



US EMPOWERED

Urban Students Empowered

Annual Report

July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009





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Dear Friends and Supporters,

On behalf of Urban Students Empowered, thank you for your unyielding support of our movement and the students we serve. With the momentum we gained this past year, we have never felt our sense of urgency to expand more acutely. Last year was an incredibly difficult one for all Americans, especially those living in under-resourced neighborhoods. Yet, because of the effectiveness of our model, the dedication of our teachers, and the generosity and passion of our supporters, last year was our most successful year in US Empowered history.

We solidified partnerships with eleven high schools throughout Chicago and will impact a record number of students this year. We attained our goals for financial growth, which will launch US Empowered into a second year of vast programmatic expansion. Our Fellows greatly surpassed our indicators of success and will fulfill their potential not only to become college graduates, but also generational leaders who will positively impact their communities and their world.

This current year is critical, and our need to deepen our impact is stronger than ever. Amid unprecedented focus on education reform, newly available sources of federal funding for education, and renewed commitments to education from both President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, there are tremendous opportunities to grow and scale proven, change-making programs. US Empowered's success is irrefutable and we are working relentlessly to expand once again to more deserving students.

Through our new in-school pilot program, we aim to dramatically decrease our cost per student while exponentially increasing our impact on the schools we serve. At all of our partner schools we endeavor to increase focus on evidence-based curriculum development, teacher training, streamlining conferences, and college persistence programming.

We are blessed to have your support. As we enter this year challenged to find new funding streams, we will need to look to our current supporters to maintain or increase their support. It is thanks to your strong commitment that we are able to make college a reality for urban America. Please take a moment to peruse our annual report. Our students' success is a direct reflection of the support and passion of the entire US Empowered family.

Warmest regards,

Jeff Nelson
Executive Director

Our Mission

Urban Students Empowered is dedicated to providing low-income, urban high school students with the resources, support, and networks necessary to make higher education a reality. In order to fulfill this mission, US Empowered trains highly effective teachers to guide underperforming students in low-income high schools towards success in college and beyond. We envision a day when every student in low-income America has the opportunity to realize post-secondary success unencumbered by educational inequity.

US Empowered has two overarching goals for our Fellows (students): acceptance into college and graduation from college. In order to ensure successful fulfillment of these goals, our Fellowship encompasses the final two years of high school and the first year of college. Program Directors (teachers) lead students in a weekly, three-year college preparatory program that consists of six after-school scripted courses, experiential conferences, and a system of online support tools that collectively propel students toward success in college and beyond. Ultimately, our program equips alumni with a system of best-practices and collaborative networks of support, so that these alumni become college graduates and generational leaders.

Our Fellowship

During the first two years of the US Empowered Fellowship (junior and senior year of high school), students take five courses that act as a “road map” for college admission and post-secondary success. US Empowered courses, including College 101, Acing the ACT, and Financing College, elevate personal expectations, increase test scores, produce exceptional applications, and prepare students for academic, financial, and personal success in competitive, four-year colleges and universities. Fellows also participate in conferences designed to supplement their weekly courses. These conferences promote the collective nature of our movement by connecting students throughout Chicago who share similar passions and goals.

But getting students into college is not enough. Often minority students from disadvantaged high schools have lower success rates in college. Only 41% of African-American and Hispanic undergraduates who begin their studies at a given four-year institution complete a bachelor’s degree within six years at that same institution. Yet, research shows that effective retention programs for first year college students significantly increase the likelihood of college graduation. US Empowered puts this research into action with a final year long curricular course, College 301. This course provides students with the tools to create their own support networks at their respective universities.

The Need: A National Education Crisis

Only 18% of incoming CPS ninth graders enroll in four-year universities after high school.

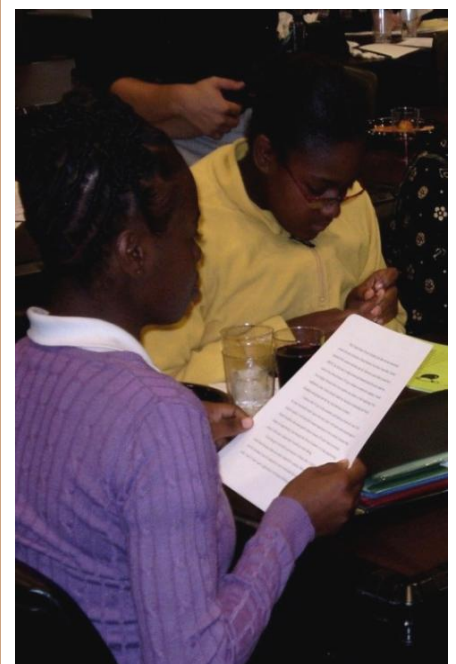
Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2006

High school graduates who do not attend college will earn, on average, less than \$25,000 per year.

U.S. Census Bureau

Only 20% of CPS graduates have GPAs and ACT scores that give them access to selective or very selective colleges.

Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009





Our History

Five years ago, US Empowered began in one high school on Chicago's South Side. In 2007, US Empowered partnered with three new schools and increased our incoming class size from seven to 30 Fellows. A year later, US Empowered more than doubled in size, serving seven schools with 72 incoming students. Today, US Empowered serves 227 students in 11 Chicago high schools. Since inception, 98% of our Fellows have been admitted into four-year universities, with 79% enrolling in their top-choice schools. To date, **100% of Fellows remain on track to graduate from college within six years.**

“I have grown so much since the beginning of US Empowered. I've always thought college was important, but it's all I can think about now. I love this program and need this program. This kind of opportunity comes once in a lifetime.”

- Shandreeka Lewis, Class of 2014, Uplift Community High School

Class of 2013 Results

Attendance: 93%

Session Outcomes: 3.5 out of 4.0

ACT Increase: 2.7 points

GPA Increase: 0.29 points

Class of 2014 Results

Attendance: 95%

Session Outcomes: 3.6 out of 4.0

ACT Increase: 3.2 points

GPA Increase: 0.26 points



Financial Summary

	FY2008	FY2009
Revenue		
Foundations	\$92,321	\$133,539
Events	\$81,800	\$242,904
Individual Contributions	\$55,372	\$115,598
Corporate Donations	\$10,000	\$65,785
Public Funding	\$0	\$10,000
Expenses		
Program Services	\$127,133	\$391,879
Fundraising	\$14,833	\$47,384
General & Administrative	\$10,802	\$41,300
Change in Net Assets	\$87,123	\$89,710
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$70,617	\$157,740
Net Assets End of Year	\$157,740	\$247,450



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“As we swore in our first African American president, Barack Obama, he reiterated that it is our responsibility to give back and help each other. What he doesn’t know is that US Empowered has already begun his vision, and for that I will be forever grateful.”

- Kameron Walker, Class of 2013, George Corliss High School



Development

Thanks to the commitment of countless individuals, foundations, and corporations, US Empowered successfully achieved its second year expansion goals and exponentially broadened its impact on urban students.

In addition to expanding our growing base of generous supporters, US Empowered hosted its first annual Graduation Gala on May 6th, 2009 at the University Club of Chicago. Thanks to the kindness of more than 250 guests, the event funded over half of the incoming Class of 2015 Fellows and secured US Empowered’s financial footing for the new fiscal year. We also honored Mr. John J. Dugan for both his commitment to expanding opportunities for all and his endless support of US Empowered. The generosity of our stakeholders inspires our movement and instills in us an even stronger determination to expand our Fellowships to more deserving students. We are immeasurably grateful for your kindness and look forward to continuing to deepen our impact in Chicago and beyond.

Growing Our Staff

In addition to expanding our Fellowship to more and more deserving students, we also grew our staff this year. Joining our team are Joanna Rudnick, Program Manager, and Brynne Mancuso, Development Manager. Joanna, a graduate of both Northwestern University and the University of Chicago, was previously a social worker at Perspectives Charter Schools, Joslin Campus. Brynne is a recent graduate of Northwestern University and continues on at US Empowered after interning during her senior year. Our new team members will continue to propel our movement into the future.

US Empowered 2009-2010 Partner High Schools

ACE Technical Charter High School

Gage Park High School

George Corliss High School

Kenwood Academy

Perspectives Calumet High School

Perspectives Calumet High School of
Technology

South Shore School of Entrepreneurship

South Shore School of Technology

TEAM Englewood Community
Academy

University of Chicago Charter School

Woodlawn Campus

Uplift Community High School

Fellow Corner: Elijah Ogunkoya, Class of 2014, Uplift Community High School

Before US Empowered, Elijah admits he was an average student and was not very social at school. Since joining the program though, Elijah has raised his GPA by 0.30 points, increased his ACT score from a 16 to a 19, and maintained the highest session outcome averages in his cohort, an average of 3.89 on a 4 point scale. Of his transformation Elijah says,

“I didn’t like asking for help when I needed it, because my confidence was low, and I didn’t know what I wanted to do in life. But now I am a better student, thinking about what college to go to and what to major in, and also thinking about the ACTs. My confidence has increased a lot and my test scores have shown improvement. I’m a lot more social now. I am so grateful for what US Empowered has done for me. I can’t imagine what my life would be without US Empowered.”

Since immigrating to the United States from Nigeria, Elijah has set ambitious goals for himself. He wants to be a politician. He says, “The government in Nigeria has been corrupt for many years now and I want to give all Nigerians a chance to experience what I have in the US.” His campaign goals already include improving the economy, creating universal healthcare for Nigerians, mandating education grades one to twelve, and ultimately making Nigeria competitive with other nations. This fall Elijah looks forward to applying to colleges such as the University of Maryland, Ohio State University, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.





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