO of American Express, about a partnership. Chenault was supportive because the idea aligned with many of the company’s business objectives. He assigned an executive sponsor, responsible for internally promoting the partnership. American Express is now in its fifth cycle with Year Up and will host seven interns in 2010. American Express is looking into how to grow the partnership by expanding internships to other job functions and other locations.

> **INTERNS ENTER THEIR WORKPLACE POISED TO DEVELOP THE FULL RANGE OF SKILLS THAT WILL ULTIMATELY MAKE THEM VALUABLE CONTRIBUTORS AND QUALITY EMPLOYEES.**

Year Up's partnerships with employers thrive and expand because of its careful screening and training procedures. Year Up trains participants in a variety of key technical, academic, and professional skills that participants then have the opportunity to put into practice and refine in their internships. "In the first six months, Year Up has done the vetting and relevant training," explains Todd Alston, senior technical director at AOL. "Students come in with some technical skills and a proven desire to succeed. These are sharp students that we can train [further]."

Year Up works with employer partners to gain an understanding of their business and general industry needs, which helps ensure that the curriculum trains students on the technical skills required to succeed in both the internship and beyond. For example, Christina Shanks, director of network infrastructure at American Express, decided to have Year Up interns work on a project that required knowledge of Microsoft Project and Visio. Recognizing that these are important skills for anyone entering the IT field, she asked if Year Up could integrate training in Microsoft Project, a widely used project management software program, into its information technology curriculum. According to Shanks, "Year Up is able to modify the curriculum so that interns are prepared with skills that are important to us at American Express, and that will serve them well as they embark on a career." As a result, Year Up students were well prepared to succeed in their internships at American Express, as well as for potential careers at peer organizations.

Employers also consistently report that interns bring a high level of professionalism to the workplace. Year Up's focus on preparing students for success in a business environment is critical. As John Giurleo, vice president of global human resources at State Street Corporation, notes, "The Year Up interns bring such great professional attributes—networking, commitment, enthusiasm, and timeliness—into our organization. These traits set these candidates apart when they get to State Street to begin their internships."

Donna Sams, vice president of information systems corporate systems at CVS, expresses a similar sentiment: "Year Up students have a good work ethic. They bring enthusiasm and excitement to the job. They have motivation to prove themselves and be here permanently."

The combination of responsive technical skill training, along with an intensive focus on professional skills and behaviors, enables interns to excel. "Year Up interns come with enough technical skills that they can contribute while we continue to work with them to hone their technical and professional skills," says John Ropas of JPMorgan Chase & Co. Several employers indicate that some Year Up interns are better prepared than the average college graduate by the end of their internships.

“

Year Up interns sell themselves. They have a strong start with the training Year Up provides, and then we continue to invest in their training and development. Mentoring is critical to the success of the internship and we expend the effort because these are people we hope to hire someday.

”

- Ellen Wright, Director of Human Resources, Information Technology Division, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

“

We do not differentiate work for college-level interns and Year Up interns. Year Up interns are assigned the same workload and have the same goals and objectives.

”

- John Ropas, Worldwide Securities Services, Information and Communications Technology Organization, JPMorgan Chase & Co.

> THE INTERNSHIP IS STRUCTURED TO BE LOW-RISK AND HIGH-REWARD.

The six-month internship provides employers the opportunity to “test drive” interns over an extended period of time, an approach that can assuage initial concerns or skepticism. Children’s Hospital Boston initially viewed its involvement as a “farm team” approach. As Director of Operations and Chief Information Security Officer Paul Scheib, explains, “The internship gives us an opportunity to work with the interns, support their ongoing learning, and see what they can do in our work environment. At the end of the internship, we have a good sense of ability and fit, and we can hire the ones that we really like.”

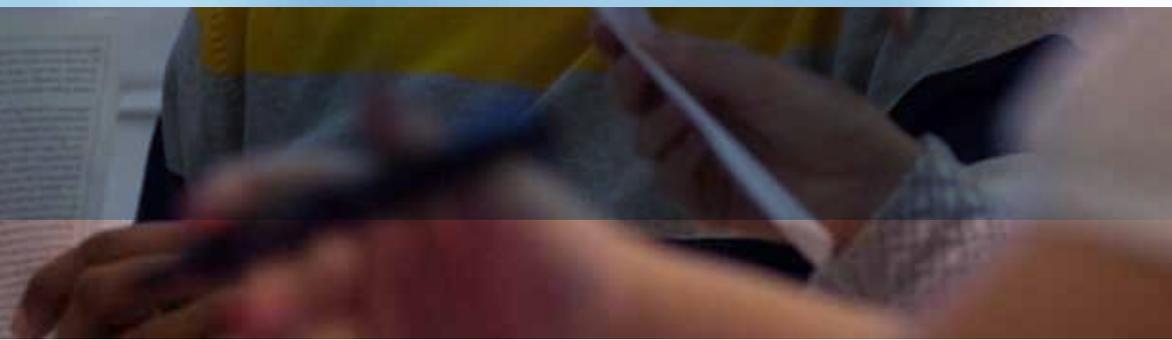
AOL takes a similar approach. The internship gives the company a chance to “assess both the hard and soft skills of the Year Up intern and whether the intern is a good fit for the company,” says AOL Senior Technical Director Todd Alston. “Then, if we have an opening, we hire them.”

This low-risk approach works well for employers. They are under no obligation to hire, and it is one of the keys to creating a new talent pipeline.

Partnering with Year Up to groom interns for permanent positions can be more cost effective for employers than recruiting from Monster.com or similar job recruitment sources. The screening and training Year Up provides, coupled with the work-based training approach of the internship, dramatically increases interns’ likelihood of success in a permanent job. Moreover, unlike a temporary employment agency, Year Up does not charge a placement fee.

Companies have developed a range of strategies designed to deepen their partnerships with Year Up and increase the number of interns they hire for permanent positions. Not surprisingly, those companies that invest time and resources in the interns have had the greatest success. State Street Corporation has developed a one-week foundational training on the company’s systems and general investment operations. State Street also continually explores opportunities to introduce more general investment operations training into the internship period because it believes it is a worthwhile investment that enables interns to be even better prepared if they become permanent employees.

“Because we are using the Year Up internship program as a potential talent pipeline for several critical job categories at State Street Bank,” says John Giurleo, “we have started to invest more time and resources in providing additional job-specific training for the Year Up interns when they arrive to boost their already terrific success rates.”



Similarly, AOL has developed an internal training and development program to maximize the internship experience and increase success rates. The *Year Up Success Program* is designed to help interns further develop the skills and confidence needed to drive their own career growth. AOL leaders recognized early on that creating a structured program to support the Year Up interns would augment the internship experience and increase the value to AOL. It is delivered during the workday throughout the internship. The program focuses in three areas: increasing opportunities to build professional relationships through mentoring and networking; deepening training opportunities focused on both professional and technical skills; and carrying Year Up's commitment to honest feedback into the internship. Through the Success Program, every intern is assigned a mentor, attends a brown-bag series that culminates with interns presenting to senior AOL leadership, has access to AOL's internal educational and training curriculum, and gains support for career exploration coupled with a talent assessment for each intern. In addition, AOL is exploring whether its partnership with Year Up might provide a new talent pipeline that could augment staffing for technical jobs beyond the IT track currently available through the partnership.

KEY COMPONENTS OF AOL'S YEAR UP SUCCESS PROGRAM

Mentoring and Networking

- > Creating opportunities for peer, professional, and team engagement
- > Assigning AOL mentor(s)
- > Facilitating career exploration

Training

- > Job and industry-specific training
- > Communication and leadership
- > Exposure to different corporate functions within AOL
- > Access to AOL Online University, the company's educational offerings

Feedback

- > Managers are trained to provide feedback
- > Interns receive direct, frequent, consistent, and constructive feedback
- > AOL implements formalized incoming talent assessment
- > AOL engages Year Up to continually improve and expand partnership

“

Year Up interns start at our service desk and work on everything from laptops and desktops to our software applications and mobile devices. They can expand their track here or move on elsewhere with solid resume material from the program.

”

- Jonathan Rider, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Gilbane, Inc.

Employers report that their partnerships with Year Up are most valuable when they can hire interns for permanent positions and then ultimately see them move up. Mary Finlay of Partners HealthCare in Boston spoke about one Year Up intern who “came to us as a motivated, hard-working student. As a full-time employee, he has become an irreplaceable asset to our IT department.”

Some companies, such as AOL, assign Year Up interns to managers only if a job is opening up and offers a clear career path. This helps ensure that an employer’s investment yields long-term benefits. Once hired, the typical Year Up graduate is assimilated into the employer’s professional workforce, with access to the full range of internal and external training and career development opportunities offered by the company, including financial supports to pursue postsecondary education.

> YEAR UP RESPONDS TO EMPLOYER FEEDBACK, CONTINUALLY ADAPTING TO MEET EMPLOYER AND INDUSTRY NEEDS.

In contrast to most workforce training, youth development, or education programs, Year Up ties its finances to the satisfaction of its corporate partners. For Year Up to remain solvent, the interns it sends to businesses—and the customer service it provides—must meet or exceed employer expectations. As a result, it has developed a highly refined, continuous improvement process that helps to ensure that it responds to employer needs.

Year Up assigns a manager to every employer who decides to work with interns. This person’s primary responsibility is to solicit and integrate feedback from the employer and, based on the feedback, provide appropriate support to interns. This manager seeks regular input from employers about the degree to which interns are prepared to perform effectively in the workplace.

For example, early in its partnership with Year Up, CVS initiated a conversation with Year Up staff about how interns could better meet the organization’s needs. In response to feedback indicating a need to strengthen youths’ skills in the areas of reliability and resilience, Year Up tailored the curriculum to provide greater focus on these core professional skills. It also modified the intake process with additional screening to ensure that interns would be equipped to solve life challenges in order to successfully meet work commitments, and it augmented mentoring and counseling services during the internships. As Donna Sams explains, “Since then, CVS has seen significant improvement in the Year Up interns at the company.”

Some employers have even developed their own internal survey to provide regular, timely feedback to Year Up. Christina Shanks, director of network infrastructure at American Express, notes that Year Up “makes it very easy for the employer to say, ‘This is how you could improve the curriculum.’”

CONCLUSION

TOWARD A “CAREER FIRST” PATHWAY

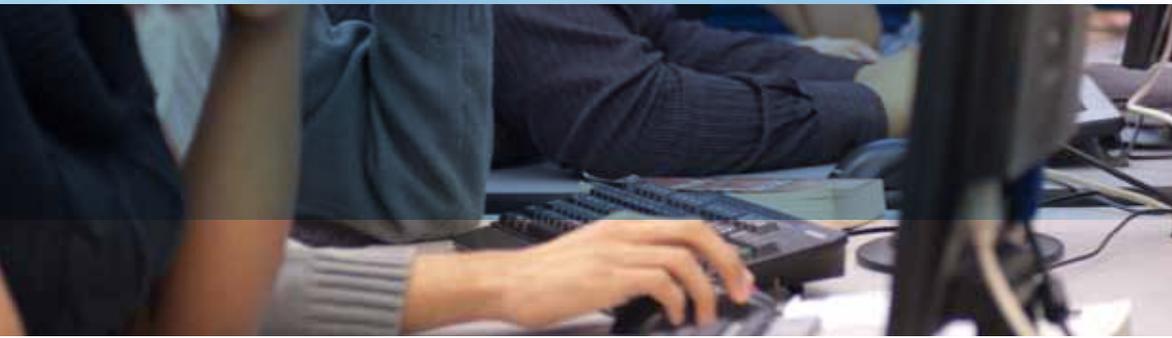
Employers invest in Year Up because it reliably provides competitively priced, skilled talent that helps them meet their core objectives. Employer satisfaction with and commitment to Year Up—and the program’s strong student persistence, job placement, and college-ready outcomes—offer a vision for an effective, postsecondary pathway to quality employment that is sorely needed.

In today’s knowledge economy, employment and wages are inextricably linked to education. In recent years, as the unemployment rate has doubled and underemployment has risen, low rates of postsecondary access and persistence have continued to disproportionately affect low-income youth. These outcomes, if allowed to continue, will lead to an increasing bifurcation of the workforce: a widening gulf between those with the skills and credentials to access higher-paying careers and the lower-income, lower-skilled who have little prospect of advancement or financial self-sufficiency.

The steady erosion of higher-wage, lower-skill jobs has led to more calls for “college for all.” But it is not well understood how to turn this laudable aspiration into reality, especially for low-income and first-generation college students, many of whom struggle just to complete high school. Typically, young adults who seek to enter decent-paying employment face two choices: obtain a college credential or find short-term training opportunities that lead to work. Unfortunately, it can take many years to earn a college credential, especially for those requiring remediation before they can begin credit-bearing coursework. And training programs are too often disconnected from specific employer needs or not intensive enough to develop the skills needed for career advancement.

Year Up proves that it is possible to envision a new kind of thirteenth-year, “Career First” pathway that would challenge the current choice between preparing for a job and preparing for postsecondary education. As Year Up demonstrates, such pathways would substantially improve the educational and employment outcomes for the many young people who earn a high school diploma or GED but cannot find firm footing in higher education or the labor market. It would also provide a steady and reliable talent stream tailored to meet employers’ needs. Within this Career First pathway, program models would be characterized by close partnerships between employers and training providers. Strong employer participation is needed to ensure that the training incorporates just the right mix of professional, academic, and technical skills and experiences young people need to access jobs in high-demand, high-wage occupations with potential for career advancement.

Year Up exemplifies how an entrepreneurial nonprofit enterprise can deliver an excellent, replicable program. But as Year Up leadership has realized, for a Career First pathway to exist at sufficient scale to fill the need, it will be necessary to build many more of these programs with or within community colleges, a sector that serves as the default destination for hundreds of thousands of low-income youth, and that has substantial infrastructure and capacity to deliver technical training. Year Up has begun this work Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), led by its entrepreneurial president, Bob Templin. The two partners have developed a tightly integrated academic planning process that results in adjunct faculty status for Year Up instructors, alignment of program curricula with current NOVA courses, and enrollment as full-time NOVA college students for Year Up participants. Additionally, NOVA and Year Up have adapted a financial arrangement, originated with high school dual enrollment programs, that directs a large portion of the tuition collected to Year Up for providing the classroom facilities and qualified faculty, a significant revenue stream which helps to sustain the program. Building on the success of this innovative partnership, Year Up is now exploring opportunities to further adapt and test the NOVA model with other community colleges.



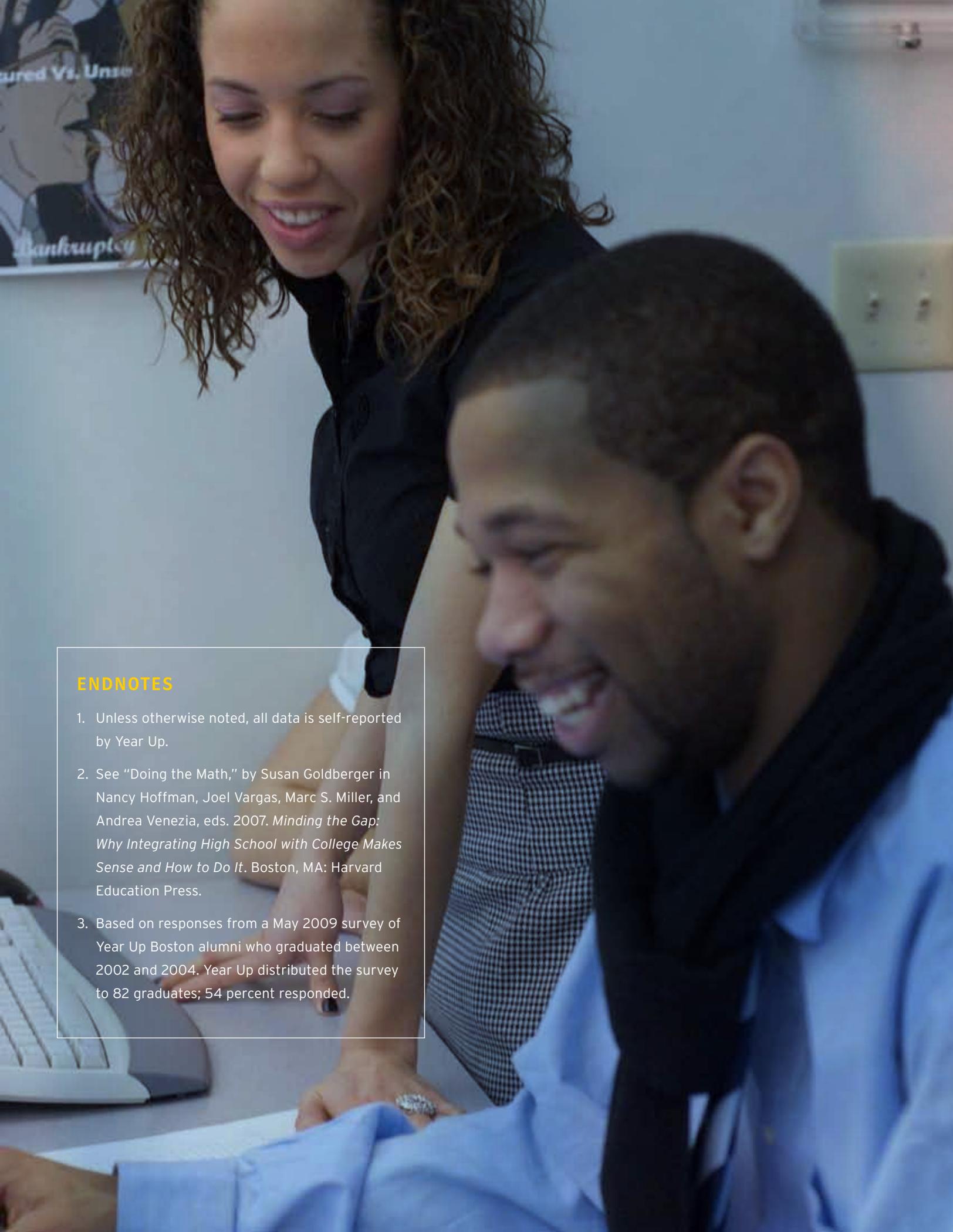
NOVA has also pioneered a variety of ways that community colleges can partner with other community-based organizations to offer Career First programming. Through such partnerships, CBOs help recruit students and provide wraparound case management support. In some cases, they also function as training providers, offering credit-based instruction whose curriculum is approved by a partnering college, using the integrated academic planning process described above for Year Up. One could imagine a number of these programs on or near community college campuses, serving as preferred on-ramps or feeders to colleges' existing technical training programs. This would serve as a way to restructure the first-year experience and provide directed support for youth who are "not quite ready" for college. For those Career First graduates who choose to enter the workforce directly, their chances at accessing career-track employment would be greatly enhanced as a result of the technical and professional skills training they received.

NOVA has used such partnerships to better address the needs of the low-income populations its partners serve (and that the college has otherwise struggled to recruit and serve), enrolling approximately 250 such participants in five CBO co-enrollment programs in 2009-10. In partnership with Goodwill Industries International, the college is now spearheading a national effort to replicate this and other innovative college-Goodwill program models in several cities across the country.

Two-year colleges—and four-year ones, as well—can also learn from frontrunners such as the City University of New York's New Community College, scheduled to open in 2012, and Northeastern University's Foundation Year program about how to build Career First pathways into a redesign of first year programming. Both are redesigning the first-year college experience with an eye toward improving needed academic supports, providing clearer and more transparent academic and career pathways, and putting in place the supports necessary to help youth persist in their first year and transition to further education and training or placement in career-track jobs.

Young people and their parents are clearly getting the message that education beyond high school is a must, and yet too many are completing their secondary education without the skills necessary to persist and succeed in college or careers. Year Up provides important lessons on how to take an approach that will meet employers' needs and help many more young people accelerate their study and move quickly into jobs and careers.

Jobs for the Future is working with innovators across the education, workforce, and employer communities to learn from and grow Career First pathways. As the Obama Administration calls on the United States to once again take the lead among countries in the postsecondary attainment of its young people, policy and program leaders, with employers and postsecondary institutions, need to work together to support and expand these crucial efforts. Year Up and its employer partners provide a powerful example for how to move forward.



ENDNOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, all data is self-reported by Year Up.
2. See “Doing the Math,” by Susan Goldberger in Nancy Hoffman, Joel Vargas, Marc S. Miller, and Andrea Venezia, eds. 2007. *Minding the Gap: Why Integrating High School with College Makes Sense and How to Do It*. Boston, MA: Harvard Education Press.
3. Based on responses from a May 2009 survey of Year Up Boston alumni who graduated between 2002 and 2004. Year Up distributed the survey to 82 graduates; 54 percent responded.



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