



### **Year Up: Social Entrepreneurship and the Community College**

Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) is a medium-sized public, urban-serving single-college, multi-campus system, located in the mid-Atlantic region. Year Up (YU) is a non-profit organization designed to provide participating youth with continuing education, guidance, skill development, and hands-on experiences to help them become productive and successful citizens of the world, able to earn a livable wage.

Year Up approached BCCC, and the two organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding. By electing to house the program on BCCC's campus, this new partnership became Year-Up's first campus-based initiative.

YU targets urban youth from low-income families, between the ages of 18 and 24, and provides them with a one-year intensive training and college education program, combined with hands-on skill development, and a corporate internship. Participants must have a high school diploma or a GED certificate.

Currently, BCCC's YU program offers training in Information Technology (computer technical support). Interested students must first complete the interest form and an application. The application is reviewed by YU staff members. If the prospective student is qualified, he/she will be invited to interview; applicants are expected to be punctual and dress professionally.

Aside from enjoying the experiences of campus life, Year Up student participants receive their class instruction along with the support and assistance of the staff members, all in one central location. The YU organization also benefits from this partnership. Housing the program on the BCCC campus eliminates the cost of purchasing computers for the program and renting space for offices and classes. In addition, this integration affords YU and its participants the instruction of qualified BCCC professors, instructors, and staff.

The implementation process at Baltimore City Community College closely mirrored Kotter's well-known eight-stage change process:

Step 1: Establishing a Sense of Urgency: BCCC was faced with the crisis of being placed on probation and needing to show some positive actions and results quickly. By accepting the responsibility for ushering in the pilot program's partnership with YU, BCCC embraced a major opportunity for possibly becoming the national model for other community colleges across the

nation.

**Step 2: Creating a Guiding Coalition:** BCCC created what it called a Design Team—the vice president of academic affairs, two deans from academic affairs, two deans from student affairs, as well as YU’s national program developer, the Baltimore site director, and the Baltimore program manager. This team met regularly to outline the steps for implementation and identify strategies for overcoming obstacles.

**Step 3: Developing a Change Vision:** By starting with model developed by Year Up and adding the ingredients necessary to establish buy-in, we were able to develop a change vision for the entire organization regarding how we would recruit, enroll, embrace, monitor, retain, educate, and graduate students at BCCC. It became a part of our one-stop, wrap-around student services.

**Step 4: Communicating the Vision for Buy-in:** By having the college president announce the partnership and members of the team make presentations to the Board of Trustees and at the college-wide town hall meetings, the message was repeatedly delivered to the organization.

**Step 5: Empowering Employees:** Being empowered by the college president, the Design Team was able to be creative in devising solutions, including marrying Year Up with BASIC (another social entrepreneurial model that a member of the Design Team had previously developed in work as a consultant with schools in the Baltimore City K-12 system).

**Step 6: Generating Short-Term Wins:** By acknowledging and celebrating small, yet meaningful milestones (signing the Memorandum of Understanding, securing the office space for the Year Up staff, admitting the first student to the cohort, presenting to the Board of trustees, etc.), the team was able to generate momentum quickly and keep it going.

**Step 7: Never Letting Up:** The Site Director on the Year Up staff was a charismatic and engaging individual whose favorite words were: “Don’t worry—it’s gonna happen.” This attitude was infectious and a constant source of encouragement when the team was having trouble sustaining the amounts of energy it takes to transform processes in a state-run agency.

**Step 8: Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture:** BCCC was incorporating “Friday Feedback” sessions into courses beyond those who share the Year Up designation; replicating the Year Up recruitment model by having targeted recruiters work alongside and learn from the Year Up recruiters; and receiving feedback (constructive criticism) from the Year Up students.

There were several challenges to implementation, including marketing to the broader community about the program, establishing faculty buy-in for an initiative with which they had little familiarity, and having faculty agree to adjust their teaching schedules. One significant challenge was navigating the different cultures that were thrown together as we sought to blend YU’s corporate culture with BCCC’s traditional community college culture. It occurred to the team in the early meetings that the challenge was similar to the ones faced by the consultant with the schools in Baltimore’s K-12 system. There was a need for what has been called a “disruptive innovation.” The team decided that it would need to apply creative thinking to the problems of a state-run agency and perhaps infuse some social entrepreneurship into the process.

We elected to apply (insert) a model that was developed by applying private-sector ingenuity to a public-sector problem. The challenge the team faced as it attempted to solve this problem was that, in this instance, we were not bringing these ideas in from the outside as a consultant might, but from the inside as employees of the college. We had neither the luxury of time, nor resources, to effect change throughout the entire college.

Fortunately, as we began to craft our strategy for growing this change initiative, we had the perspective of insiders, which meant that we knew the student population and the individual staff members in the key roles who would serve as resources (and their respective strengths and weaknesses). And because we were invested in the long-term success of the college and the partnership, we were able to utilize the avenues to work around any of the blockages that frequently stymied other change efforts.

We borrowed from the lessons learned while designing the BASIC Academic Mentoring Program for a local high school, where a team member worked as a consultant, and decided that we would apply the concepts of BASIC at the community college level. Rather than attempt to focus on the entire college, we decided to keep the change effort small at first. Yet, although we could not recruit, hire, train, and reward the staff to work in the program according to the principles of BASIC, the staff resources of Year Up provided the core team that was needed to function as an entrepreneurial *island* in the larger state-run agency.

There were some very valuable lessons learned from the first cohort at BCCC. It was a great advantage to have staff on board at the institution who had had previous experience with a program that operated like Year Up. In addition, it was a great advantage to have a social entrepreneur on board at the helm of the implementation process; it was important to hand select faculty and hold them accountable; and it was essential to designate and protect the space set aside for Year Up staff and programming.

The benefits of the partnership have been significant. This campus-based site is the first of its kind and will serve as the national pilot as Year Up seeks to bring to scale the results it has experienced in other cities. By housing the program on the BCCC campus, this public/private partnership allows Year Up to reduce operating costs as it expands to engage increased numbers of detached youth and fulfill YU's mission of closing the "opportunity divide." Baltimore City Community College's benefits include the high course- and program-completion rates achieved by the Year Up students, as well as having a core group of impeccably dressed students, displaying scholarship-focused and goal-oriented behaviors, moving about the campus and serving as role models for other students.

The Year Up students are still taking classes and about to begin their internships. If the student retention numbers remain constant, we are looking at completion rates that approach 80%. Although we began with a relatively small cohort, the proven track record of Year Up and the strong retention rates achieved with this population make the Year Up + BASIC a formula that is worth replicating. This innovation appears to be a useful model for addressing the challenges posed by developmental education, an instructional area that demands creative and innovative approaches to improving the chances for student success.

**Peggy F. J. Bradford**, *Vice President of Academic Affairs*

**Wayne Beckles**, *Dean of Academic Services*

For further information, contact the authors at Baltimore City Community College, 2901 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21215. Email: [pbradford@bccc.edu](mailto:pbradford@bccc.edu) or [wbeckles@bccc.edu](mailto:wbeckles@bccc.edu)

---

**September 22, 2012, Vol. XXXIV, No. 19**  
©The University of Texas at Austin, 2012  
Further duplication is permitted by MEMBER  
institutions for their own personal use.

*Innovation Abstracts* is published weekly following the fall and spring terms of the academic calendar, except Thanksgiving week, by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, 1 University Station, D5600, Austin, Texas 78712-0378, (512) 471-7545, Email: [abstracts@nisod.org](mailto:abstracts@nisod.org)