



US EMPOWERED
Urban Students Empowered

MAKING COLLEGE A REALITY FOR ALL STUDENTS IN AMERICA

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

A Message from the Co-Founder & CEO

Dear Friends,

On behalf of Urban Students Empowered, thank you for your generous support of our movement. This was an incredible, exciting year for US Empowered, and for this kind of work within the education reform arena – locally and nationally.

What lies at the heart of the US Empowered movement is the vision that great teachers can transform the schools in which they work, and dramatically increase college persistence rates for their students if they receive the resources, structure and support they deserve. US Empowered offers this support, and paves the way for our city's best teachers to create positive, results-oriented, college-bound cultures within their schools. This shift in culture starts at the grassroots level; is authentic, meaningful and inspiring; and often occurs despite the profound and complex challenges that exist in some of the toughest neighborhoods in the city.

It is because of these strong, inspiring, school-based communities that we operate with a sense of optimism and set big goals. This year, we partnered with 44 teachers in 15 schools and ultimately served 550 students. We see this and can't help but want more – more impact, more students, more collaboration, more solutions. Chicago alone is failing to prepare more than 90 percent of its students for success in college; it is imperative that we do more – thoughtfully, effectively and urgently.

I am proud to report that 99 percent of US Empowered Fellows have been admitted to four-year colleges, and 83 percent of US Empowered alumni are persisting in college, on track to graduate. And because of your support, we are on track not only to serve the largest class of Chicago students in our history, but also are poised to implement a plan for national expansion that will guide our efforts working with 11,000 students in 3-5 cities by 2017. This is only possible because of your generous support and we thank you for your steadfast commitment to US Empowered.

Warm regards,



Jeff Nelson

Co-Founder & CEO



The Landscape: A Crisis in Education

In the last 20 years, the United States has plummeted from first place to 12th place in college graduation rates, putting us at risk for this generation of college-age Americans the first to be less educated than their parents. College degrees – including advanced degrees and specialized training – are growing in importance and are critical pieces of many meaningful careers. And college-prep efforts are the subject of more stories in the media, research studies, new state laws, and federal priorities. In addition, the demand for college degrees is rising among young people: Since 1980, the share of tenth graders nationally who hope to earn a bachelor's degree or higher has doubled, from 40 to 80 percent in 2002.

In contrast, only 31 percent of Americans are earning four-year degrees after high school, a figure that drops to eight percent for students from low-income households. Further, high-achieving, high income students are 2.5 times as likely to graduate college as high-achieving students from low-income communities, and 60 percent of low-income and minority students drop out of college after successfully enrolling and starting to pursue their degrees. In Chicago, where 86 percent of CPS students come from low-income homes, only 18 percent of incoming ninth graders enroll in four-year colleges after high school, and only eight percent are expected to graduate by age 25.

In this fourth year of operation, US Empowered continues to recruit some of the most talented teachers in the Chicago with a program that helps keeps them working in tough schools they would have otherwise left. We identify and train highly effective teachers to lead students attending non-selective high schools in low-income communities to enroll in and graduate from college. Ninety-nine percent of our students have been admitted to college, and we envision a day when every student has a legitimate opportunity to graduate from college.

The US Empowered Program Model

US Empowered has two primary goals for students: acceptance to and graduation from college. Led by exceptional teacher, called Program Directors, Fellows make transformational academic gains throughout our three-year program – which spans junior and senior year of high school and freshman year of college – to enroll in match colleges and universities. Fellows have been admitted to Harvard University, Morehouse College, Northwestern University, the University of Michigan, the University of Illinois and many other schools. We attribute our successes to our proven, five-part model:

1. Teacher Recruitment & Selection: We partner with exceptional teachers who develop a culture of rigorous expectations and work tenaciously to ensure student success in college. In addition, our teachers form a unique collaborative of talented teachers who support each other and share best practices, and whose feedback enables US Empowered staff to continually improve our program model.
2. Student Recruitment & Admission: We leverage the special recommendations of teachers and their colleagues to target and admit students who are capable of achieving more than is indicated by their performance to date. In addition to potential, these students also demonstrate a commitment to US Empowered.
3. Structured, In-School Course: Fellows benefit from a daily, in-school US Empowered course to improve their ACT scores, increase their GPAs, develop important leadership skills and prepare for college.
4. Tailored, College-Level Support: Fellows receive critical support during their first year at college that helps them build systems of academic and personal support and share best practices within the US Empowered network – all aimed to ensure college persistence.
5. Experiential Conferences: Throughout our three-year program, Fellows participate in a variety of experiential conferences, including college visits, essay writing workshops and financial aid seminars, all designed to supplement the US Empowered in-school course.



Three-Year Program

Led by exceptional teachers, US Empowered Fellows build the leadership skills and support systems necessary for collegiate success. As a result, they make tremendous gains throughout our three-year program.

Year One

Year One of US Empowered takes place during junior year of high school. The US Empowered curriculum introduces the college experience and application process, offers customized ACT test preparation and supports college conferences at schools including Northwestern University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Year Two

Year Two of US Empowered takes place during senior year of high school. US Empowered guides Fellows to submit strong college applications to match and over-match colleges, helps them secure college funding and focuses on social identity development, resource identification, college course selection and college writing skills.

Year Three

Year Three of US Empowered takes place during freshman year of college. Fellows learn to establish their own systems of academic and personal support on their respective college campuses and share best practices for college success. Guided by our curriculum, US Empowered Program Directors continue to offer customized support to Fellows from a distance, once they are college freshmen on campuses across the country.

On average, Fellows have raised their GPA by .23 points over two years and improved their ACT scores by 3.1 points with support from US Empowered.



Expansion & Growth

In early 2007, US Empowered was serving seven students at one Chicago high school under the leadership of one teacher. In FY11, it empowered 550 students in 15 non-selective schools across the city. In addition, total revenue for US Empowered has grown from \$10,000 in 2007 to \$1.1 million in FY11, with a projection of \$1.5 million in FY12. During this time, the cost per student has dropped from \$5,092 in 2007 to \$1,351 in 2011, early proof that US Empowered is not only a high-impact program for students, but also a scalable solution to the college persistence challenges we face nationally.

The window marking the first five years of growth, or **Phase I**, has been a pivotal and exciting time for US Empowered. During this time, its leaders have honed the US Empowered program model through rigorous experimentation, testing and evaluation, and identified the critical program elements that enable the team to improve the academic outcomes of its Fellows.

Phase II for US Empowered represents the organization's second phase of growth, when it begins initial expansion into a targeted group of 3-4 new cities. During this time, US Empowered leaders will take what they have learned during the early years as a Chicago-based start-up and begin to put it into practice in other cities, expanding the US Empowered movement to empower students in select districts around the country. Similar to Phase I, Phase II will also span five years and will include the 2012-2013 through 2016-2017 school years.

The Phase II Strategic Plan is the result of a collaboration of a core group of US Empowered stakeholders, including senior staff and members of the board, as well as a team from the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning. Below is a brief snapshot of the Phase II Strategic Priorities for US Empowered:

1. Grow in Scale Locally & Nationally
2. Maximize Teacher Impact on Student Achievement
3. Build Internal Capacity
4. Grow & Diversify Funding Sources



US EMPOWERED PARTNER HIGH SCHOOLS 2011-2012 ACADEMIC YEAR

ACE Technical Charter High School

Chicago Academy High School

Chicago Bulls College Prep

Collins Academy High School

George Corliss High School

Farragut Career Academy

Christian Fenger High School

Gage Park High School

Gary Comer College Prep

John Marshall Metropolitan High
School

Muchin College Prep

Perspectives Leadership Academy

Perspectives High School of
Technology

Charles Allen Prosser Career
Academy

Rowe-Clark Math & Science
Academy

South Shore School of Technology

Steinmetz Academic Center

TEAM Englewood Community
Academy

University of Chicago Charter School
Woodlawn Campus

Uplift Community High School

Theory of Change

With a keen focus on student performance and academic outcomes, US Empowered teachers lead students to graduate from college at radically higher rates than their peers. Leveraging these student outcomes, US Empowered aims to implement this plan for its Phase II expansion and growth to:

TRANSFORM SECONDARY EDUCATION by changing the way high schools prepare students to graduate from college. This effort bridges the gap between high school and college and invests high school leaders in graduates' success.

TRANSFORM HIGHER EDUCATION by changing the way colleges support students through graduation. Some savvy colleges are working to better support students from low-income communities, and US Empowered offers tools, data and infrastructure to support this effort.

Third Annual Graduation Gala

On May 4, 2011 US Empowered celebrated the college graduating class of 2015 at the Third Annual Graduation Gala at the University Club of Chicago. US Empowered was pleased to present the John J. Dugan Award to Lyle Logan, Executive Vice President and Managing Director, Global Financial Institutions Group at Northern Trust. Lyle has played a key advisory role for our team, has offered critical counsel and support during this early phase of exponential growth, and has helped build the foundation that enables us to grow our impact with Chicago students.



All the President's Men

On August 14, 2010 NBA star Dwyane Wade led a five-on-five basketball game with four of President Obama's closest friends to benefit US Empowered. The game was inspired by the President's passion for basketball and was auctioned off at the US Empowered Gala.



Meet Lindsey Tucker

US Empowered Program Director Perspectives Leadership Academy

I am a proud Program Director of Urban Students Empowered. Because Chicago Public Schools graduate only seven percent of its students from college, clearly there is a need for groundbreaking collaboration, revolutionary tactics, and an all-out assault on factors that dramatically stifle our students' opportunities. I believe that US Empowered has provided the scholars at Perspectives Leadership Academy with the unique opportunity to earn acceptance into best match schools with improved grade point averages, the strongest indicator of success in college. I feel privileged to learn alongside the Fellows and provide a less arduous pathway for college.

Teachers affiliated with the US Empowered program quickly become addicted to the work, regardless of the required extra time commitment, extensive communication, and intense attention to organization. It is all about the transformation. We watch our Fellows, usually performing well below their potential, often with low GPAs and inconsistent attendance, start to perceive themselves as capable, powerful adults. Their posture changes as they stretch into their new and improved academic attitudes. Fifty percent of my US Empowered students grew at least three points on their ACT over the course of five months. One of my students seized the POSSE scholarship, an extremely competitive and prestigious award that will send him on a full ride to Pomona College in Claremont, California. US Empowered offers these kids access to excellent teachers, promotes group strength with positive, supportive cohorts, and even urges them to stop accepting mediocrity common within Chicago schools.

Perspectives Leadership Academy is starting to feel the impact of US Empowered. When I first started working with US Empowered two years ago, the program was a little-known nonprofit lost among the myriad programs offered at our school. Now we have 35 newly motivated, fired-up students who are proud of their accomplishments and are quick to brag about their affiliation with the program. Other teachers, impressed by the results of these turnaround students, are eager to volunteer for Saturday conferences, stop by to help them research colleges or scholarships, and write phenomenal letters of recommendations. The power of the organization is contagious! The feeling is mutual; Fellows understand that teachers are invaluable resources. They have learned that building relationships with adults, networking so to speak, is a crucial life skill that only offers rewards and opportunities. I feel so very fortunate to participate in a program that benefits everyone. When our scholars graduate from high school they will leave behind a stronger school culture.

If donors can support the continued expansion of US Empowered at PLA, we can surely make college possible for PLA students for years to come. Better yet, we can guarantee graduation for them from their first-choice college.



Program Dashboard

US Empowered is successful because our teachers demonstrate tremendous passion and relentless dedication to creating new opportunities for their students. Because of the school-based leadership of our Program Directors, the data-driven model implemented by US Empowered continually empowers students to achieve ambitious goals. The table below highlights the academic progress of our Fellows in FY2011.

Measures of Success	Org Results	Class of 2013	Class of 2014	Class of 2015
College Persistence: Percentage of US Empowered alumni that are still in college at the conclusion of Year Three.	83%	83%	N/A (Avail 2011)	N/A (Avail 2012)
College Acceptance: Fellows accepted to four-year colleges and universities (end of senior year).	99%	96%	100%	N/A (Avail 2011)
Financial Aid: Average financial aid secured outside of loans.	77%*+	91%*	71%*	N/A (Avail 2011)
College Applications: Fellows completing at least seven applications.	87%	93%	94%	82%^
GPA Increase: Average cumulative growth over two years.	0.23	0.29	0.20	N/A (Avail 2011)
ACT Growth: Average score increase from diagnostic to final test.	3.1	3.1	3.5	2.8
Session Outcomes: Average score out of 4.0.	3.5	3.6	3.5	N/A (Avail 2011)
Attendance: At US Empowered sessions and conferences.	93%	94%	92%	N/A (Avail 2011)

*This percentage reflects those students who have reported their complete financial aid packages to US Empowered.

+Information does not reflect average financial aid secured outside of loans for undocumented students.

^95% of Fellows applied to five or more colleges.



Financial Summary

	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011
REVENUE				
Foundations	\$92,321	\$133,539	\$231,908	\$294,930
Events	\$81,800	\$242,904	\$371,482	\$367,559
Individual Contributions	\$55,372	\$115,598	\$123,204	\$197,656
Corporations	\$10,000	\$65,785	\$95,180	\$231,050
Public Funding	\$0	\$10,000	\$0	0
In-Kind	\$0	\$0	\$4,104	\$2,425
Interest	\$398	\$2,447	\$2,700	\$1,261
Total Revenue	\$239,891	\$570,273	\$828,578	\$1,094,881
EXPENSES				
Program Services	\$127,133	\$391,879	\$573,238	\$822,146
Fundraising	\$14,833	\$47,384	\$46,128	\$65,547
General & Administrative	\$10,802	\$41,300	\$24,835	\$34,376
Total Expenses	\$152,768	\$480,563	\$644,201	\$922,069
Change in Net Assets	\$87,123	\$89,710	\$184,377	\$172,812
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$70,617	\$157,740	\$247,451	\$431,828
Net Assets at End of Year	\$157,740	\$247,450	\$431,828	\$604,640



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Equity Partners \$50,000 & Above

Namaste Laboratories
Kimbra & Mark Walter

Venture Partners \$20,000 & Above

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