

Preparing People of Color for Leadership: An Evaluation of Management Leadership for Tomorrow's Career Prep Program

APRIL 2018

Dr. Susan Gershenfeld
Dr. Meg Lovejoy
Dr. Tatjana Meschede
Maria Fernanda Escobar, MPP



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) is dedicated to equipping People of Color for leadership positions in business organizations and communities throughout the world. MLT achieves its mission through skilled coaching programs offered to underrepresented minorities at critical educational and career transition points in their lives. These programs are supported by an MLT alumni network of more than 7,000 members and committed partnerships with over 80 leading businesses and organizations.

Through a competitive process, MLT selected Brandeis University’s Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP) to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its Career Prep program, an intervention for students of color transitioning from college to the workforce. The evaluation employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses, including original data collection (survey data, interviews) and secondary data analyses of nationally representative data of college graduates and MLT institutional records. In particular, original data collection included 50 interviews with a range of stakeholders, and an online survey administered within the MLT community and with a key comparison group of students from low-income backgrounds attending a public university. Additional data sources involved analyses of matched samples derived from the nationally representative Baccalaureate & Beyond panel data set, collected through the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S Department of Education, and MLT institutional data.

The MLT Career Prep Approach

Launched in 2002, MLT’s goal is to equip African American, Latino, and Native American college students with the “know-how, navigation, and network” to realize their full potential. Aiming at meeting a need not met by traditional university career services, MLT sees Career Prep as a “bridge between what it takes to be smart and high performing in the academic world and what it takes to be high performing in the business world.” The six pillars of the Career Prep program, identified in MLT’s 2017 Request for Proposals, are: 1) personal clarity; 2) understanding the high-performance bar; 3) knowing where you stand in relation to the bar; 4) personalized action plan to become a high performer; 5) coaching; and 6) network.

The 18-month-long Career Prep Program begins in the summer between the sophomore and junior years of college. Career Prep participants, called Fellows, engage activities on reaching personal clarity on professional goals, and receive guidance and support through professional training, internships, and job searches. Through one-on-one coaching, in-person seminars and workshops, a personalized playbook, and an extensive network, these Fellows gain access to top employers and a high-leverage professional network.

“There really is safety in numbers and that’s a part of why this sense of community becomes so important, because [otherwise] it is so isolating. Being the only person [of color] in a room gets lonely.”

—MLT Leadership

Impact of Career Prep

The interview data provided in-depth information on the perceived impact of the Career Prep approach on its Fellows (student participants). A range of different program stakeholders were interviewed about their perspectives on this matter, including current Career Prep Fellows and alumni, Coaches, and MLT Business Partners. Five major themes concerning Career Prep’s impact on Fellows emerged from this analysis:

- 1) Acquisition of top-tier internships and jobs
- 2) Clarification of career goals
- 3) Heightened self-confidence and aspirations
- 4) Enhanced professional skills
- 5) Expanded professional and social networks.

When compared with a matched cohort drawn from the nationally representative Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B) data set following college students over time, MLT Career Prep alumni did better with respect to their first post-college position. These outcomes include entering jobs requiring a college degree, earning a higher starting salary (over \$50,000), and expecting bonuses. These results are true for comparisons of Career Prep alumni with Students of Color and White students drawn from a national sample of college attendees. Sub-analysis for women and first-generation students show similar findings, except for starting salary.

Table 1: Career Prep (CP) Alumni Have Superior First Jobs Post-Graduation than Matched Comparisons

Matched National Comparison Groups	First Job Required College Degree	Starting Salary Greater Than \$50,000	Expecting Bonuses
Graduates of Color	■	■	■
↳ Women	■	■	■
↳ First-Generation	■	■	■
White Comparisons	■	■	■
↳ Women	■	■	■
↳ First-Generation	■	■	■

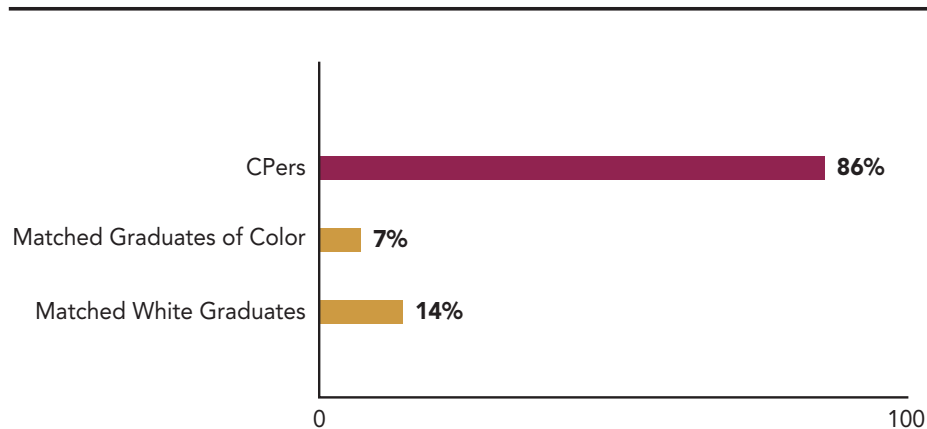
■ CP alumni showed significantly better outcomes than their counterparts
■ CP alumni showed no significant difference in outcomes relative to their counterparts

The online survey conducted by IASP provided more detailed data beyond the MLT institutional and existing national data. When comparing these survey responses from MLT Career Prep alumni who were Pell Grant recipients with responses to the same survey from a similar cohort of Pell Grant recipients¹ at a public flagship university, no significant differences were found regarding career aspirations, networks, and professional skills. However, there were significant differences with respect to tangible college-to-career outcomes. Specifically, Pell Career Prep alumni were more likely than Pell recipients in the comparison group to:

- Have a college internship with one of their top three employers of choice (82% versus 32%);
- Have a professional internship related to their post-college career path (87% versus 50%); and
- Receive an employment offer before college graduation for a job that required a college degree (87% versus 45%).

¹The Pell Grant is from the U.S. Department of Education to help subsidize the cost of post-secondary education for low-income students. The terms “low-income” and “Pell” are used interchangeably in this report.

Chart 1: Career Prep Alumni are More Likely to Earn Starting Salaries Above \$50,000*



In addition, there were differences in higher quality first jobs, post college. Specifically, Career Prep alumni who had received a Pell Grant were more likely than the comparison group to:

- Receive a signing bonus (58% versus 24%);
- Receive a year-end bonus (52% versus 26%);
- Receive employer-sponsored health care benefits (95% versus 72%); and
- Have their employer contribute to a retirement account (85% versus 57%).

Thus, while these groups were similar with respect to their household family income while in college and have similar perceptions of their career aspirations, networks and professional skills, students enrolled with MLT gain significant advantages in the job market.

Civic engagement is another area in which MLT has a positive impact on its alumni. MLT's community-building approach inspires participants to give back. Alumni were more likely to mentor younger people, vote, and volunteer. Specifically, 84 percent of Pell Career Prep alumni surveyed have "paid it forward" through mentoring compared to 56 percent of the Pell recipients in the comparison group.

Finally, MLT partners with businesses in financial, consulting, consumer products, technology, and other sectors to achieve its goals. Business Partners interviewed cited MLT's ability to deliver high-performing minority talent consistently as the top reason for their investment in the program. Business Partners also noted that MLT helped them advance their diversity and inclusion goals.

Summary

This Career Prep evaluation is a first step in assessing outcomes important to MLT and its stakeholders and holds promise for advancing diverse leadership in society. This evaluation highlights the promise of MLT's Career Prep program in supporting the college and early career advancement of students of color. While there is much to celebrate with these positive impacts, there is also room for growth and improvement. The recommendations for Career Prep focus on curriculum development, managing program growth, and data quality to inform operations and future evaluations. Our hope is that this evaluation provides a foundation for building the base of research in this socially consequential area.

*Non-program effects for this difference include, in part, college major and first post-college position obtained during recessionary years of 2008-2009. (E.g., in the comparison group, a statistically significant higher number enrolled in non-STEM, were non-business majors, and earned under \$50,000; and a statistically higher number obtained first post-college job during these recessionary years.) Part-time employment status is another possible correlate, but this variable was not available for inclusion in the analysis.