

**PREPARING YOUTH FOR THE
WORKFORCE: EXPLORING
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT
IN THE CHICAGO REGION**

**A Report to the John C. and Catherine T.
MacArthur Foundation**

Samuel P. Whalen

Jan DeCoursey

Ada Skyles

Chapin Hall Center for Children
at the University of Chicago

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@2003 Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, IL 60637
773-753-5900 (phone) 773-753-5940 (fax)

PS-42

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

How, when, and to what degree employers should be engaged in preparing youth for the workforce are important, but often overlooked questions in the debate over youth workforce development. That employers should be involved has been a consistent principle of federal job training and employment policies since the New Deal. However, policies to solicit the voluntary involvement of large employers in youth workforce preparation have found limited success in establishing consistent employer participation in planning processes, or in attracting large numbers of employers into training partnerships.

Chapin Hall engaged in a two-year study of the policies and practices related to the preparation of today's youth for the world of work, with a particular emphasis on understanding opportunities to improve this preparation in the Chicago region.¹ The first year of research suggested that employer engagement remains a weak link in the region's efforts to prepare youth for work. Our review of policy challenges identified a need for research to understand how strong partnerships for youth workforce preparation integrate employers, and what challenges may impede the development of such partnerships. In this report, we examine questions of employer involvement in the Chicago region. Current local, state, and federal policy now encourages more employers to consider undertaking activities that require employers to directly engage, nurture, and challenge young people, such as mentoring, internships, and job shadowing. Therefore, we pay particular attention to the experiences of employers and professionals who choose to engage directly with youth in workforce preparation activities.

Twelve diverse and highly regarded workforce preparation programs with strong employer involvement were studied in spring 2003, through 34 in-depth interviews with employers, employee volunteers, and program managers. In three programs, we gathered the opinions of 20 youth through focus groups. The study pursued four broad purposes: 1) to examine how employers become involved in partnerships for youth; 2) to better understand the challenges and obstacles to employer involvement in the region; 3) to explore how employers in

¹ The study, *Youth Development Meets Workforce Development*, aims to understand the issues involved in deepening civic engagement in the preparation of youth for the workforce, particularly in the Chicago region. In the first year of research (2001-2002), we focused on the evolving landscape of youth workforce development policies and their implications for applying best practice principles to youth workforce development programs. In the second year of research (2002-2003), we investigated the issues involved in engaging one key stakeholder group, employers, more extensively in youth workforce preparation. The John C. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation funded the research, in collaboration with Chicago Metropolis 2020.

the Chicago region contribute to the workforce preparation of youth, particularly urban youth facing heightened risk for school failure and poor workforce preparation; and 4) to identify practices and strategies to address these challenges, and to direct employer assets to support high-quality youth workforce preparation.

KEY FINDINGS

After we gathered information about effective and innovative employer partnerships for youth workforce preparation in the Chicago region, 12 program partnerships were recruited for interviews.² Interviews and focus groups were conducted during the winter and spring of 2003. Existing research studies and other literature were reviewed to aid in assessing the validity of our interview analyses. The following findings emerged from our analyses with particular clarity:

Employers have unique capital and perspectives to contribute to workforce preparation.

Research indicates that factors in adolescence tend to exacerbate the isolation of low-income youth from information and resources that lift career aspirations and align educational and career goals. The present study corroborates that professional workplaces can effectively integrate youth into their productive routines, and finds that a strong minority of employers have experience with a wide spectrum of programs and activities directly relevant to workforce preparation. Partnerships that include employers are credited by participants with providing the full spectrum of skills and attributes associated with career readiness. Further, the findings suggest that links to employers can provide four developmental assets to youth that no other setting can fully duplicate:

- Entry and exposure to the mainstream economy and the diversity of contemporary workplaces.
- Socialization to the objectives, norms, and practices of the business world.
- Useful, personalized, and authentic information about career options, how to pursue a career, and what to expect along the way.
- Opportunities to apply formal learning to solve real-world problems in team setting

² Information about programs with strong employer partnerships were drawn from two primary sources: literature about employer involvement in the Chicago region, from sources such as the Chicago Workforce Investment Board and background interviews with people with prominent roles in youth workforce preparation and youth development in the Chicago area. Programs were identified and representatives were recruited for interviews in fall 2002.

Youth workforce preparation activities can benefit both employers and youth.

Adults often assume that youth lack the social maturity, skills, experience, or discipline necessary to function within a work environment or contribute meaningful value. As a result, employers either avoid the presence of youth in professional workplaces altogether, or they assign youth to positions of limited responsibility. Our findings indicate that with appropriate preparation and ongoing support, high school youth can use technology creatively and effectively, contribute real value as junior team members, and meet professional expectations of reliability, decorum, and honesty. Employers themselves noted two features of their contact with youth, sometimes with surprise.

- High school students in many cases could contribute valuable skills and information to workplaces, exceeding the expectations of their employer sponsors.
- Employees found considerable satisfaction in supporting youth. Once contact was initiated, the tendency among the employers in this study was to extend and deepen contact with youth rather than curtail it.

Employers also identified a number of benefits that they realized from participating in partnerships for youth workforce preparation. Potential benefits of involvement for employers include the following:

- *Employee attachment.* Opportunities to contribute to youth programs can build employee loyalty, by addressing employee aspirations to “give something back,” to share professional experiences, and to have a tangible impact in the lives of young people.
- *Workforce development.* Particularly in industries facing shortages of skilled workers, youth workforce preparation can expand the pool of potential employees.
- *Employee and work team development.* Mentoring, instructing, and supervising youth can build skills and professional maturity among employees.

Employers are involved in diverse activities and begin from a variety of starting points.

Although they represent a relatively small collection of programs, the employers in our sample were diverse in terms of capitalization, workforce size, industry location, specialization, and prior experience with youth workforce preparation. For firms such as Bank One, Illinois Tool Works, or Quaker Oats, the programs we studied were part of a larger enterprise of community engagement that addressed a range of long-term business concerns. For other firms, such as

Earth Tech or Revere Group, the programs we studied were among the first serious commitments of time and resources to youth development. The results suggest that a wide range of firms in the Chicago region can find viable and productive niches as partners in youth workforce development. The findings also indicate that the facilitation of employer involvement by program providers and intermediary organizations can increase the number of employers ready and willing to try youth workforce preparation, permitting some optimism about the prospects for extending the number of firms ready to contribute to youth workforce preparation.

Effective employer partnerships combine social responsibility with business objectives.

The data indicate that employers and professionals get involved in youth workforce activities for a wide variety of reasons, and with a striking range of impacts and outcomes in mind. Employer objectives include expansive, community-oriented objectives—often summarized as “social responsibility”—to more immediate “bottom line” objectives related to profitability and competitiveness. Objectives related to social responsibility are rarely purely altruistic but usually have a strategic dimension, an awareness that contributions to the community enhance the reputation of companies and brands. In the same way, bottom line considerations are rarely strictly financial but include building skills and attachment among current employees, as well as identifying future talent. Our analyses suggest two preliminary conclusions about firms that are most motivated by youth workforce investment:

- Highly engaged firms exhibit both high degrees of social responsibility and bottom line motivations, and emphasize compatibility and synergy between these incentives. Although employers anchor their engagement in different incentives, highly engaged employers draw upon a matrix of motives to sustain a commitment to youth.
- Second, highly engaged firms build a commitment to youth development upon a foundation of employee development and human resource management. Firms that see value in preparing youth for work also see value in cultivating the competency and attachment of current workers.

Advocates for youth may be found at many levels of companies and institutions.

CEOs and top managers can play three important functions in establishing a beachhead for youth within their organizations. First, top management can communicate support for educational and workforce activities personally and through other media, setting expectations for employee

cooperation and engagement. Second, senior staff can identify and assign lead staff with responsibility for specific implementation of program requirements, and they can assure those staff that their efforts will contribute to their standing in the firm. Reassurance about this level of support clearly was important to corporate officers. Finally, senior managers can remove obstacles and set policies within departments and firms that facilitate program collaboration.

Although top managers can create conditions for effective youth partnerships, it falls to mid-level managers and administrative staff to actually implement collaborations for and with youth. Two lessons emerged from the findings:

- Regardless of the goodwill of top managers, partnerships can founder if key personnel such as corporate foundation officers, human resource professionals, and leaders of autonomous business units are not integrated early into the partnership process. Unless it is clear that the interests of their departments or business units are factored into plans for youth activities, managers may guard their prerogatives and resist potential disruptions to departmental order.
- Potential advocates for youth may be found at many levels within firms, including mid-level and supervisory staff who can “work the system” on behalf of mentees or interns. Identifying, supporting, recognizing, and rewarding these employees is a key ingredient in translating a culture of community outreach into concrete action for youth.

Effective employer partnerships exhibit some common features.

Common attitudes and practices among program providers can facilitate employer involvement.

- Most program providers recognized a need to make collaboration “as easy as possible” for employer partners. Program providers were both appreciative of and realistic about the pressures facing employers, and they tended to place themselves in the employer’s shoes when considering how to access resources for youth in the workplace.
- Program providers understood that to stake a rightful claim to a place in an adult workplace, youth needed to perform “real work” and avoid being perceived as peripheral objects of charity. They were willing to walk away from potential employer partners if the work allocated to youth did not meet a clear and present need recognized by both employer and partner.

- Program providers validated the concerns of employers for accountability and periodic evaluation, and they took steps to document the impact of programs on youth participants from many angles.

Intermediaries can add crucial value to employer partnerships.

Evidence also emerged that more ambitious goals for youth could be realized through significant attention to intermediary roles and functions. In a few cases, these functions were addressed by inclusion of an organization specifically to provide specialized services, such as support services to youth participants. Skillful intermediary organizations make it easy for employers and program providers to spend more time on direct service to youth and less time on program administration. Roles and functions undertaken by intermediary organizations in this study included the following:

- Brokering connections between employers and other partners.
- Building accountability among partners regarding program performance.
- Contributing expertise in areas such as training, participant selection, and counseling.
- Convening partners and facilitating communication.
- Expediting effective program management and logistics.

Some significant challenges to employer engagement need to be acknowledged.

Our informants also were frank about conditions inherent in employer engagement that are likely to constrain widespread participation of employers including:

- *Encouraging employers to consider new roles and rules.* Employers need to be assured that it is both feasible to integrate youth into professional workplaces and to alter standard business practices in order to contribute to the education of youth.
- *Realities of the business cycle and competitive pressures.* Constrictions of the economy affect the willingness of employers to invest time and resources in youth programs.
- *Turnover in staff contacts.* Turnover of staff in businesses and youth program partners inevitably challenges the continuity of relationships between employers and their program partners.
- *Clashes of organizational cultures.* Employers become frustrated when partners such as schools and community organizations appear to de-emphasize business values such as efficiency, accountability, and “real world” problem solving.

- *Preparing employers to work with youth.* As do organizations and individual volunteers, employers need training and orientation to work effectively with youth, especially youth from high-risk communities.
- *Matching youth to employer partners.* It is challenging to match youth to employer mentors and internship positions in ways that meet youth needs and complement the strengths and interests of employee volunteers.
- *Logistics.* Coordinating busy schedules and arranging transportation were among the challenges that sometimes hampered full development of employer partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop Public Information to Encourage and Recognize Employer Engagement

The findings point particularly to a lack of sufficient and compelling information about contributing to youth workforce preparation, the kind of information that would catch the attention of business people. We strongly recommend developing useful information for employers that discusses why and how to become involved in youth workforce preparation, as well as how to enhance current involvement. This information should appeal to both general and business-specific outlets and build public support for more employer involvement in youth workforce preparation.

Establish an Intermediary Organization to Expand Employer Involvement

A number of advocates for youth in the Chicago region have supported the expansion of opportunities for youth engagement with employers. We recommend developing a comprehensive intermediary organization Chicago to act both as an information clearinghouse and coordinating agency linking employers with schools and youth employment programs, and to expand employer engagement in the City of Chicago, with four essential features:

- Strong employer leadership and management, to assure that the basic requirements for building employer engagement are observed.
- Strong links between businesses and employer organizations currently involved in youth workforce preparation and policy bodies working to address the workforce needs of disadvantaged and out-of-school youth—most notably, the Chicago Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, and the KidStart Summer Jobs Program in Chicago.

- A matrix of opportunities for employer engagement, giving employers an array of options for involvement.
- Close association with PEPNet and other national organizations to disseminate best practices in employer engagement and facilitate employer involvement by supporting training and orientation for and possibly by employers.

Commission Research on the Outcomes of Employer Engagement

The present study indicates that employers both want and need better information about how employer involvement impacts the workforce development of youth, as well as how and to what degree employer involvement can benefit participating companies. Such information should help companies and policymakers develop options for employer involvement on the basis of realistic expectations about outcomes, and lead to better indicators for program evaluation.

SECTION 1. BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

An important feature of the debate over youth workforce development has been the question of how, when, and to what degree employers should be involved in workforce education and career preparation. That employers should be involved has been a constant principle underpinning federal job training and employment policies since the New Deal (Zuckerman, 2000). However, since their inception, policies to solicit the voluntary involvement of large employers in job training and workforce development have had limited success in establishing consistent employer participation in planning processes, or in attracting large numbers of employers into training partnerships.

Beginning in the 1990s, market developments and policy responses converged to create new urgency around the allied issues of education and workforce development, and to alter the conversation about employer involvement. Concerns over a looming shortage of skilled workers to meet the demands of high-tech production helped reinvigorate federal attention to school achievement, with increased emphasis on close linkage between educational standards and the skill requirements of the “information economy.” Policy initiatives such as welfare reform, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA), and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) all asserted an expanded role for the private sector in envisioning and steering workforce policies, with the professed aim of establishing a “workforce development system” keyed to American conditions, but as comprehensive as those operating in Japan or Europe. Within this system, employers and job-seekers would be approached as “co-customers” and collaborators in all planning and training processes. Business would help catalyze a comprehensive approach to youth workforce preparation that aligns schools and job training organizations more closely with employer needs, raises academic standards and reduces premature school leaving, and replicates best practices at the curricular and management levels. In return, employers would reap young workers with the combination of skills and work habits that employers say they need, and that currently cost employers so much in belated training expenditures.

Although research directly examining the participation of employers in youth workforce preparation is scant, existing evidence yields a mixed picture of the extent and nature of employer involvement. The most systematic survey of employer involvement in school and career-related activities is the National Employer Survey (NES). Among the concerns of this

survey are worker education and on-the-job training, including employer participation in school-based programs (Zemsky, Shapiro, Iannozzi, Cappelli, & Bailey, 1998).³ In the most recent NES (1997), employers identified 18 different ways in which they supported K-12 education, from donation of materials (53%) to sponsorship of staff development (6%). One in four employers were involved in formal school-to-work partnerships, and about one-third reported sponsoring some work-based learning activity (e.g., internships, job shadowing). Further, highly involved employers exhibited higher retention rates and lower annual “fire” rates with young workers (ages 18 to 25) than did uninvolved employers. Acknowledging that causality in the data remained unclear, Zemsky and his colleagues observed:

It is a quintessentially American pattern. Most employers do not engage their local schools, do not offer work-based learning, do not use school measures—other than highest credential earned—when making hiring decisions. On the other hand, roughly one-quarter of the nation’s employers do partner with schools and do have more stable youth labor forces—and therefore have less need to recirculate young workers and greater opportunity to invest in entry-level workers’ skills and careers. While these firms reported spending more on each individual hire, in the aggregate their hiring costs were lower and presumably their productivity greater (p. 37).

Chapin Hall Center for Children has been engaged in a two-year study of the policies and practices related to the preparation of today’s youth for the world of work, with a particular emphasis on understanding opportunities to improve this preparation in the Chicago region.⁴ As part of the first phase of this study, we asked experts and stakeholders whether they saw any changes in the tone or extent of employer engagement (Whalen, DeCoursey, & Skyles, 2002).⁵

³ The NES is a joint venture of the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce (EQW). The most recent administration of the survey occurred in 1997. For details, see: www.landview.census.gov/econ/overview/mu2400.html.

⁴ The study, *Youth Development Meets Workforce Development*, aims to understand the issues involved in deepening civic engagement in the preparation of youth for the workforce, particularly in the Chicago region. In the first year of research (2001-2002), we focused on the evolving landscape of youth workforce development policies and their implications for applying best practice principles to youth workforce development programs. In the second, current year of research (2002-2003), we investigated the issues involved in engaging one key stakeholder group, employers, more extensively in youth workforce preparation. The John C. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation funded the research, in collaboration with Chicago Metropolitan 2020.

⁵ Chicago is particularly interesting from the vantage point of employer engagement for at least two reasons. First, the Chicago region encapsulates all the demographic shifts that America will face in the new century, including the aging of the general population, and the proportional rise of Latino and other minority representation among the nation’s youth (Sum, Fogg, & Mangum, 2000; Sum, Fogg, Taggart, & Palma, 2001). Second, Chicago has a long tradition of employer involvement in municipal planning and civic projects, a tradition most recently expressed in the business community’s prominent role in helping to spur significant school reform (Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1998; Hess & Cyrtnbaum, 2000).

Our interviews indicated that employers were open to the broad policy aim to provide youth with assets and services that conform to the best ideas and practices of youth development and workforce preparation. Policymakers and program managers also reported that the business community remained solidly behind efforts to strengthen the region's schools, and that they support such initiatives as KidStart and After School Matters in the City of Chicago, which link after-school activities to job and career development opportunities for teens. In addition, we found that many corporations and institutions were partnering with schools and community groups in ways that more deeply informed youth about career options and pathways.

However, the findings also highlighted challenges to employer engagement. Business leaders involved with the Chicago Youth Council felt that they lacked crucial information about youth development practices, leading to ongoing friction with youth-serving organizations. As a result, progress was slow toward a broader vision for youth workforce preparation. Employers continued to feel external to the vocational agendas of the schools and city agencies, while recessionary pressures were drawing more employers inward to immediate employment needs and away from more long-term policy concerns. In summary, the 2002 study suggested that employer engagement remains a weak link in the city's and region's efforts to prepare youth for work. The study also pointed to the need for research to understand in detail how strong partnerships for youth workforce preparation integrate employers, and what challenges need to be appreciated to further the development of such partnerships.

In this report, the product of the second phase of our workforce study, we hone in on questions of employer involvement in the Chicago region. We pay particular attention to the experiences of employers and professionals who choose to engage directly with youth in workforce preparation activities. Twelve diverse and highly regarded workforce preparation programs with strong employer involvement were studied in spring 2003, through interviews with employers, employee volunteers, and program managers. In three programs, we held focus groups with youth. The study pursued three broad purposes: a) to explore how employers in the Chicago region currently contribute to the workforce preparation of youth, particularly urban youth facing heightened risk for school failure and poor workforce preparation; b) to better understand the challenges and obstacles to employer involvement in the region, and c) to identify practices and strategies to address these challenges and to direct employer assets to support high-quality youth workforce preparation. The research draws upon in-depth interviews with

employers and their partners working with youth in some of Chicago’s most disadvantaged communities, with a broad representation of the kinds of activities that policy now asks more employers to consider undertaking—such as mentoring, internships, and job shadowing.

How to Read this Report

In structuring this report, we have tried to leave ample space for readers to hear the perspectives of employers, their program partners, and youth (employers and program partners are listed in Appendix A). For this reason, we have located more technical information about the methods employed in the study in Appendix B. Detailed descriptions of the 12 programs selected for study may be found in Appendix C. Some elements of the research literature also are introduced with research findings as a way to help locate these findings in a broader context. Because we decided to study highly regarded programs, it is likely that the programs studied may not be representative. We attempt to alert readers to this possibility, especially in sections of the report where differences from the norm appear most likely.

The report is divided into three sections. Section I (Chapters 1-3) includes a review of current approaches to addressing employer involvement and an introduction to the 12 employer partnerships. In Section II (Chapters 4-11), we summarize the findings from our interviews, which were structured around the following research questions:

- What motivates employers and individual employees to engage with youth workforce preparation, and what factors and incentives keep them involved with the programs?
- How did employers initially become involved in these programs?
- What challenges and issues arose for employers and their partners, and how did employers and partners respond?
- Were workforce issues such as race and gender focuses of the interaction between employers, their partners, and youth? How were these issues approached?
- What practices appear to facilitate the impact of employers on youth workforce preparation?
- What benefits did employers realize from their involvement? Did their experiences in programs match their expectations?
- What benefits do youth derive from the involvement of employers? What was the employer’s “value added?”

We conclude in Section III by considering the implications of the research for policy and program development, and we offer recommendations for increasing employer involvement in youth workforce preparation in the Chicago region. Throughout the report, we use the term *employer* to refer to companies, institutions, and business professionals who provide youth with jobs or job-like experiences. We use the term *program provider* to refer to organizations that provide programs or broker connections between employers, schools, youth, and other program partners.

CHAPTER 2. EVOLVING APPROACHES TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE PREPARATION

A vigorous literature that advocates for the involvement of employers in preparing youth for the workforce has emerged in the wake of recent policy initiatives such as the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. The best of this literature draws upon research in adolescent development to propose how employers can support youth, and it includes qualitative studies of the experiences of employers in programs supported by recent policy initiatives. In this chapter, we review two contemporary approaches to employer involvement—those driven by industry perspectives and those driven by youth development and advocacy concerns. As background, it will be helpful to acknowledge three factors that have shaped the development of these approaches, the involvement of American business in education reform, shifting attitudes toward youth employment, and a broad reappraisal of adolescent development.

First, the evolving interest of business in youth workforce issues is conditioned almost exclusively by the broader involvement of the private sector in educational reform. On the one hand, industry concern about future skill shortages has helped maintain pressure to educate all children to high standards of achievement, streamline school staffing and management, and hold schools and districts accountable through rigorous outcome measurement. On the other hand, the heightened employer focus on school achievement, coupled with reduced federal funding for employment training, has further eroded the interest of employers in programs for out-of-school youth—a significant group of youth in urban areas, including the Chicago region (Kazis & Kopp, 1997; Siegel, 2002; Sum, Fogg, & Mangum, 2000; Tienda, 2001). For most employer organizations, involvement in youth workforce development is now almost exclusively an educational proposition.

Second, American attitudes toward youth participation in the labor force appear to be shifting. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, opinion within educational circles on the value of youth part-time employment turned decidedly negative. Bellweather research by Greenberger and Steinberg concluded that youth employment during high school tended to weaken the commitment of teenagers to academic achievement, and to deny youth more enriching extracurricular experiences (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). Intense work schedules (over 20 hours per week) were associated with higher dropout rates, and were disproportionately

characteristic of low-SES teenagers. The research appeared to confirm and extend a longstanding trend of discouraging child and youth participation in the workforce in favor of sustained educational pathways.

Nevertheless, part-time youth employment reached record high levels by the late 1990s and shows no sign of declining, as industry dependence on part-time/low-benefit labor continues to hold firm (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000). This workforce participation, coupled with concerns that American education prepares youth poorly for labor force success, has prompted a significant reexamination of possible developmental benefits of youth jobs and job-like experiences. Recent studies by Bidwell, Schneider, and Borman (1998) and Mortimer and her associates (2002) suggest that youth jobs in the service sector develop employability skills, increase maturity and confidence in the ability to interact with adults, and motivate youth to aspire to more rewarding jobs through education (Bidwell, Schneider, & Borman, 1998; Mortimer, 2003). Youth jobs are less available to inner city and minority youth, due both to spatial isolation and discrimination, denying youth these developmental benefits (Rector & Youseff, 2000; Wilson, 1996). Despite the fact that research continues to find negative educational impacts from intense youth work, jobs that provide enriched training in areas like computer technology appear to provide many of the developmental benefits (e.g., identity development, “hard” and “soft” skills) associated with the best extracurricular activities (Eccles, et al., 1993; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002; Yohalem & Pittman, 2003). Workplaces, it now appears, may contribute unique capital to the overall developmental advancement of young people.

Finally, this reappraisal of youth work has emerged as part of a broader and fundamental reappraisal of adolescence as a developmental transition, or series of transitions, that, as Mortimer and Larson put it, “put a premium on youth’s initiative, creativity, and ability to navigate a multidimensional labyrinth of choices and demands” (p. 14) (Mortimer & Larson, 2002).

What was once seen as a discrete shift from dependence to independence is now viewed as a longer and more gradual transition into more complex social and economic relationships, with adolescents as active agents of their own development at each step along the way. Three features of this reappraisal are particularly germane. First, there is now greater emphasis on the economic and social power of adolescence, especially in relation to technological acceleration.

If the “youth market” was viewed as a potent influence on social trends in the late twentieth century, it has now emerged as a driver of technological and productive trends in the twenty-first century. This cultural power, in turn, reinforces a stronger tendency in research to emphasize the desire of teenagers to actively shape their own experience, and the stake of society in supporting the capacity of youth to take initiative (Larson, 2000).

Another research lens that increasingly influences social views of adolescence is that of information processing. Especially in the realm of technology, youth are seen as particularly apt and creative, and less bound by social convention in how they apply new technologies to work, leisure, and social interaction. How youth interact with technology in their teens now helps determine how adults will learn and work a few years later, and what software and hardware producers will decide to sell (Hellenga, 2002). In turn, the acceleration of technology hastens the pace of industrial and professional development, so that the current labor and skill market no longer serves as a reliable guide to educational and career choices. This picture of adolescent precocity and intergenerational discontinuity in key areas of information, such as career pathways, leads to greater emphasis on cultivating information management and navigational “mapping” skills at early ages. It is particularly important for youth to learn how to discern their personal interests and strengths as compasses with which to navigate career choices and educational options (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Yohalem & Pittman, 2001).

Finally, adolescence now is seen less as a break with parents and authority, and much more in terms of broadening social networks and renegotiating long-term relationships. Indeed, if success in adulthood involves mastering varied modes of information management, then a key feature of such mastery involves learning to solicit help from a wide range of people with expert knowledge and relevant experience. Current research emphasizes differences among adolescents both in terms of their access to caring and informed adults, and in terms of how skillfully teenagers can accrue information and guidance from adult networks in ways that clarify and propel personal, career, and educational choices (Anderson, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000).

Youth Development

The primary expression of this reappraisal of adolescence in the arenas of educational and program practice is the synthesis of recommended practices focused on *youth development*. One of the root proposals of youth development is that adolescents often suffer from discontinuity

between their needs for respect, mastery, and intergenerational connection, and the reigning conditions in places like school that tend toward control, social isolation, and the fragmentation of knowledge (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989; Eccles, et al., 1993). In response, advocates for youth development have promoted policies and practices that see developmental needs as interconnected, and aim toward aligning activities and settings that together help prepare youth to move successfully into adulthood (Yohalem & Pittman, 2001). They look beyond school at how social institutions, including workplaces, might provide resources and experiences that prepare youth more effectively. The National Research Council recently highlighted the following attributes of settings that cultivate positive youth development:

- address basic needs for physical and psychological safety
- provide appropriate structure, including clear, fair, consistent, and predictable rules and expectations
- provide access to warm and supportive relationships
- create opportunities for meaningful inclusion and group participation
- support positive social norms, including respect for rules of behavior, civility, and “ways of doing things”
- foster “efficacy and mattering,” particularly opportunities for making a difference in others’ lives and community well-being
- provide chances for skill building, including access to a wide range of skill domains and instruction toward competency
- integrate family, school, and community efforts, particularly a disposition among community adults to work toward common aims for adolescent development, in partnership with teenagers themselves (see National Research Council, 2002, pp. 90-91).

Consensus around youth development practices has influenced the direction of recent legislation, for example, in the program strategies central to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and the youth provisions of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) (for review, see Whalen, DeCoursey, & Skyles, 2002).

Career Pathway

Another concept with important implications for employer engagement is the concept of *career pathway*. Although this idea has deep roots in traditions of apprenticeship, its recent

interpretation has been influenced by research into adolescence and youth development practices. Like youth development, the career pathway orientation begins by recognizing a fundamental discontinuity between the realities of contemporary adolescence and the structure of career and vocational guidance and education (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2002; Jenkins, 2001; Levy, 2001; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Scott & Bernhardt, 2000). Unlike other industrialized nations, the United States has committed its educational system primarily to one trajectory into the adult labor market—from secondary education to the four-year college education. Critics of this narrow focus point out that other pathways toward necessary postsecondary credentials—through community colleges, union- or company-sponsored credentialing, or technical training programs—are difficult for students to learn about, especially given the paucity of high school counseling services in most communities. As a result, options for youth facing a wide variety of obstacles to learning are poorly developed and supported, and reentry to educational pathways for out-of-school youth is difficult to achieve (Carnevale, 1999; Rosenbaum, 2002).

Advocates for diversifying career pathway options emphasize the following steps (Jenkins, 2001; Kazis & Kopp, 1997; Pennington, 2001; Rosenbaum, 2001). First, they propose that high schools should create options for linking youth with career information and experiences that marry high academic expectations with multiple links to employers and the working world. Options such as career academies, school-to-work programs, internship programs, and service learning curricula can inform youth about career and educational options, and motivate a wider range of students to see the relevance of high school studies to high wage work. Second, they stress the need for alliances between schools, community organizations, and employers that support varied options for youth and young adults to begin earning wages while acquiring credentials and technical skills that put them on pathways that allow career advancement. Third, they urge policymakers to provide incentives for employers, schools, and community programs to collaborate effectively, and in particular, to strengthen options in community colleges and training programs for youth to gain meaningful credentials and connect with promising employment opportunities. These themes have begun to find an audience both within industry organizations and among youth advocates, providing elements of a common vocabulary for youth workforce preparation (Pines, 2000; Pittman, 2001).

Models of Employer Engagement

Some distinctive approaches to youth workforce preparation have emerged from the efforts of industry associations and employer organizations to address future workforce demand, with strong emphasis on addressing the concerns of employers. In addition, advocates for youth have outlined a youth development agenda for employer involvement in youth workforce preparation. This section will review the literature and activities that grow out of each of these perspectives.

Employer-Based Perspectives

Although they differ in terms of their specific business constituencies and market concerns, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Employer Leadership Council (NELC), the National Association of Manufacturers, SF Works, and the National Skill Standards Board, along with numerous industry and trade associations (e.g., the Hospitality Business Alliance), all offer an employer's perspective of workforce development. They share a core perspective that is reflected in their publications, conferences, and policy briefs (Jobs for the Future, 2002; Kochan & Osterman, 1994; National Employer Leadership Council).

NELC, for example, was formed in 1994 by 17 major corporations in association with the National Alliance of Business (Wills, 1998). Its "employer participation model" and range of publications illustrate some key features of an employer-based approach.⁶ First, the NELC emphasizes the advantages of collective action among firms within specific industries to address workforce development issues at a scale that no single firm can afford. This is best accomplished through the formation of industry-level intermediary organizations with sufficient resources to lobby policymakers and coordinate local and state industry organizations around a common school-to-work agenda.

Second, NELC strongly supports the development of industry-specific skill standards to clarify the precise requirements for certification of students. It affiliates with the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) to promote the development of skill and performance standards to be

⁶ See: <www.nelc.org/aboutnelc/epm/epm.html>.

adopted by school-to-work programs at the high school and community college levels.⁷ NSSB, in turn, aims eventually to certify various high school credentialing programs in specific industries using the common set of skill standards.

Third, NELC supports the development of “career ladders” within companies and within industries that make clear for both employers and employees the educational steps required to advance professionally and financially within an industry. High school and community college certifications would be coordinated with company-based training efforts to assure that entry-level positions include training steps that set employees clearly on a ladder toward promotion.

Finally, NELC encourages employers to measure the success of their school-to-work investments against strong indicators of youth progress, and to support affiliate schools in adopting high outcome standards for their students. In turn, involvement in school-to-work programs brings corporate influence to bear on academic standards and expectations for students (National Employer Leadership Council, 2002b).

Youth Development Perspectives

Youth development approaches begin by clarifying the workforce development needs of youth (as opposed to industries) and articulating program practices that support alternative career pathways, especially for out-of-school youth or youth at risk of leaving school. Steinberg and her colleagues, for example, highlight four institutional configurations that “constitute the building blocks for a system of educational opportunity that includes vulnerable youth” (Steinberg, Almeida, Allen, & Goldberger, 2003). They include: reinvented high schools, with particular emphasis on small size and academic rigor; secondary/postsecondary blends, including dual enrollment and accelerated learning options; extended learning opportunities, particularly the strategic enrichment of after-school time; and education/employment blends, including internships and credentialing opportunities. In contrast to industry/demand approaches, there is greater emphasis here on identifying multiple pathways and entry points for youth at various

⁷ From the NSSB web page: “The NSSB is an unprecedented coalition of leaders from business, labor, employee, education, and community and civil rights organizations created in 1994 to build a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment and certification systems to enhance the ability of the United States workforce to compete effectively in a global economy. These skills are being identified by industry in full partnership with labor, civil rights and community-based organizations. The standards will be based on high performance work and will be portable across industry sectors.” See: <http://www.nssb.org/>.

points of involvement with school systems, and on linking broad developmental outcomes with exposure to the work world and work-related skills.

The most comprehensive and ambitious synthesis of this agenda is represented in the activities of the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC). NYEC supports an annual recognition process of exemplary youth workforce programs (PEPNet, or Promising and Effective Practices Network) that aims to disseminate knowledge of best practices in youth workforce preparation to a national audience through a rigorous peer-review process.⁸ A key facet of NYEC's mission is to shift the aims of traditional job training from narrow employment readiness to a more comprehensive preparation of youth for career path jobs. Thus PEPNet highlights five areas of quality: a) purpose and activities, including the capacity of the program to reach high-risk or vulnerable youth; b) organization and management; c) general youth development practices;⁹ d) workforce development practices, including a requirement of significant employer engagement; and e) evidence of success, including data collection and youth outcome measures. NYEC publishes annual profiles of the award-winning programs, and is creating an ongoing affiliation process for programs that repeatedly meet criteria for high performance. NYEC also uses the Internet to disseminate best practices recommendations and supporting documents.

Consistent with its support of multiple pathways, NYEC and PEPNet seek to foster a wide range of options for employers to contribute to youth workforce preparation. The range of recommended practices for employers includes the following specific criteria for assessing the quality of employer engagement:

- Structure service learning and community service experiences to teach transferable skills.
- Team with trade unions to offer apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship opportunities.
- Create opportunities for youth to work with tradesmen and professionals.
- Integrate academic and vocational curricula.
- Maintain program contact with employer after hire; provide coaching during learning stages of new job.

⁸ For more information on PEPNet, see: <<http://www.nyec.org/>>.

⁹ Includes the following criteria: quality of youth/adult relationships, youth responsibility and leadership, individual focus and age/stage appropriateness of activities, family and peer support, supportive services and opportunities, and building sense of self and group. PEPNet criteria notebook, National Youth Employment Coalition, Washington, DC. www.nyec.org.

- Provide hands-on activities/projects in actual work setting.
- Invite businesses to share their technical business expertise (e.g., management, training).
- Engage employers in active roles such as steering committees and advisory councils.
- Gather feedback and data regularly from employers for continuous improvement.
- Invite employers to provide instructional staff, training facilities, and other resources.
- Actively engage employers in interaction with/as mentors for their young participant employees.
- Develop a range of employer linkages to provide jobs and internships.
- Employer runs the program.¹⁰

Bridging Employer-Based and Youth Development Approaches

The approaches to youth workforce preparation discussed above contrast in some key respects. In general, employer- or industry-based approaches focus on in-school youth and emphasize securing some element of the school curriculum to devote to industry preparation. The approaches based on youth development principles are more likely to stress the need for alternative career pathways for vulnerable and out-of-school youth and to challenge employers to share that concern. Employer-based approaches interpret skill development through industry terminology, and focus less on the role of employers in cultivating broader youth development or workforce development. Skill standards approaches in particular focus on youth at the point they are ready to commit to a pathway. By contrast, youth development approaches place greater emphasis on maintaining options for youth and on connecting work experiences with multiple educational opportunities (Kazis & Kopp, 1997; Kazis & Pennington, 1999).

Yet, models favored by industry and models favored by youth advocates share some common features. PEPNet, for example, acknowledges the emergence of skill standards in various industries.¹¹ PEPNet also recommends that program providers align their curricula both

¹⁰ See: <http://www.nyec.org/pepnet/workforcedev.htm>.

¹¹ From PEPNet Best Practices Index: “When developing workforce development activities, effective initiatives ensure that the competencies developed are relevant to labor market and postsecondary requirements, and that there is a mechanism in place to document competency attainment.” (: <http://www.nyec.org/pepnet/workforcedev.htm>, under “Criteria,” p. 29).

with the federal SCANS competencies and the skill standards of local target industries.¹² NELC and PEPNet also share a common emphasis on outcome evaluation, program quality, and the importance of experiential learning to genuine skill mastery. WINS, a collaborative effort of the National Association of Manufacturers, the Center for Workforce Success, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and Jobs for the Future, is an ambitious initiative designed to bridge employer-oriented and youth-oriented emphases, and to introduce models of employer engagement that include both schools and community organizations as equal partners (Jobs for the Future, 2002)

Implications for this Study

The current literature devoted to employer engagement in youth workforce preparation is long on concepts and proposals, but markedly short on hard data by which to judge the extent of actual engagement, variations in employer engagement by key variables such as company size or industry, or the sources of challenges to engagement. Although meager, available statistics suggest that a broad range of employers are open to involvement in workforce education and youth development, especially if such involvement does not negatively impact their operations or adult workforce (Burghardt, 2001; Hudis, 2001; Zemsky, Shapiro, Iannozzi, Cappelli, & Bailey, 1998). Nonetheless, a majority of American employers continue to avoid involvement in youth workforce preparation. Studies based upon interview samples suggest that some fundamental structural constraints reinforce this reluctance and are likely to remain countervailing forces into the foreseeable future. These constraints include periodic contractions in the economy, negative attitudes toward adolescents in the workplace, and misalignment between the interests of educators and businesses (see Chapter 6 for further discussion) (Burghardt, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Jobs for the Future, 2003; Murnane & Levy, 1996).

Some evidence indicates that the proportion of employers involved in workforce development is malleable and can expand with greater exposure to best practices at the partnership and program levels (Bremer & Madzar, 1995; Zemsky, 1994). Attention to these practices narrows differences between the perceived interests of employers, community partners, and youth, and increases the potential for mutually beneficial program outcomes. The literature

¹² SCANS (an acronym for Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) was initiated in 1990 by Secretary of Labor Lynn Martin to "encourage a high-performance economy characterized by high-skill, high-wage employment" (from USDOL website: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/>). An influential product of the commission's work was a framework of essential skills and competencies recommended as a foundation for youth workforce development curricula. See: *What Work Requires of Schools*, Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). Washington, DC, July 1991.

points to a need for more detailed understanding of the synergies and challenges that arise when employers and their partners apply best practices principles to their collaborations (Festen & Hass, 2002; Rosenbaum, 2002).

In the following chapters, we explore these synergies and challenges in greater depth, emphasizing what employers and their partners learn about the art and science of engagement once an employer makes a commitment to a youth workforce preparation program. First, however, we briefly introduce the 12 employer partnerships that informed our inquiry.

CHAPTER 3. INTRODUCING THE EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS IN THIS STUDY

The challenge in all research design is to determine research methods and define a research sample that best addresses the primary research questions. In the present case, our primary purpose is to learn as much as possible about the opportunities, challenges, and unresolved issues that arise when employers and employees become serious partners in preparing youth for the future workforce. For this reason, we identified programs in the Chicago region that are known for engaging private- and public-sector employers as partners in youth workforce preparation. We interviewed an employer and at least one partner organization in each program we studied, and we sought focus groups of youths representing major categories of workforce preparation activity. And we tried to bring forward the perspectives of employers, their partners, and the youth they serve around key issues in youth workforce preparation.

Appendix B provides a more detailed description of the methods used in this research, and Appendix C gives more extensive information about each of the 12 employer partnerships included in this study. In this chapter, we briefly introduce these 12 partnerships, organized within three major categories of youth workforce preparation activities: exposure, preparation, and transitions to postsecondary education.

Programs Emphasizing Exposure

Exposure activities introduce youth to varieties of careers and workplaces, with the goal of deepening career awareness. The four programs selected to represent the participation of employers in exposure activities include the following:

Career Links is a program of Women Employed (WE), a not-for-profit organization committed to the improvement of the economic status of women. Career Links provides mentorship and career education activities for teenage girls, including small group contact with working women in a wide range of professions. *Quaker Oats Company* is an employer partner that provides financial support and volunteer mentors to the Career Links program at Wells High School in Chicago.

Tech 37, a part of the City of Chicago's After School Matters initiative, provides Chicago public high school students with exposure to career paths in computers, technology, and engineering. Teams of 20 students at each participating high school meet three days each week in three-hour sessions during the school year. *Earth Tech Inc.* is the employer partner featured in

this study. Earth Tech, a subsidiary of Tyco International Ltd., is a large, international firm specializing in water, environmental, transportation, and construction projects.

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, founded in 1996, is a private, college preparatory high school serving the Latino Little Village and Pilsen neighborhoods of Chicago. The student body is almost entirely Latino. Cristo Rey's Corporate Internship Program (CIP) assigns teams of four students to cover one full-time internship position at a company or organization in the Chicago region, both to defray tuition costs and to gain career exposure. *ABN AMRO/LaSalle Bank*, the CIP partner in this study, has participated in CIP since 1998.

Best Practices High School, an innovative Chicago Public School, requires students to participate weekly in an internship program. One half-day each week, unpaid BPHS student interns work in local businesses and not-for-profit organizations around Chicago. *The Garfield Park Conservatory*, a unit of the Chicago Park District, has sponsored BPHS interns since 2000, as part of its youth docent program.

Programs Emphasizing Preparation

Preparation activities help youth to acquire knowledge, skills, and credentials to make the transition successfully from high school to a specific career pathway. The four programs selected to represent the participation of employers in preparation activities include the following:

TeraU, the creation of TEC Services Inc., is a school-based education-to-careers program integrating rigorous classroom instruction with work-based learning opportunities in the information technology arena. *Revere Group Inc.*, the employer partner with TeraU in this study, is a technology consulting firm specializing in services to middle-market companies.

The *EXCITE Pharmacy Technicians Program* is the product of a collaboration between the Illinois Retail Merchants Association (IRMA), Walgreens Inc., Target Group Inc., and the Chicago Public Schools. With support from IRMA, *Walgreens* provides an experienced pharmacist as an in-school employer, provides training internships for EXCITE students, and guarantees pharmacy technician positions to students who successfully complete the program. *Target Group* manages relations with high schools, and provides counseling and referral support services for students as needs arise.

Added Chance, a member of the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago, works closely with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to help youth who are aging out of foster care services to obtain job training and placements. *Food and Paper Supply Company*, a

medium-sized food service distribution company located in Chicago, has placed Added Chance youth in entry-level positions for over 10 years.

The *SAME (Science and Math Excellence) Program* of *Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center* partners closely with public elementary and high schools in Chicago to enrich science and math instruction, and it sponsors a high school internship program at the Medical Center in which low-income and minority youth receive academic enrichment and serve as volunteer interns. Students intern in many departments, including administrative and medical practice offices.

Programs Aiding the Transition to Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary transition activities equip youth with knowledge and skills necessary to succeed as students in two-year and four-year college and university programs. The four programs representing the participation of employers in preparation activities include the following:

The Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) Institute of the Minority Engineering Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) introduces urban Hispanic students to advanced topics in science, engineering, and mathematics in a university setting. The study focuses on the volunteer activities of a Chicago consultant who works for a large engineering consulting firm.

The College Readiness Program of the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) annually provides more than 500 low-income Illinois high school students with information and preparation for the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. The study highlights their partnership with Illinois Tool Works, Inc., a large, publicly held machine metal and industrial tool manufacturer, in support of College Readiness students associated with the Chicago Youth Centers.¹³

Robert Morris College and Blackwell Consulting Services in 2001 initiated a discussion about collaborating to provide students with challenging work-based learning experiences. Robert Morris College specializes in meeting the needs of first-generation and minority urban students from the Chicago region. Blackwell Consulting Services is the largest minority-owned management consulting and information technology consultancy in the Midwest.

¹³ See: <http://www.chicagoyouthcenters.org/>.

Bank One Academy is a mentorship program, sponsored by Bank One Corporation, serving seniors in Chicago public high schools. *Bank One Saturday Scholars* is a weekend mentorship program for students beginning in ninth grade. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago (BBBS) partners with Bank One Academy to help improve the recruitment and support of adult mentors and youth participants.

SECTION II. FINDINGS

There is currently renewed interest among policymakers in the potential of the private sector to contribute to youth workforce development. This interest derives in part from a fresh policy perspective that identifies employers, along with youth and adult job seekers, as the primary “customers” of a workforce development system. It also derives from a nascent body of research indicating that contemporary adolescents face critical challenges in effectively making the transition to postsecondary education and employment, challenges for which employers may possess unique information, resources, and grounded experience.

At the same time, workforce efforts around the country continue to involve a struggle to define roles for employers that compel their interest and solicit their consistent participation in policy and program development (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 2002). The chapters in this section consider the experiences, roles, and contributions of employers and businesses in 12 programs with exceptional reputations for helping youth prepare for success in the work world. In particular, we want to find out what experiences and incentives get and keep employers and employees engaged as partners and to explore their routes to involvement; to explore what challenges they face once they get involved; to learn the extent to which issues of race and gender influence employer engagement; to explore what practices sustain employer engagement; and to identify benefits to employers and youth of such engagements. We begin by considering the motivations that bring employers into partnerships for youth workforce preparation.

CHAPTER 4. MOTIVES FOR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

We asked our interviewees to consider why employers become involved with youth workforce preparation. Employers and their partners identified a number of reasons employers work with youth, from the corporate or organizational perspective and from the perspective of individual employees who choose to become involved in youth workforce development efforts. In this chapter, we talk about each of these perspectives.

Corporate and Organizational Motivations

A number of studies have investigated why some employers engage school and community partners in preparing youth for the workforce, and others do not (Bailey, 1995; Barton, 2000; Besharov, 2000; Carnevale & Desrochers, 2002; Festen & Hass, 2002; Holzer, 1996; Jobs for the Future, 2002; Kazis & Kopp, 1997; Murnane & Levy, 1996; National Association of Manufacturers, 2000; Workforce Innovation Networks, 2001; Zemsky, 1994). Because the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 mobilized research and evaluation toward understanding partnerships with schools, the majority of studies in this area focus on school partnerships.¹⁴ When we asked our informants about the reasons that their companies get involved, their responses were very consistent with this research. Three motives were frequently mentioned and strongly emphasized: corporate social responsibility, addressing needs for skilled labor, and cultivating diversity in the workforce.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Most employers in this study expressed the view that, as part of the fabric of society, corporations should assume responsibility for contributing to the well-being of its members. For some firms in our sample, this perspective was viewed as a contemporary expression of longstanding philanthropic commitments to the greater Chicago region. A sense of corporate social responsibility was not viewed as inconsistent with strategic self-interest by our informants. But it was seen as distinct from specific market objectives and as a distinguishing trait of companies that aspire to civic leadership. One company included in this study describes its approach to corporate social responsibility as follows:

¹⁴ The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (STWOA) provided federal funds for school, community, and business partnerships to experiment with new programs to connect school curricula to workplace education. States were mandated to include businesses in prominent roles at all levels of the STWOA, from state councils to the advising councils attached to the school-to-work programs of individual schools. For details on STWOA, see Kazis, R. and H. Pennington (1999). *What's next for school to career?* Cambridge, MA: Jobs for the Future.

We believe it is our responsibility to support, improve and give back to the communities where we manufacture and market our products. By helping our communities, we strengthen local economies, develop a diverse work force and supplier base, and contribute a better quality of life for current and future generations. The company supports the community in a variety of ways: product donations and cash contributions, a Supplier Diversity and Small Business Opportunity program, and employee volunteerism.¹⁵

Broadening the Pool of Skilled Labor

Some companies also partner with youth workforce development initiatives to address their need for skilled workers. Walgreens, for example, although in a position to profit from the aging of the American population, is hampered by a shortage of qualified entry-level pharmacy technicians. One key to the current success of EXCITE, the education-to-careers program that partners with Walgreens, is the clear stake of the employer partner in addressing a critical human resource need.

Right now...an individual age 55 takes about twenty-six prescriptions a year ... we foresee a great need for not only pharmacists but for technicians and individuals that can work the pharmacy to assist the pharmacist.

In order to grapple with its own shortage of skilled workers, the information technologies consulting company TEC Services developed TeraU (Jenkins, 2001). TEC Services first undertook an analysis of the core skill-set characteristic of their best entry-level technical service staff. They found that about 80 percent of the skills exercised by staff at this level were not technical or financial, but rather interpersonal and organizational.

We found that it really didn't require someone with years of business experience. It required someone that had been through an education process that also gave them the opportunity to practically apply what they learned. And in looking at that we thought we could actually take this not just to an adult population, but also to a youth population, especially what we termed a capture population in the high schools.

TEC Services now is marketing its school-to-work methodology (TeraU) not only in the Chicago region but nationally and internationally as well.

Cultivating Diversity

Several employers and their program providers mentioned increasing employee diversity as an important reason to engage with youth programs with strong representations of minority and female youth. The large employers in particular professed a dual stake in diversity, both as an intrinsic benefit to the company and in cultivating a positive community profile. Bank One

¹⁵ For Quaker Oat's Internet site, see: http://www.quakeroats.com/qfb_Community/SocialResponsibility.cfm.

identifies its Academy and Saturday Scholars programs explicitly as “corporate diversity” programs, with close ties to the mission of its human resources department. Target high schools are chosen with an eye for diversifying the pool of students participating in the youth programs. Walgreens engages with the EXCITE program in part to attract and train minority pharmacy technicians who live in communities the company is seeking to penetrate. Similarly, the SAME program provides Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke’s Medical Center with one mechanism to feed qualified health service professionals living in the surrounding minority community into its medical and management positions. A program provider at a Chicago high school agreed that the importance seen in diversifying corporate workforces was an advantage for internship programs.

Almost every company except for maybe the small ones have diversity officers. They are very, very attuned to the value of diversity to their organization and that’s part of the reason that they’re participating with us.

In addition, two other incentives for corporate involvement were seen as potentially important but less easy to document or verify: advancing employee development and building goodwill in communities.

Staff and Employee Development

Roles such as mentor and intern supervisor were also seen as opportunities for current staff development and management training. Bank One integrates its employee mentorship programs into its staff development curriculum, and it maintains both participation and performance requirements for mentors to receive staff development credit for their contributed time. As one program provider saw it, mentorship is:

... [A] good thing for people in management and it’s a good experience if you’re cultivating someone for leadership or management. So being a mentor and doing this program helps with staff development as well as with future employees or customers.

Community Goodwill and Market Development

Employers also saw the potential to cultivate a positive orientation toward the company and its products and to develop market presence within low-income communities. Walgreens, for example, seeks partnerships with schools and youth programs in part to improve the company’s image in low-income and minority communities, a primary target for retail expansion.

It does something for you as an organization to be able to say, not only are you making ... profits, but you're trying to give this back to the same people in the same areas that you're servicing.

Finally, incentives to engage a youth workforce program also included an interest in developing professional relationships. As a longstanding contractor with the City of Chicago, for example, Earth Tech Inc. was motivated to give serious consideration to overtures from the City's Tech 37 initiative and to combine direct involvement with a cash donation. Walgreens' engagement with Wells High School EXCITE pharmacy technicians program was motivated partially by the considerable success of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association (IRMA) as an advocate for the company in state and local policy circles.

Motives for Employee Engagement

The literature of employer involvement in youth workforce preparation has emphasized incentives at the corporate and institutional levels. Our interviews also revealed the interest of individual employees in addressing youth and community issues. Motivations for volunteering individually and as members of company teams included the following:

A Desire to Give Back

Corporate volunteers approached involvement with youth workforce preparation as a way to acknowledge their own debt to past mentors or benefactors. Some also sought to provide the kind of information and attention to youth that they lacked when they were adolescents, or to help youth avoid unnecessary and expensive pitfalls. "What I heard over and over is, 'I want to be involved and I want to make a difference with these young people.'"

Many employee volunteers we interviewed expressed a special sense of commitment to the futures of youth.

When we have job shadow days at the office where we bring in the kids...twice a year through Junior Achievement to talk about careers and jobs and things like that, you see our employees wanting to be and do their best because they want to show them the right role modeling and behavior. So I think working with young people you feel that's our future, that's our opportunity.

A high school teacher with a business background, considering her own motivations for involvement, observed:

As a businessperson myself, I think that anyone who gets involved with students really is looking for more. They're looking to make an impact on their life; to relay what they know; they're looking to present options and give students ideas.

Commitment to a Particular Community

Some professionals expressed acute concern for the future of a particular geographic or ethnic community in the Chicago area. The CEO of a prominent technology consulting firm said: “I’m 65 years old and I’m African American and I think the key to my people going forward is the workplace A job and getting jobs that allow you to develop yourself.”

For others, the motive to contribute was closely associated with a desire to direct corporate resources toward enhancing the career chances of poor, urban youth: “[W]e’re trying to level the playing field so that these students have an equal chance at actually getting the best opportunities and we’re going to provide for those resources.”

A Concern for Education

Individual professionals were motivated by the opportunity to contribute to the quality of education and the educational success of urban youth. Of his involvement, one employer noted:

[I]t’s public education that’s very important me, and this is a part of public education, in my opinion ... [A]nd all of the opportunities at education and development are crucial.

Employer volunteers seemed particularly drawn to workforce preparation initiatives that coordinated with schools in some way, or permitted employees to supplement formal education with enrichment and hands-on experiences.

So we’re helping to bring these high school students together with some business leaders or folks in our company who can bring practical approaches to help to build a resume, how to fill out job applications. What are employers looking for regardless of the industry? What kind of skills does it take in communication, both oral and written, body language?

Professional Passion

In addition to a general desire to contribute, some of our employer volunteers discussed their own enthusiasm for their profession or business and expressed a strong desire to transmit that passion to young people. Explaining why he became involved in a Chicago school-to-work program, one professional consultant noted:

[L]ike a lot of us, I’ve been in this business for 22 years ... I enjoy evangelizing the topic of technology and I just personally enjoy speaking so, I had some personal reasons for wanting to do this.

For at least one employer in our study, professional passion increased as a motivation for engagement as employee volunteers began to work closely with youth. As a Tech 37 partner, Earth Tech committed to provide curriculum and instruction. As the process of engaging Tech

37 students at Wells High School progressed, Earth Tech's "37" team, which eventually included more than a dozen employee volunteers, embraced the challenge to format a curriculum showcasing the company's international environmental engineering projects. Earth Tech even recruited some of its own subcontractors to give students first-hand experience of how landfills are managed, and to spend an afternoon drilling ground contamination test holes in the lawn surrounding Wells High School. By the end of their Tech 37 session, the team was excited to have a base curriculum it could develop and adapt for other team-teaching opportunities.

CHAPTER 5. HOW DO EMPLOYERS INITIALLY BECOME INVOLVED?

We asked employers and their partners to discuss the mechanisms and sequences of events that initiated their involvement with youth programs included in this study. The employers and their program partners identified a number of mechanisms and routes that begin partnerships between employers and youth workforce efforts, including the following:

Recruitment by program providers. Program providers used a number of mechanisms to recruit employer partners, including advertisement, formal requests for proposals (RFPs), referrals from business colleagues, and “cold calling” to corporate offices.

Corporate outreach. Some employers actively seek and structure partnerships with youth workforce preparation programs. As one example, Bank One’s development of the Academy and Saturday Scholars programs emerged from a high-level institutional commitment to community outreach and employee diversity.

Employee initiative. Connections between businesses and youth workforce programs also come from the “bottom up,” through the agency of individual employees who advocate for programs and help capitalize on initial successes. This can happen, for example, in response to a referral from a business colleague.

Employer organizations. Industry and employer organizations can play a vital role in brokering the participation of affiliated companies in youth workforce development projects. The role of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association (IRMA) in EXCITE was to recruit a major retail pharmacy chain to work with the program.

Civic organizations. Civic organizations with an interest in business’s role in education and workforce development also sponsor forums and events that connect programs with employers. For example, a presentation sponsored by the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce proved valuable in connecting the TeraU program with Revere Group, a private consultancy.

Private sector entrepreneurs. Private companies with a business stake in youth workforce education can play key roles in recruiting employers into program partnerships. As part of its for-profit model for seeding school-to-work programs, Tech Services conducts outreach with local businesses and chambers of commerce to attract community entrepreneurs as speakers and learning project sponsors.

Municipal planning processes. Especially in the allied areas of education and after-school programming, municipal planning processes can spur the recruitment of employer

partners and the initiation of partnerships. For example, Chicago's Tech 37 program emerged from a civic planning process focused on after-school programs.

Lessons About Drawing Employers into Youth Workforce Partnerships

In looking across the diverse entry points through which employers began youth workforce preparation activities, some lessons emerge. It is clear that the recruitment of employer partners is primarily a matter of building key contacts and relationships. The first lesson concerns the time required to develop trust and commitment from a prospective employer partner. As one program provider with long experience of employer recruitment put it:

When you approach a new employer it's a long process. It's the process of getting them to trust you, it's the process of getting them to like you, it's the process of sending them some very good kids to try to get them interested and then it's a process of working with them ... eventually, if you send them enough good kids they'll take a few others and basically you develop a relationship that way.

Other lessons focus on the relationships that are built with employers and at different levels throughout each company. The interviews suggest that connecting with a company's senior officers can be invaluable in establishing partnerships. Especially in smaller firms, CEOs and their immediate subordinates can help identify talented employees to act as program liaisons, can delegate responsibility for implementing partnership activities, and can communicate their excitement about a program's goals throughout the company. Robert Blackwell's commitment to work-based learning as implemented in his firm's partnership with Robert Morris College, for example, was expressed both in his selection of subordinates to work with the college, and his expectation that a quality experience be offered to Robert Morris students.

Particularly in the case of larger companies, our interviews further indicate that other levels of management may function as gatekeepers during the early phases of partnership. Program providers must assess which departments and personnel could effectively if not explicitly veto the program and include them in partnership planning as early as possible. Two examples of critical gatekeepers included heads of individual units and human resources departments.

- *Business units.* Despite the fact that CEOs were sometimes involved in early contacts with program directors, in many cases the responsibility to fund and implement

engagement with a program devolved to specific “business units” within companies.¹⁶ Managers of these units were asked to find funding for youth projects from within their unit’s budget and retained latitude to assess the specific feasibility of a commitment to a program in the light of competing interests and constraints.

- *Human resources (HR)*. The process of incorporating new personnel into a large company, including youth interns, part-time staff, or full-time hires, inevitably requires the attention of human resources departments. All the HR issues applicable to regular employees—from compensation and performance review to equal opportunity and sexual harassment—apply in some measure to youth hires and interns as well. One program provider noted: “I learned a long time ago ... You need to develop a relationship with the HR person or the manager or the person in charge of hiring to the point where they trust you.”

Finally, in persuading companies and institutions to make more intensive commitments to youth workforce preparation, program providers can bolster their cases by bringing money to the table. As one program director put it:

A lot of time businesses don’t have the initial dollars available or they don’t perceive they have the dollars available to kick start a program like this. So we will go out and look for the funding entities.

In two cases, program providers’ access to public sources of funding was instrumental in recruiting employer partners. In both cases, the funding source was the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs’ (DCCA) High Tech School-to-Work Funding program. IRMA used these funds to engage Target Group to provide support services for participating youth, thereby giving Walgreens assurance of the reliability of youth interns and relieving the employer of expenses not immediately related to the store-based training of youth. Similarly, TEC Services used DCCA funds to support the implementation of their model in high schools in the Chicago region.

¹⁶ This term typically refers to a large division or department within a company with responsibility for managing specific brands, overseeing lines of production, or executing broad internal functions (e.g., human resources). See <http://www.ventureline.com/glossary.htm#BASICEARNINGSPower>.

CHAPTER 6. CHALLENGES TO EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

We asked employers and their partners to discuss the challenges in linking employers with youth workforce preparation programs and sustaining their participation over time. In general, their comments reflected the challenges reported in prior studies of employer engagement. Here we focus on seven key obstacles to employer engagement that were of particular concern to employers or program providers, and in some cases, to both groups. In Chapter 9, we consider practices and strategies that help partnerships address these challenges.

Getting Employers to Consider New Roles and Rules

As Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider point out, two fundamental conditions of contemporary adolescent development pervasively condition the attitudes of adults, including employers, toward youth and their potential (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). First, adolescence is structured to isolate most youth from adult productive activities in favor of long-term academic preparation. Second, Western children and adolescents are socialized first to become savvy consumers, but attitudes conducive to sustained labor often are neglected until after high school. As a result, young workers are not well socialized to workplace norms, and youth come to be seen as inherently unstable, immature, and prone to unrealistic expectations about the labor market and work world.

One of the fundamental challenges identified by our informants was the problem of convincing employers that it was both feasible and wise to alter standard practices in their workplaces to contribute to the education of youth. This effectively asked employers to accept “a different kind of relationship than they’re used to having with their employees,” to work with youth at ages and skill levels that they would not usually hire, and to alter hours or work conditions for a special class of employee. It required considerable persuasion in some cases to convince employers to alter standard practices to accommodate youth interns.

Professionals and employers also are likely to have doubts and fears about contact with teenagers, and particularly about supervising youth in work settings. As one program provider observed:

I think companies are challenged by the idea of having high school students. They have this vision of high school students as being a particular way—unruly, unskilled, not reliable. And in our experience that has not been the case.

One employer reported that it required two years of work with high school students before co-workers believed that teens could be productive and respectful in a professional workplace.

The Business Cycle and the “Bottom Line”

Current research strongly indicates that prevailing business conditions and economic pressures influence employer involvement in youth workforce preparation (Jobs for the Future, 2002, 2003). Our interviews confirm that constrictions of the economy affect the willingness of employers to engage youth workforce preparation programs in at least three ways. First, they elevate the general level of anxiety at all levels of management, and they pressure managers to cut expenditures deemed peripheral to short-term profit. Second, tight economies often precipitate layoffs and staff reductions and raise the opportunity costs of volunteer activity for remaining employees who often must cover a heavier workload. Third, the “ripple effect” of lower profits can include reduced contributions to foundations and programs, further limiting resources available for youth workforce development.

Turnover in Staff Contacts

Employee turnover is a reality for all large companies and organizations (Jobs for the Future, 2002, 2003). For youth workforce programs, which often depend on specific people and relationships, loss of an inside patron can threaten the ongoing relationship with an entire organization. As a youth employment program manager noted:

It’s the kind of person that you’re working [with] ... It could be the same company and you could have a great person that you’re working with there and they leave and a new person comes in and they won’t even talk to you.

Supervisors of interns regularly faced the problem of orienting new staff liaisons in departments hosting interns when reliable staff moved on to new positions.

Clashes of Organizational Cultures

Employers often report frustration in their interactions with schools, and especially large education bureaucracies, involving time inefficiencies and differences in organizational culture (Shapiro & Iannozzi, 1998). Such friction undoubtedly hampers collaboration. Systemic analyses of the incentives driving schools and businesses, however, reveal fundamental disjunctures between the interests of high schools and employers. Research by Rosenbaum; Murnane and Levy; and Zemsky and associates shows that employers make little reference to

high school grades in hiring graduates and largely view high school as irrelevant to the preparation of entry-level technical workers (Murnane & Levy, 1996; Rosenbaum, 2001; Zemsky, Shapiro, Iannozzi, Cappelli, & Bailey, 1998).

Our interviews revealed a number of ways in which differences in the organizational cultures of businesses, schools, and youth programs may hamper collaboration or complicate communication among partners. As one provider of a school-based mentorship program put it:

There are things that we within the school system know about that people outside the system don't have a clue about and the same thing for us here. We're in the school system and some of my colleagues that have never worked in the real world don't have a clue about what goes on within a corporation or out in the business world. Sometimes I hear unrealistic things being said and it's because they have always been a teacher.

Our informants noted three differences in practice and expectations, most often occurring in associations with schools:

Attitudes toward efficiency and change. Business professionals can become particularly frustrated with slow or cumbersome bureaucratic processes often seen in public school systems that contrast sharply with increasingly lean organizational structures and tight timeframes that characterize contemporary business. As one business entrepreneur observed: “[B]usiness gets very disenchanted with the bureaucracy.... So you don't see the real positive outcomes that could be there if the businesses were able to see things happen quickly.”

Approaches to accountability and continual improvement. Businesses have embraced philosophies of continual improvement and expect their partners to share that perspective. Businesses also value speedy information about the impact of programs and distrust claims that meaningful outcomes may take years to measure. As a program provider with close ties to business partners emphasized:

This business opportunity [is] in front of me right now; it needs to be addressed right now. I can't do a study that takes 3 years to address this issue because that issue is no longer relevant to me.

Theory versus practice. Collaborations between employers and teachers can founder over differences in how much to emphasize “applied” versus “theoretical” knowledge. In one partnership in this study, a class was designed to combine the consultant's approaches to solving “real world” computer networking challenges with the professor's presentations of networking theory. But from the consultant's perspective (the professor was not interviewed), the professor disliked the consultant's applied solutions, and the professor limited discussion of these solutions

in class. As a result, the final exercise posed by the consultant in applied network solutions was never completed.

Preparing Employers and Professionals to Work with Youth

The interviews highlighted a number of challenges involved in bringing adults together with youth in workforce preparation activities. These included shaping adult expectations about what youth can accomplish and how quickly, with particular attention to the quality of activities assigned to youth and to placing youth in situations appropriate to their age.

Shaping employer expectations. Several employers noted that in engaging with youth as mentors or supervisors, they were challenged not to find the same consistency that they might in an adult colleague. As one employer who directs a program for youth noted: “[O]ne of the things that I found then and I still find now is that learning to be, having to do the same thing day-after-day consistently is not something that kids are used to.” Other employee volunteers were surprised to discover the poor math and reading skills of some students and felt unprepared to address these needs.

Assuring youth have quality tasks and interactions. Planning tasks and interactions that keep youth engaged can require unanticipated skill. Poor program experiences for youth were linked in our interviews with deficits in either task quality or the quality of interactions with adults. In terms of task quality, there was broad agreement that youth must be assigned “real work” with high performance expectations, or their motivation to do their best work would erode quickly.

One value of the program is the students know what they’re doing is real and that they’re making a real contribution to this community of people at work. So that part of the realness of the job is very important.

Another program provider preferred that employers assign student interns to freestanding “back burner” projects that added real value and could be scheduled flexibly.

In terms of quality of interaction, some program providers reported that in isolated cases, youth encountered adults in workplaces who were rude or disrespectful. More often, however, problems in interactions arose from the genuine concern of adult mentors, especially if the role of the adult slipped from the facilitating role of mentor to the more controlling role of parent. As one employer put it: “You can be here to coach them but you’re not here to give them answers. You’re here to coach them to find their own answers, you’re not here to mother them.”

Vigilance about appropriate boundaries. Especially in the case of older youth in internship positions, issues such as access to alcohol and sexual interaction are a concern. Employers and program providers in internship programs stressed the necessity of informing both employees and youth about limits on events that youth could attend (e.g., holiday parties where alcohol would be served) and inappropriate contact. Supervisors discussed their willingness to coach youth firmly on standards of professional dress and conduct that do not precipitate inappropriate attention from adult employees. A program provider related one incident in which an employee was fired for sexual attention to a youth intern.

It's not that we're out to get people fired, but you have to come and let us know ... you find out that there are other people who have had this experience and it allows the company to be able to take some action. I think it was wonderful for the kids to find out that the company didn't tolerate that either.

Matching Youth to Employer Partners

Even in healthy partnerships with experienced employer participants, it is challenging to match youth to employer mentors and internship positions in ways that meet the needs of both youth and employers. Several approaches to the matching process are featured among our programs. Best Practices High School (BPHS), for example, holds an autumn internship fair to acquaint student interns with potential employer placements. The fair allows students to select and rank their preferred placements, while employers are limited to informal expressions of preferences for particular students. This is consistent with BPHS's stance that the internship represents an educational commitment from employer partners. But some employers protest that they do not have more choice in their youth interns. Cristo Rey, on the other hand, allows current business partners first to decide whether they wish to retain a youth intern before youth are asked if they want to return to the placement.

One question that emerged from discussions of student selection was whether integrating employers as partners in youth development strengthens the tendency to select youth participants who are exceptionally able, motivated, or mature. Program providers and employers were quick to point out that their programs included many youth facing high levels of risk, both in their communities and in their personal lives. But two threads of evidence suggest that a tendency toward "creaming participants," especially on the basis of motivation and maturity, is an issue in the engagement of employer partners.

First, some employer volunteers expressed frustration that urban youth were not sufficiently equipped or motivated to participate fully in activities related to professions such as engineering or computer science. In one case, an employer volunteer discussed his desire to continue working with youth but his preference for students who were better prepared in mathematics or science. Second, program providers clearly wished to avoid sending to employers youth who might prove uncooperative or undisciplined, and they tended to screen youth for pro-social attitudes and behaviors. Most program providers concurred that businesses were places of serious purpose, and that not all youth had the maturity and focus to qualify them as “ready for downtown.” Still, at least one program provider pondered whether his program’s commitment to meet employer needs was in conflict with the program’s outreach to underserved youth and families:

A couple of years into this we said, “maybe that person that said we’re taking the cream of the crop in some ways is right.” We’re not taking the cream of the crop academically. These aren’t the kids that were stellar in grade school and junior high, but these are definitely the cream of the crop of kids that are motivated who all have the desire. And we take the kids that have that desire, that want to go to a school ... that goes an extra 4 weeks longer than the public schools. Where they go to work, where they do all these other things. We really do just take the kids that have that inner drive.

Logistics

Whether getting youth to employers or bringing employees to schools and community programs, most programs had to confront a number of logistical challenges in order to bring youth and employer professionals together. Two logistical challenges stand out in the interviews. First, businesses, schools, and after-school programs follow daytime schedules, and coordination of variable schedules can prove cumbersome. As one corporate interviewee put it:

The challenge of working with kids is they’re in school and they’re not available until like 3:30 in the afternoon. So when we want to volunteer our workday might be coming to a close, and getting ... them bussed back to the office and getting the trains back, and their own personal commitments, can be a challenge. Sometimes real simple logistics can be hard.

Second, arranging transportation for youth to work sites involves considerations of time and legal liability. One employer from the North Shore, for example, wanted to bring a group of Chicago Public School students to the work site to continue a collaborative research project at the firm’s headquarters. The high school, however, refused to sanction the trip on the basis of the distance and risk of accident.

To conclude this chapter, we note again that most of the challenges encountered by the partnerships studied here are corroborated in other studies of employer involvement (Bremer & Madzar, 1995; Morgan, 1995). What appears to distinguish this group of employers and partners is their access to practices and strategies that help them overcome such challenges. These responses to challenges include actions that employers can take, as well as steps that partners can take, to facilitate employer engagement. We discuss these practices and strategies in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 7. DO ISSUES OF RACE OR ETHNICITY INFLUENCE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT?

Earlier we noted that the larger corporations in our study cited diversity goals as incentives to address the workforce preparation of urban and minority youth. Interaction with youth was seen as potentially facilitating the recruitment of a more diverse workforce, while deepening the exposure of employees to residents of urban, minority communities. Individual volunteers were motivated by their desire to contribute to the success of youth from their own ethnic background, or to help “level the playing field” for youth from Chicago’s minority neighborhoods.

Because questions of race and economic opportunity remain a sensitive focus of concern in the United States, we asked informants if considerations of race surfaced at all in the experiences of employers with youth workforce development.¹⁷ In this section, we asked employers and program providers whether racial or ethnic considerations affected the experiences of adults and youth as they participated in youth workforce preparation programs. Three perspectives on race and ethnicity emerged from the interviews: optimism about improved racial dynamics and diversity in workplaces; a commitment to secure mainstream economic opportunities for minority youth; and awareness of race as a dimension of working with youth. The youth focus groups took up this issue as well, and their perceptions are discussed at the end of this chapter.

Improved Racial Dynamics and Diversity

There was broad consensus among adults interviewed that barriers to employment and advancement based on race had receded significantly in corporate America, and that diversifying corporate workforces was a sincerely held corporate value. Globalization and the pervasive influence of information technology were seen as working against institutional racism. The need to adapt to a global marketplace was perceived to be replacing national with transnational corporations that depend on international workforces. And the remarkable adaptability of youth to technological change was considered as an unprecedented window of opportunity for minority youth to enter the labor market with highly valued skills. According to one employer:

¹⁷ Project staff discussed the relative merits of explicitly posing an interview question about race/ethnicity. While staff acknowledged that an explicit question targeting a sensitive topic could lead to distorted responses, the veiled nature of discussions of race in contemporary America raised the probability that many interviewees would avoid the topic unless explicitly posed. We decided to ask the question late in the interview in order to allow spontaneous references to surface, and then further explore these references as part of the direct inquiry into race and ethnicity. A similar approach was taken to questions of gender (see following section).

There have been lawyers forever, ... it may in fact matter if your father was a lawyer and your grandfather was a lawyer or a doctor, computers though is more like music. Folks that catch on to music, they do it at a really young age and it doesn't seem sort of a hereditary or experiential right ... They get computers. And so this business, it doesn't matter what your momma did or your daddy did.

As one program provider saw it, poverty and access to education and technology, rather than race itself, are now the key barriers separating youth from economic opportunity.

Anyone who looks middle class can be any race they want. It's not a factor. It's coming from a poor background, an economically disadvantaged background that gives them the lack of polish that employers don't like.

Securing Access to Mainstream Opportunities

Following this generally optimistic reading of corporate diversity, our informants also concurred about the primary goals of youth workforce partnerships—to provide youth with access to *mainstream* economic and educational opportunities. Two implications followed from this validation of mainstream economic success. First, program providers strongly resisted exclusive or didactic attention to matters of race or ethnicity in their programs, seeing this as most likely to reinforce racial resistance and victimology within urban youth. Whereas the ongoing reality of racism was not denied, program providers saw minority youth as hindered more by fear of mainstream culture and by a counterproductive resistance to adult guidance. Rather than talking about race, programs emphasize active engagement with people of similar and varied backgrounds, both to model ethnic success and reduce fear of diversity.

Second, interviewees assumed that the primary task of workforce preparation was to adapt youth to fit the requirements of the mainstream labor market. One program provider spoke of this adaptation as learning to “modulate” styles of communication and self-presentation in order to work effectively with a wide range of people:

I think some [youth] just haven't had a range of experiences and they aren't modulating their dealings with different people in different ways and they don't know to do that. Ultimately that sort of modulating is something I'm interested in laying bare for the student and helping them develop ... if we can communicate to them or allow them to practice this modulation and have them recognize we're not asking you to lose your self, this doesn't have to be an identity issue, then I think everybody can stand to gain a little from that.

Robert Morris College embraces this approach, requiring all students to learn to dress for mainstream business success and master “Business English” as a requirement of graduation. Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center's SAME program emphasizes a slow process of

socialization for youth, beginning with learning basic norms of punctuality, courtesy, and reliability, and only then moving toward work more specific to science and medicine.

Employers do not see modulation as synonymous with conformity. Indeed, employers report tolerating and even looking for a certain degree of “attitude” and assertiveness in students, if these aspects of personality reflect strong individuality and personal drive rather than resistance to structure and authority. The goal for programs is to influence youth to see the work world as an arena of opportunity, with a particular language and culture that must be mastered. As one program provider put it: “We push really hard on the idea that when you get a job, it’s with the idea that you’re moving up in that company or moving on to a better one. And to see that as what you’re really doing there.”

Awareness of Race as a Dimension of Working with Youth

Although the adults we interviewed were positive about race relations in their workplaces, those who worked closely with youth acknowledged that discomfort related to race can arise between white mentors and minority youth. One white employer articulated his sense that white mentors must respect limits on the degree to which they can expect minority youth to identify personally with them. He recalled partnering in a mentorship program with a successful minority businessman who spoke frankly and with authority to minority youth about his experiences, positive and negative, as a Latino entrepreneur.

I as a white male didn’t have that same appeal or didn’t have the same angle, so mine was more focused on how do you sell the stuff and why is that important.

Another employer discussed her awareness that in the diverse environment of a large urban hospital, relationships of trust and openness about personal problems, especially as they impact work, can be slow to develop among adult and youth co-workers. Yet another employee supervisor of youth admitted that she is:

not comfortable talking about race issues with [youth], [adding], I don’t know where their line is. I’m afraid if I go into that arena, it could be misconstrued and then they go back to mom and dad.

She related an experience with one of her best youth interns, a Latino high school senior who had just won a scholarship to Notre Dame University, that left her unsure about how to respond to a young man’s struggle with questions of race in his college decisions.

I had a situation 2 years ago, and this kid was really, really on top of things, ended up getting a scholarship to Notre Dame ... When he came to me, he didn’t know what he was going to do about college so he says, “Well these are my options, but I really want to

go here.” And I said “You know you can’t pass up this scholarship, right?” And he said to me the only reason they’re giving it to me is because I’m Hispanic.” I remember being caught off guard and I did not know how to respond to that because my first instinct was, yeah that is why you’re getting the scholarship so grab this opportunity, don’t screw it up. But it caught me off guard and I didn’t respond.

Perspectives of Youth Participants

Youth interviewed for this study reported important learning experiences in racially diverse workplaces. Three main themes regarding race and ethnicity emerged from the youth focus groups. First, youth, like adults, reported an absence of racial animus in their program and workplace experiences, and they reported equitable treatment from supervisors of other ethnic backgrounds. One young woman’s report was typical of this theme: “I worked where it was like Mexican, Hispanics, and Nigerians.... But, they still treat each other equally. They show no favoritism or anything. Everybody is just equal.” Youth generally were optimistic about their future prospects and did not expect racial prejudice to impede their career progress.

Second, minority youth credited their experiences in mentorship and internship programs with helping them face stereotypes and anxieties about working with and being supervised by white people. As one intern noted, “I think the biggest reason why we’re scared cause we know we have so many people looking at us, observing everything we do and judging.” Another young African American student observed:

I wasn’t too familiar with people outside of my race until I came to [this school] and [this school] gave me an insight about diverse people and now I’m more familiar with the different types of races and now I don’t have a problem with it.

Third, to the degree that youth did perceive racism impacting their daily experiences, they believed it represented a compound of prejudices linked also to their age and social class. Interns in one program, for example, reported that they felt under pressure to prove themselves in professional work settings or community college classes, because supervisors or professors may assume that they know nothing and lack responsibility. In such cases, the interns suspected that their youth, race, and public school student status all combined to lower expectations of adults around them. As one intern saw it:

I don’t know if it was so much race ... I think it was because we were teenagers. A lot of them didn’t think that we knew what we was doing. They were telling us, “I don’t need you to do this.” “I don’t want you to do that.”

Race continues to figure in numerous ways in the lives of urban minority youth. For this reason, employers who help minority youth prepare for the workforce can expect, at least on

occasion, to experience race, ethnicity, and cultural identity as factors in their relationships with youth. Our analyses suggest that engaging students and interns can educate employees, white and minority, about the perspectives of minority youth and the influence of racial considerations in the workplace. But our analyses also suggest that race and ethnicity remain sensitive and potentially disturbing features of interactions with youth, and that orientation to racial issues remains largely lacking in the preparation of employers for youth workforce preparation.

CHAPTER 8. DO ISSUES OF GENDER INFLUENCE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT?

A fundamental transformation over the past 50 years in American business and professional life is the dramatic increase of working women at all levels of responsibility and success (Hacker, 2003). The ascendancy of women in business and professional circles, in turn, has fueled major changes in American educational, family, and social life. As with race, we asked our informants to consider whether any issues involving gender were implicated in how or why employers engage the workforce development of youth. Two themes surfaced: career opportunities for young women have improved, although Latina girls continue to face career barriers; and there is concern about the prospects of young men.

Improved Opportunities for Young Women

In the case of young women, both employers and program providers perceived a significant reduction in educational and occupational barriers to advancement, and they felt that resources to support female achievement were amply available, even in minority communities. Our informants also reported an increase in the confidence, aspirations, and self-assertion of the young women with whom they worked. According to one program provider:

There is no, “If you’re a female you become a nurse and if you’re a male you become a doctor.” That no longer exists. You can be anything you want to be and I think they’re taking advantage of it.

Among both employers and program providers, we found a strong conviction that mentorship and small-group interaction between female professionals and youth remains a powerful tool to build the confidence and motivation of young women. Didactic presentations about gender discrimination cannot match the power of an individual woman telling her specific story of struggle and achievement. As one program provider put it:

[P]rofessional women who have had experiences of racism and sexism can talk about experiences and talk about how they dealt with it, can give the teens insight into really what it’s like in the world of work and what they deal with and how they developed those coping skills to deal with those issues in those situations once they came upon them.

There was also a clear perception that many working women are eager to share such stories when the opportunity presents itself, and that companies in our study support this commitment among female professionals.

A few program providers noted that young Latinas were more likely to face parental pressure to conform to traditional female gender roles. In the words of one:

I think many young women feel that they're stuck in a traditional role and what I try to make them understand is there is all these things out there that they could be looking at or that they could possibly do and all I want to do is open their eyes.

But another program provider noted signs of change:

In the Latino population, the message is changing. Because more and more Latinas are achieving in terms of going to colleges, becoming entrepreneurs ... there is a lessening of the mindset that, "Well, I'll get married, raise a family, and that will be my life's work."

Finally, some questions were raised about the persistence of gender stereotyping in career education programs, particularly in Chicago public high schools. Although men are well represented among professional pharmacists, for example, the class we observed with EXCITE pharmacy tech students at Westinghouse High School was entirely female. Asked why no boys participated in the class, one of our EXCITE focus group students commented, "They think it's hard, and they want to be thugs." Another added:

They [think] if we live in this neighborhood they'd like to be more like manly, and they think that nursing is more feminine. So they try to do other things like auto body and stuff like that and barbering.

A program provider, a high school teacher, reported resistance from some male colleagues when she tries to recruit female students from other high school career programs to participate in Career Links. On the flip side, in Tech 37, boys continue to outnumber girls in after-school technology classes, although outreach to girls is helping to attract more participants. "I think we skew a little bit male but I think that's partly because of the perception of technology but we're fortunate that a lot of programs are working against that stereotype."

Before we conclude, it bears noting that the young women who participated in our focus groups are probably not typical of young women their age. The evidence suggests that the programs highlighted in this study attract youth with unusually strong motivation to succeed and capacity for self-direction. Most studies indicate that girls and young women continue to confront resistance to their career aspirations, both at home and in school. As a recent report by the National Women's Law Center put it: "Thirty years after enactment of Title IX, the patterns of enrollment in vocational and technical programs look shockingly similar to the patterns that existed prior to passage of the law (Illinois Department of Human Services, 2001; National Women's Law Center, 2002; Oakes, Selvin, Karoly, & Guiton, 1992; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). The optimism of our adult and youth informants about the prospects for girls and young women

should be viewed as a portent of what more young women could derive from programs devoted to their full career development.

Concern About the Prospects of Young Men

Both program providers and employers raised a set of concerns and frustrations about adolescent boys and workforce preparation. First, most programs reported at least 60 percent participation by young women and cited the need to do active outreach to maintain levels of male participation. Although one program provider saw today's teens in general as under "tremendous pressure," she saw differences in the challenges facing girls and boys that lead young men to choose jobs and short-term earning over postsecondary education. Even among girls who marry or get pregnant, she observed:

[T]hey still go to college and they still work, and they work their butts off trying to balance those two. Whereas the boys, I think, are more likely to give one thing up rather than trying to balance the two.

Second, some interviewees expressed concern that more program options targeted specifically to the needs of young men were not available. One program provider who ardently supported mentorship options for girls voiced frustration that a similar program was not targeted to boys at her high school.

I have many male students who are almost begging me to let them come to this and I tell them that I have asked if I can let males come and they [a mentorship program] said no. They're federally funded and federal funding specifically says it's a program for women.

Finally, the director of one workforce development program was emphatic that although being out of school was a barrier to career path employment for all youth, African American males are the target of particularly systematic negativity and discrimination. Young black men continued to be perceived by entry-level employers as less skilled and more aggressive than young minority women and they were more likely to be denied opportunities to interact with customers and learn business skills.

When you send a bunch of kids to Walgreens, the girls are going to be cashiers and the boys are going to push boxes around. The girls are going to learn to deal with people and handle money, and the guys are going to be pegged as labor and this is standard throughout the business world ... That is where race hugely comes in. Black males really are discriminated against I think in terms of employment.

If young men lack resources to overcome workforce preparation barriers, it may in part reflect a reluctance of male professionals to step into roles as mentors and role models. Commenting on one mentorship program, a program provider reported, "There are eleven mentors and there are

four men and it's a constant struggle both for mentors and for students to get enough males.”

This was corroborated by a female youth participant in the same program:

I don't find [barriers to female advancement] to be a concern because there are so many more women even being mentors here ... I'm not sure how many male mentors we have but I know it's less than females.

Yet our sample of 12 programs also includes a strong cadre of male volunteers with enthusiasm for the career development of both boys and girls and a willingness to devote work time to connecting with youth. Our findings suggest that male and female professionals may have somewhat different motives in becoming mentors, and understanding the motives of male professionals may help increase the number of men and boys represented as mentors and mentees in youth workforce preparation programs.

CHAPTER 9. BEST PRACTICES IN SUSTAINING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

We asked employers and program providers to reflect on practices and approaches to partnership that help overcome challenges, sustain the involvement of employers, and support positive outcomes for both employers and youth. A core of recommended practices for both employers and program providers emerged from the interviews. The interviews also revealed a need for intermediary organizations to help develop and facilitate relationships between employers, schools, and workforce development programs.

Practices and Strategies for Employers

We saw earlier that a number of challenges and constraints must be addressed by employers to pursue a commitment to youth workforce preparation. As we will discuss in this chapter, employers report a number of approaches to developing and managing their partnerships that anticipate problems, nurture interest among employees, and lead to greater benefits for youth. Here we focus on five strategies that employers pursued to support youth workforce preparation programs.

Empowering Internal Advocates

Although the employer companies and institutions chosen for this study were known for their community engagement, individual employees also played key roles in advocating for action and resources to address the needs of youth. What seemed to distinguish some employers was their willingness to identify such advocates within the firm and support and authorize them to facilitate youth activities. These advocates included senior staff who could engage youth development activities as a matter of company policy and influence company leadership to invest in youth workforce programs, as well as clerical staff and mid-level managers with an understanding of how to achieve goals and influence their colleagues. In most cases, these advocates were supported through pay, recognition, and release time to access key resources and arrange youth internships.

Coordinating Youth Workforce Development with Staff Development and Diversity Efforts

Employers with an institutional commitment to youth workforce education take steps to use youth activities as opportunities to enhance satisfaction, attachment, and skill development among current employees. As one employer stated:

We look at this as an opportunity to also become a developmental activity for supervisors and managers who are mentoring so that they get to practice and hone their coaching skills, which hopefully they're using everyday on the job as well.

Firms also see youth engagement as relevant to deepening the exposure of employees to minority and low-income communities. Quaker Oats and Bank One integrate youth workforce programs into their volunteer and staff development curricula, crediting employees in various ways with professional development through youth engagement. LaSalle Bank also encourages employees to access management and supervisory courses that lead to more effective involvement in community partnerships like the Cristo Rey Corporate Internship Program.

Linking Program Selections to Corporate Interests

The employers with whom we spoke were aware that commitments to youth activities that could be genuinely connected with vital corporate interests were more likely to find long-term institutional support.

If it doesn't directly benefit the business and come back some way to make the investment in education, they may not see a fit ... [it] still needs to meet some business objective.

In ways large and small, internal advocates for youth selected programs and shaped activities that could contribute evident value to the organization and win the support of employees and managers. Youth internship programs, for example, were carefully monitored to assure that youth were accomplishing "real work" and demonstrating their value as apprentice colleagues. Mentorship programs were aimed to reach youth across the city who had the potential to return as valued customers or employees and also served as venues for staff development. Programs at Bank One and LaSalle Bank were funded from budgets of major business units, both to assure steady funding and to insert the programs into the heart of the enterprise.

Taking a Team Approach

Many employers took steps to distribute responsibility for youth program support across groups or teams of employees. Walgreens, for example, involved store managers and other personnel in a range of teaching and mentorship roles with EXCITE employees. Earth Tech assembled a team of colleagues to develop teaching materials and staff presentations for Tech 37 students. A team approach has three primary benefits: a) responsibility for program commitments can be distributed across groups of employees, lightening the load for all; b) employees enjoy more options to schedule volunteer time; c) teams allow more reliable commitments to programs and

reduced instances of cancellation. In addition, employee collaborations build new working relationships among colleagues, reveal hidden talents, and build camaraderie.

Encouraging Accountability Among Program Partners

Continual improvement and self-assessment have become standard features of American workplace cultures and increasingly are influencing norms for corporate social responsibility.¹⁸

In order to encourage program accountability, Walgreens, Illinois Tool Works, Quaker Oats, and LaSalle Bank stayed engaged with the programs with which they collaborated. As one employer involved in funding youth workforce programs explained:

I want accountability and I like to have information, so I ask questions. I think that's the new philanthropy as we move into the century ... You can't ask for more unless you can prove what you've given them in the past has been well spent, well invested, some return.

In turn, staff of corporate foundations are increasingly held accountable for producing “hard numbers” to assure corporate board members and company officers of the worth of current program investments. For company-based programs such as Bank One Academy, documenting “return on investment” is becoming a more prominent feature of the role of program director.

To be sure, not all employers involved in this study were concerned with program quality or rigorous measurement of student outcomes. But among companies with strong programs of institutional philanthropy, two features distinguish the approach to accountability and collaboration. First, companies such as Quaker Oats, LaSalle Bank, and Illinois Tool Works place a premium on understanding the goals of their partners and building relationships of accountability with program partners, rather than one-way performance goals. As one corporate officer put it:

We really want to make sure that we're complementing and supporting their needs first ... these are the people who can tell us if it will work, and if it doesn't, we want them to be honest with us. That's relationship building.

Second, in attempting to improve the performance of programs they fund and sponsor, these employers tried to lead with support and facilitation rather than threat and coercion. When Illinois Tool Works (ITW) found that one of its longstanding scholarship programs was not promoting high achievement among youth participants, it engaged an old partner, Associated

¹⁸ A recent publication of the National Employer Leadership Council states: “A focus on outcomes must become a driving goal of all corporate philanthropic initiatives. To do this, employers must change their outlook on how they evaluate business-education partnerships. Companies must apply the same laser-like management principles and practices to their own philanthropic initiatives that they apply to other areas of their business” (National Employer Leadership Council, 2002b).

Colleges of Illinois (ACI), to help improve program operations and enrich youth development offerings. ITW increased funding to the community program to facilitate its collaboration with ACI, and it recognized the program director for responding positively to the challenge to make the scholarship program a genuine catalyst for student progress.

Practices and Strategies for Program Providers

Program providers related a number of guiding principles and practical lessons about building partnerships with employers that improved their own success with youth and drew resources into the program. Some of these principles are common to success in almost any collaborative endeavor, whereas others reflect conditions of partnership more specific to employer engagement. Here we focus on the lessons and practices that emerged from our program provider interviews.

Appreciating the Employer Perspective

Program providers seeking to retain employer partners seem able to appreciate the constraints and incentives of businesses, as well as to be able to speak with employers on their own terms. Several of the program providers in this study had extensive private sector experience and were comfortable thinking in terms of client development and customer service. Others had shown capacity to adapt private sector strategies to challenges such as training out-of-school youth in employability skills. One employer saw greater acceptance of business practices as a trend among the best not-for-profit program providers.

I am seeing ... more nonprofits today that are being run like businesses. They are becoming very astute. They are doing a good job of it. It's a hard road to do because all of a sudden you're asking [not-for-profit] employees ... to do things that they hadn't done before. In this tight economy, they're not getting any more funding.

Facilitating Employer Involvement

In taking the perspective of their employer partners, there was nearly unanimous agreement that the best overall strategy for building employer involvement was to make participation for companies and volunteers as uncomplicated and easy as possible.

These people's primary focus and secondary focus and tertiary focus is all getting a job done and not educating youth ... So our role is really to eliminate as many of the hindrances as possible so that they see the value.

[T]o be convenient in location and in time with the corporate sector is often very important because a lot of the people that I work with are on very tight schedules and not a whole lot of time to give even if they have the biggest heart in the world.

We've also seen if we can come in with a total package and just handle everything, there is a higher probability of success than if we come in and say, "Okay here's everything that needs to be done and we're only doing this one small segment of it and someone else has to coordinate everyone else's efforts." That ends up putting a lot at risk.

Program providers who succeed in "making it easy" try to understand possible obstacles to employer engagement and structure programs that address those obstacles. Cristo Rey's "total package," for example, includes transportation services for youth interns, and a full array of management services usually associated with temp services such as Kelly Associates—payroll, worker's compensation and accident insurance, and federal and state paperwork.

Our whole premise is we're going into the work environment and we're going to play by their rules, we're meeting their time frames, we're talking their language, we're filling real jobs.

TeraU works effectively with local employers by learning shortcuts through the central school bureaucracy and mediating the connection between school and business volunteers.

Meeting a Real Employer Need

Not only do effective program providers focus on limiting the responsibilities of partner employers, they also identify opportunities for youth to fill a real business need while gaining exposure to useful skills and experiences. Our interviews with Cristo Rey, Best Practices High School, Rush/SAME, Tech 37, and TeraU all highlighted projects that were collaboratively shaped by program providers and employers to complete tasks of genuine importance to the employer. In some cases, these tasks were mundane, such as filing, photocopying, or updating electronic records. In other cases, youth took on special projects, such as web-site design (Tech 37) or market research (Wells High School TeraU). All cases shared a common rationale: "If you don't have a need, I don't want you making anything up. I want you to ask around, see if there is a need ... if there isn't a need let's not disappoint everybody." Cristo Rey invests in updating youth computer skills with the expressed purpose of increasing their capacity to contribute value at their internships, while also meeting basic educational goals.

[W]e talk to the [corporate] sponsors regularly and one of the things they keep telling us is you better get your kids increasingly adept at being able to use computers to help them get jobs because paper is going away. So get your kids involved with computers.

Keeping Employee Engagement Meaningful

Effective program providers also pay close attention to the experiences of employer volunteers as they interact with youth. They try to provide orientation to any issues or difficulties that youth

face, and they allow employers to have input into planning activities, to connect their professional expertise to career education programs, and to see and hear the impact of their contributions on the lives of youth participants. As one program provider observed, “I think the way to keep volunteers involved in any kind of volunteer activity is to make their participation meaningful so they have a sense that they actually made a contribution.” Another added:

There’s several times that students would report to me what they are doing or what college they’re attending and what their grades [are]. And I try to communicate something to the corps of volunteers, for example, say four or five students went to your college ... So that keeps them coming back.

Finally, providers were proactive about expressing appreciation to companies and volunteers for their service. Gestures that companies appreciate include Cristo Rey’s annual recognition of corporate sponsors in *Crain’s Chicago Business*, Best Practices’ annual luncheon and feedback session with employers, and letters of appreciation from students themselves. As one program provider noted:

I often end up with a student who will send that person an e-mail or a letter or phone call. And for them to get it from the student ... is huge.

Communicating and Staying Flexible

Program providers and employers were emphatic about the importance of keeping lines of communication clear and open at all levels of contact between programs and partner institutions. Frequent, purposeful communication was seen as key to remaining flexible to meet the needs of employer partners, and to troubleshoot problems quickly as they arise. In part, this emphasis on communication and flexibility reflects a reality of many youth workforce programs—they have “a lot of moving parts,” that require proactive coordination and alignment. As one educator expressed it:

Flexibility. Understanding that Robert Morris College is meeting their needs. Also making sure that they understand what we can do. Because oftentimes a project could initially come in and they’re huge, and they are not the kind of thing that we really could accomplish in a quarter ... they forget what college students can accomplish. So it’s making sure that we have this reality check ... not biting off more than we know we can accomplish.

Embracing Principles of Accountability and Evaluation

In line with the importance attached by funders and corporate sponsors to accountability, some of the programs in this sample had committed themselves to collect and report information about program performance. Associated Colleges of Illinois hires an external evaluator to interview

program graduates and collects and documents academic outcomes annually. They have also undertaken a blanket survey of all tutoring and mentoring programs in Chicago to gauge the need for a college readiness program.

Evaluation and data collection provide information about a range of performance indices and thus help to meet the reporting requirements of some funders. Information generated through evaluation can also attract interest from new sponsors. In addition, programs can use information from key stakeholders in the program both to apply to program improvement and to generate information useful to setting future priorities and policies. Associated Colleges of Illinois, for example, suspected that its participants included students too academically advanced or too far behind to fully realize the program's benefits. Using survey instruments, they determined that their programs for youth were ill-suited to the needs of both groups of youth, and they decided instead to focus more programming on meeting the needs of "that wider middle bend" of students who have sufficient skills to succeed in college but need support to carry through the entire college search and application process.

Roles and Functions for Intermediaries

According to Wynn, "the presence and role of intermediary organizations is being recognized as pivotal to endeavors that achieve a scale large enough to matter" (Schorr, 1997; Wynn, 2000). Intermediary organizations facilitate communication among partners and address critical functions within partnerships for which other partners lack resources or expertise. The current study also revealed a number of roles within partnerships that benefited from the facilitation of a third-party specialist or organization. In many cases, these intermediary functions were undertaken by organizations, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, that are recruited specifically to solve problems or provide expertise. In other cases, one of the partners took responsibility for executing the facilitating role. Two broad focuses for intermediaries were: a) issues between collaborating organizations, and b) issues between partners and youth.

Addressing Issues Among Collaborating Organizations

Intermediaries were useful in addressing issues and carrying through functions that were vital to assuring the cohesion and success of partnerships among otherwise diverse organizations. Examples of such functions that emerged in the interviews include the following:

Brokering connections. A key intermediary role is that of bringing other collaborators to the table as planners and participants in programs. For example, Illinois Retail Merchants

Association persuaded Walgreens to commit as an EXCITE partner. Target Group drew on prior connections in the Chicago Public Schools to identify a high school site for the pharmacy program.

Improving accountability for program performance. The ACI College Readiness Program illustrates how an intermediary can contribute expertise to improve program practice and help measure outcomes for youth. ACI has incorporated the Chicago Youth Programs (CYP) into its network of programs that refer youth to the College Readiness Program. In turn, Illinois Tool Works has continued its support of the scholarship programs at CYP. Similarly, trade organizations such as the Illinois Retail Merchants Association provide employers such as Walgreens with assurance that best practices will be applied within programs.

Contributing expertise to a program model. Intermediaries can help find resources and expertise to contribute to programs. IRMA provided the concept behind the EXCITE program, although it does not directly implement it. Target Group, in turn, facilitated the alignment of the Westinghouse High School health professions curriculum with the Walgreens Pharmacy Tech certification curriculum.

Troubleshooting institutional (mis)communications. Intermediaries like Target Group help to disentangle miscues and miscommunications between employers, schools, and not-for-profits. They also acquaint parties with the views of other collaborators, especially when differences in perspective are a source of conflict.

Expediting effective program management. Intermediaries like Target Group and TEC Services can take the lead in program development and management, lifting these responsibilities from both schools and employers. TEC Services was able to gain Chicago Public School (CPS) course designation for its technology course at Wells High School by going directly to its contacts in central CPS administration. Wells High School staff were happy to be relieved of the cumbersome task of ferrying the application for a course number through central administration.

Addressing Issues Between Employers, Other Organizations, and Youth

Most of the organizations that sponsor workforce preparation programs also provide significant mediation between employers and youth participants. Examples of intermediary roles and functions of this sort include the following:

Screening, interviewing, and orientation of youth participants. Intermediary organizations are engaged to help identify, screen, and enroll youth who qualify for programs in order to help ensure a better match between student profiles, program goals, and the deployment of support services. Target Group, TEC Services, and Big Brothers Big Sisters all undertake student selection processes within the schools or companies with which they are engaged. The Added Chance Program provides its employer clients with some assurance that the youth they supply for entry-level positions are employable and honest. One intermediary stressed that his “screening” activities were less about eliminating youth and more about finding the best match between mentor and youth:

I’m not screening in terms of selecting students so much as getting a sense of their personality to make it easier to match them.

Providing specialized support services to youth. EXCITE succeeds in retaining most of its youth participants over READY in part because it provides specialized counseling for students at risk. Target Group devotes an employee specifically to counseling all students, and it procures specialized services to help students who face challenges such as pregnancy to remain active in the program.

Arranging transportation. Two programs, Cristo Rey and Best Practices High School, provided youth with transportation to internship sites. Cristo Rey also provided return transport, and Best Practices High School and EXCITE provided CTA tokens for transportation to job sites. This was seen also as a service to partner companies because it promoted punctuality.

Training/orienting corporate mentors. Most of the programs take steps to orient corporate mentors and presenters to the capabilities and expectations of the youth with whom they will interact. Big Brothers Big Sisters contributes its training expertise to the preparation of corporate mentors to the Bank One Academy program.

CHAPTER 10. OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

We asked employers and their partners to consider how companies may benefit from their involvement in youth workforce preparation activities. In doing so, we were aware that this sample of employers and highly regarded programs may be more likely than most to emphasize the quality of experience of their workers, and by extension, youth. Not surprisingly, many of the responses to this question paralleled some of the reasons that employers gave for wanting to become involved in the first place. However, four benefits for employer organizations appeared to be most valued and tangible for employers and program providers: enhanced employee satisfaction, future workforce development, unexpected value added from youth labor, and employee development.

Employee Satisfaction and Attachment

Most of the professionals interviewed for this project expressed personal satisfaction with their volunteer experiences. In addition, some organizations see *strategic* value in engagement with youth as a vehicle for deepening employee loyalty, increasing worker satisfaction, and attracting new talent. One employer referred to the benefits of supporting employee volunteerism, especially with youth, as “psychic income,” adding, “I would say that it has real benefit to us in the area of human relations and human interactions with our people.” Illinois Tool Works’ approach to community outreach is designed to communicate to employees that “we care about where you live and work.” ITW employees can secure matching funds for making contributions within their own communities and are provided release time to participate in a range of company-sponsored youth activities. Similar aims are recognized in the employee volunteer programs of large companies such as Quaker Oats, which see their community outreach efforts as ways to address employee quality of life as well as civic responsibility.

Workforce Development

Walgreens collaboration in EXCITE provided compelling evidence that companies facing labor shortages in key entry-level positions can benefit themselves and youth by providing opportunities for certification and skill training. By providing social support for youth and intermediary assistance with school partners, EXCITE allows Walgreens to concentrate its efforts on training and socializing youth within their own store-based training system. The school provides the venue and the Walgreens instructor prepares youth for certification examinations, which—when passed—provide youth with entry to the pharmacy industry, and

Walgreens with certified entry-level staff. The EXCITE model appears to be generating momentum within the firm, catching the attention of other district supervisors who see a way to reduce pressure to fill openings for pharmacy technicians with certified workers who also feel connected with customers and the community.

Although a number of other company spokespersons claimed that recruitment for talent and diversity is a primary incentive to engage in youth workforce preparation, it is too early to evaluate, even for longstanding employer partnerships. The interviews certainly revealed interest in the future potential of talented interns from sources such as Robert Morris College or Bank One Academy. Yet company officers also downplayed this motive as a decisive reason to engage youth. Bank One Academy saw such recruitment as an early hope of the program but indicated that this motive had receded in favor of greater impact on academic achievement. In assessing a large company's genuine investment in recruitment from a Chicago neighborhood high school, for example, a spokesperson for a large corporation commented:

[T]o be truthful, most of those students would not qualify for the kind of excellence, and I mean truly excellence, we would seek to hire.

Yet reaching those students and convincing other firms through example to make similar intensive investments in Chicago schools remains *the* focus of the same corporation's community outreach:

I know that several companies have signed on or increased their level of commitment because of what's learned, and that's what we hoped to do, to achieve scale that way.

Youth Productivity

A number of employers indicated that youth interns and students working on special projects were responsible for tangible savings to the daily operations of firms. Cristo Rey Jesuit High School has made this impact the chief selling point of its internship program. Other employers also remarked on real value contributed by student interns. Revere Group, for example, put a group of Wells High School TeraU students to work on a market research project. The information they unearthed from the Internet and other sources, though varied in quality, nonetheless saved the company's researchers time and effort.

Now these kids have everything in the world at their fingertips. So, an unskilled researcher can kick up a lot of dust in a short amount of time ... That's 40 hours that we were able to spend doing other things.

Many youth interns became so valuable to their departments that appropriate use of enthusiastic interns needed to be monitored, and cuts in intern budgets were greeted with groans.

This was especially true among smaller employers, where an extra set of hands could make a valuable contribution. As one program provider observed:

Some who have been able to utilize our interns in real project-based ways can say, “John was fantastic. We never would have gotten this off the ground if he hadn’t stuck with this all year and taken charge of it.” Most of those tend to be at small places where they take one or two people ... I think for adults in workplaces, the energy of a teenager ... is a great thing.

Employee and Work Team Development

Finally, there was evidence that mentoring, instructing, and supervising youth did contribute to the skills and professional maturity of staff, as well as making staff aware of issues and challenges within urban communities. Individual employees noted that mentoring and instructing youth added to their repertoire of skills and their management confidence. In addition to addressing students’ questions, an employee mentor observed:

I also had to throw away a lot of my practical knowledge and really make this something that was challenging for them.... I grew a lot ... I learned as much from doing this as much as they did from the program.

Another employer sponsor of youth interns noted:

I am a lot more patient; I’m more of a role model than I have ever been; more of a mentor ... The way I deal with them changes how I deal with my co-workers.

Finally, employers and professionals occasionally had eye-opening experiences in their interactions with urban youth. One program provider saw this exposure as a developmental opportunity for corporate mentors, creating

[A] bridge between worlds that seem very separate. And it’s good for everyone because the people who live in Oak Park or Cal City, I think it’s a good experience for them too as mentors to be working with kids they would never otherwise meet.

Another program provider agreed:

It’s one thing to read about an inner city kid in the newspaper, a drive by or something. And here you got a kid in your department and the kid comes to work and the kid is talking to you about the drive by that happened a block from his house and I think you begin to identify more with what that kid goes through. And I think the kid begins to understand that you have issues too. I think it’s educational on both sides.

CHAPTER 11. EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUTH OUTCOMES

The mutual impact of interaction for employers *and* youth brings us to the final question considered in our interview. We asked our respondents to consider the range of benefits and outcomes for youth that result from collaborations involving employers and professionals as volunteers. Adults involved in programs reported a wide range of outcomes, reflecting the broad and diverse activities and goals reflected in the program sample. The list mapped quite closely to youth development assets covered in the literature review in Chapter 2. In our focus groups, youth particularly emphasized that their program experiences built useful skills, helped them formulate personal and career goals, raised self-confidence, and provided them with supportive relationships with caring and well-informed adults.

In looking across the range of outcomes associated with programs, there is no easy way to discern which outcomes derive strongly from employer involvement and which benefits are more endemic to partner organizations or, for that matter, to the youth who choose to participate. Nonetheless, our analysis suggests some contributions to the general and career development of youth that reflect unique value added by employer partners. Here we highlight five such contributions and the needs they help to address: The value of exposure to the workplace and to workers, socialization to workplace expectations and rewards, information about career development and pathways, tangible connections in the workforce, and exposure to role models.

The Power of Exposure

Our interviews indicate that employer involvement can help introduce youth to the “downtown” work world and increase the diversity of youth’s social and cultural experience. Consistent exposure to professional work settings provides many youth with experiences that more affluent youth take for granted—from traveling to unfamiliar neighborhoods and asking directions to using public transportation and managing a bank account—and overcomes fear of failure. As one youth intern in the EXCITE program told us of the challenges she confronted:

I would have to say myself and fear, because if you’re scared that’s a burden to yourself.

Consistent and well-supported exposure to professional workplaces also helps youth overcome fears about people different from themselves, especially people perceived to be in power. A Bank One Academy intern observed:

I have a problem with adults and people that are in charge of me. I guess the mentors that were here are nicer than most adults I have been in contact with, and they changed my views on adults as a whole.

Perhaps just as important, youth in the modern American workplace are likely to see many people with professional standing who look and speak much as they do. As a program provider noted, job shadowing and internship can be

at least a little bit of eye opening for kids in terms of realizing that there are folks from their community who are part of the big world.

Socialization to the World of Work

Discussions of workforce development often focus narrowly on training youth in behaviors expected of employees in business settings—so-called “employability skills.” Our interviews, however, indicate that thoughtful employer partnerships go well beyond training, and instead socialize youth into the attitudes, perspectives, and practices that characterize the contemporary American professional. For one, this process of socialization was “about more modeling of work habits and professionalism, a bigger understanding of what the work world entails.”

Another program provider saw the process as a matter of gradual initiations: “It is ... a very slow preparation. Nothing is done overnight.” For yet another, it was turning youth loose to ask questions of professionals and reflect on the answers:

I think the most exciting thing you see is when the high school apprentices engaged with their instructors on a professional level. So they're asking questions like “How do you get business? What do you do to get a client? Where do you learn more about these things?” And actually having conversations with their instructors post program via e-mail and continuing to be in touch and really interacting with them as a colleague or a junior apprentice. That's the most exciting thing when you start to see that.

Information and Insight About Career Pathways

Nowadays, career education turns increasingly to digital media to present youth with information about career and educational pathways. Although these tools are undoubtedly useful, our interviews suggest that thoughtful employer involvement in career preparation programs provides youth with both the confidence, knowledge, and inquiry skills to learn the concrete educational and credentialing steps toward career-path employment. What programs such as Bank One Academy and EXCITE appear to do particularly well is help youth formulate career interests and goals through interactions with employers, while also gathering information about career options. The result is the sense of confidence expressed by a Bank One youth:

It gave me clear steps on how to get to my goals. I want to major in business like everybody else and it gave me what I need to do and how I need to do it and how I go about getting there. And I learned that it's going to be detours but if you take that detour you can still end up going to the same path you take.

Looking back at her internship experience, a senior at Best Practices High School expressed a similar appreciation for her experience:

It changed my whole mind about what I thought I wanted to be.... Now when you think about the 4 years that you've gone to different internships, it gives you a clue like do I really want to sit behind a desk. Or do I really want to operate on a dog or take care of the animals or do I really want to go to these schools and teach them about health issues. The whole internship to me I think is a good idea because ... it gives you a clue of what you want to do.

Making Real-World Connections

One of the well-established pitfalls of traditional high schools is the presentation of information in isolation from any sense of its relevance to “real life” or students’ futures. Thoughtful employer involvement in internship and work-based learning programs often challenges youth to solve real-world problems and to submit their solutions to the judgment of qualified practitioners. One employee volunteer described the networking problem he assigned to Robert Morris students:

I put it in real-life situations where the client doesn't have all the answers because they hadn't kept accurate documentation or their people just didn't have the skill set to perform the duties that they needed cause we run into that, that's why we're consultants and people call us in. After working with them [the students] a few weeks they were able to start asking deeper questions and actually doing your research and finding answers instead of just going on what I said.

Our interviews suggest that students respond with excitement to projects assembled by knowledgeable professionals. Such projects also may help develop an ethos of lifelong learning, such as that articulated by a Bank One Academy student:

One of the things I've learned from this program is you need to learn from basically everything you do and learn from your mistakes, learn what you do and just keep on learning.

Role Models in Action

Business people and professionals have long contributed to career development programs by speaking with groups of students about the work they do and the steps that brought them there. Well-planned employer engagement in mentorship, internship, and work-based learning can extend the developmental potential of contact between professionals and youth in at least three

critical ways. First, it extends the time frame for contact, often creating multiple opportunities to meet and engage an adult participant, and when possible, to establish both a working and caring relationship.

Second, it reduces the scale of the contact from large-group to small-group or one-to-one discourse. In these circumstances, professionals are more likely to attach names to the faces around them, entertain questions in greater depth, and draw out from students their own stories and aspirations. A program provider reflected on the power of one such exchange:

There is one mentor [who] grew up in [public housing] years ago and her family moved out when she was 14. One of the girls at the school lives there ... it was just this amazing thing for this girl who only knows people who live there and who go to her high school, where there aren't a whole lot of examples of success to point to. To hear them talk, "Oh you grew up there, you lived there?" It was really remarkable!

Third, mentors are more likely to become what one employer called "catalysts" when they share a common project with youth, help solve a real problem, or allow youth to accompany them in their daily work for an extended period of time. Under these circumstances, mentors have an opportunity to illustrate the connections between craft, ethos, and relationships with colleagues, while exposing youth to the daily practice of a profession as it is lived by people in workplaces. In such settings, conversations about career paths and educational requirements stop being abstract, allowing youth to see and hear the results of setting long-term goals and pursuing them, one step at a time. As one EXCITE youth said of her Pharmacy Tech teacher, a volunteer professional from Walgreens:

The health occupations program has many doors that you have to come in. So when you choose this major gotta be willing and prepared that you're going to do everything in your will, and [our teacher] is going to make sure that you do everything in your will to complete your goal because that's the kind of teacher she is.

SECTION III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, we have investigated a diverse group of employers and professionals in the Chicago region that have made serious and well-informed commitments to youth workforce preparation. The study has aimed particularly to understand the routes that bring employers into programs and partnerships, the factors and experiences that keep them involved, the challenges that arise from making and sustaining such commitments, and the practices that are associated with successful efforts. Inevitably, our choices of sample and method have imposed some limitations on the findings. Although our 12 programs have provided us with rich snapshots of employer engagement, the sample remains relatively small, making any depth of analysis between employers and program providers, or across varieties of workforce activities, somewhat sparse. Our findings derive from a small circle of informants working within very complex companies and programs, leaving many voices unheard. The sample does not permit comparison with the views of employers who decided not to pursue similar opportunities for contact with youth. Finally, our sample programs lean heavily in the direction of linkages with schools and in-school youth. Although this probably reflects the state of the art of employer engagement, nationally and in Chicago, we are not in a position to compare employer experiences with in-school and out-of-school adolescents in any depth.

Nevertheless, the interviews collected in this study yield useful information on routes of engagement, the challenges of engagement, and the outcomes that may reasonably be expected for employers, their partners, and youth. Our findings converge at many points with the existing literature in ways that support the validity of the research. The findings and issues raised by our informants add depth to this literature and possibly some unique perspectives.

We conclude by summarizing the study's most significant findings, and then we outline some unresolved issues that deserve more research and exploration. Finally, we advance three recommendations for extending the engagement of employers in youth workforce preparation that are warranted by our data, drawing from both the policy and practice phases of this two-year study.

CHAPTER 12. CONCLUSIONS

In reviewing the research results, some patterns within the data emerge as particularly important for understanding the opportunities and constraints for increasing the engagement of employers in the Chicago region. In this chapter, we summarize and draw conclusions from broad findings that have implications for policy development in the area of employer engagement. In the final chapter, we make some recommendations for further research and for some civic action to support further gains in youth workforce preparation.

Unique Capital for Youth Workforce Development

For important historical reasons, Western societies, particularly in North America, remain ambivalent about the developmental implications of employment for adolescents, and they actively limit the exposure of youth to workforce settings. Research indicates that factors in adolescence tend to exacerbate the isolation of low-income youth from information and resources that lift career aspirations and align educational and career goals (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Current workforce policies, on the other hand, raise the question of whether employers and professionals possess unique and necessary capital for workforce preparation, resources that youth must access to meet the challenges of the new century (Brown, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 1998; U.S. Department of Labor, 2001).

The present study corroborates that professional workplaces can effectively integrate youth into their productive routines, and that a strong minority of employers have experience with a wide spectrum of programs and activities directly relevant to workforce preparation. Partnerships that include employers are credited by participants with providing the full spectrum of skills and attributes associated with career readiness. Further, the findings suggest that links to employers can provide four developmental assets to youth that no other setting can fully duplicate: exposure to the mainstream economy and culture; socialization to the norms and practices of contemporary capitalism; first-hand information about career options; and opportunities to apply formal learning to solve real-world problems.

Synergy of Interests Between Employers and Youth

For reasons justified and unjustified, adults often assume that youth lack the social maturity, skills, experience, or discipline necessary to function within a work environment or contribute

meaningful value. As a result, employers either avoid having youth in workplaces altogether or assign youth to positions of limited responsibility. However, the weight of findings in this study indicates that with appropriate preparation and ongoing support, high school youth can use technology creatively and effectively, can contribute real value as junior team members, and can meet professional expectations of reliability, decorum, and honesty. Employers themselves noted two features of their contact with youth. First, high school students in many cases could contribute valuable skills and information to workplaces, exceeding the expectations of their employer sponsors and encouraging programs to sustain involvement. Second, employees found considerable satisfaction from supporting youth and deduced for themselves that greater benefits for youth could be realized by bringing youth into workplaces for first-hand experience with business activities. Once contact was initiated, the tendency among the employers in this study was to extend and deepen contact rather than curtail it.

A Variety of Activities, Employers, and Starting Points

Although they represent a relatively small collection of programs, the employers in our sample were diverse in terms of capitalization, workforce size, industry location, specialization, and prior experience with youth workforce preparation. For firms such as Bank One, Illinois Tool Works, or Quaker Oats, the programs we studied were part of a larger enterprise of community engagement that addressed a range of long-term business concerns. For other firms, such as Earth Tech or Phoenix of Chicago, the programs we studied were among the first serious commitments of time and resources to youth development. The results suggest that a wide range of firms in the Chicago region can find viable and productive niches as partners in youth workforce development. The findings also imply that the facilitation of employer involvement by program providers and intermediary organizations can expand the number of employers ready and willing to try youth workforce preparation. This is consistent with levels of employer involvement reported by initiatives such as Chicago's KidStart Summer Jobs Program, and it permits some optimism about the prospects for extending the number of firms ready to contribute to a concerted effort for youth.¹⁹

¹⁹ The KidStart web page includes an extensive list of employers that have committed to providing internships for youth in 2003. See: < <http://www.chicagokidstart.org/home>>.

A Matrix of Motivations for Employer Engagement

The data indicate that employers and professionals get involved in youth workforce activities for a wide variety of reasons, and with a striking range of impacts and outcomes in mind. One thoughtful corporate informant saw most employers as arrayed along a “45 degree line” between more expansive, community-oriented objectives—often summarized as an attitude of “corporate social responsibility”—and more immediate “bottom line” objectives related to profitability and competitiveness. Objectives related to corporate social responsibility are rarely purely altruistic, but usually have a strategic dimension, an awareness that contributions to the community enhance the reputation of companies and brands. In the same way, “bottom line” considerations are rarely strictly financial, but include building skills and attachment among current employees, as well as identifying future talent. Our analyses suggest two preliminary conclusions about firms that are most involved in youth workforce investment:

First, highly engaged firms exhibit both high degrees of corporate social responsibility and “bottom line” motivations, and they emphasize compatibility and synergy between these incentives. In effect, they operate at the high end of the “45 degree line” between the two dimensions. Strong workforce development incentives, for example, brought Walgreens into the EXCITE program. But the company’s awareness of community location and promotion from within are the soil in which the program has taken root. Quaker Oats, on the other hand, does not see a stake in developing future employees in the Chicago schools it sponsors. But it does envision a wide range of synergies between addressing the needs of public school students and cultivating employee development through volunteerism and community engagement. Despite anchoring their engagement in different incentives, both firms draw upon a matrix of motives to sustain youth work within their companies.

Second, highly engaged firms build a commitment to youth development upon a foundation of employee development and human resource management. Firms that see value in preparing youth for work also see value in cultivating the attachment and competency of current workers, and they interpret employee development in broad rather than narrow terms.

Advocates for Youth at Many Levels of Employer Organizations

Both the literature and our informants affirmed the importance of securing support for investing in youth activities from the highest levels of management within firms. The interviews helped to clarify at least three important functions that CEOs and top managers can play in establishing a

beachhead for youth within their organizations. First, top management can communicate clear support for educational and workforce activities personally and through other media, setting clear expectations for employee cooperation and engagement. Second, senior staff can identify and assign lead staff responsibility for specific implementation of program requirements and assure those staff that their efforts will contribute to their standing in the firm. Reassurance about this level of support clearly was important to corporate officers. Finally, senior managers can remove obstacles and set policies within departments and firms that facilitate program collaboration.

Although top managers can create conditions for effective youth partnerships, it falls to mid-level managers and administrative staff to actually implement collaborations for and with youth. Two lessons emerged from the findings. First, regardless of the goodwill of top managers, partnerships can founder if key personnel such as corporate foundation officers, human resource professionals, and leaders of autonomous business units are not integrated early into the partnership process. Unless it is clear that the interests of their departments or business units are factored into plans for youth activities, managers may guard their prerogatives and resist potential disruptions to departmental order. Second, the interviews suggest that potential advocates for youth may be found at many key levels within firms, through people with the commitment and connections to “work the system” on behalf of mentees or interns. In a number of instances, our contacts within companies made extraordinary commitments of time and were even willing to call in a few chits to establish an intern position or save current slots. Our results indicate that identifying, supporting, recognizing, and rewarding these employees in these efforts is a key ingredient in translating a culture of community outreach into concrete action for youth.

Common Features of Effective Partnerships and Program Providers

Although more time in our interviews focused on questions about employers, the study also pointed out common attitudes and practices among program providers that facilitate employer involvement. We have pointed out, for example, that most of our partners accepted a need to make collaboration “as easy as possible” for employers. In saying this, though, program providers did not imply that their employer partners were taking the easy road. Program providers were both appreciative of and realistic about the pressures facing employers, and they tended to place themselves in the employer’s shoes when considering how to access resources for youth in the workplace.

Program providers were particularly emphatic about aligning with the outlooks of employers in two respects. First, they understood that to stake a rightful claim to a place in an adult workplace, youth needed to perform “real work” and avoid being perceived as peripheral objects of charity. They were willing to walk away from potential employer partners if the work allocated to youth did not meet a clear and present need recognized by both employer and partner. Second, program providers also tended to “understand” the concerns of employers for accountability and periodic evaluation and had taken steps to document the impact of programs on their youth from many angles. Although most programs were not as committed to evaluation as Associated Colleges of Illinois, program providers did not view evaluation as a threat to program funds, and they professed a strong desire to improve youth offerings through data collection.

Evidence also emerged that more ambitious goals for youth can be realized through significant attention to intermediary roles and functions. In a few cases, these functions were addressed by inclusion of an organization assigned specifically to provide specialized services, from screening applicants to providing support services to youth participants. Although it may be natural for employers to avoid community partnerships that appear overcomplicated, the interviews indicate that skillful intermediaries make it easy for employers and program providers to keep youth engaged and spend more time on direct service and less time on program administration.

Recognizing Some Significant Constraints on Employer Engagement

As hoped, our focus on highly regarded programs has yielded many features of successful partnerships and prompts some optimism about the variety of ways that employers can contribute to youth workforce preparation. But our informants also were frank about conditions inherent in employer engagement that are likely to constrain widespread participation of employers, and should temper expectations of programs and policymakers. Particularly important was the reality of the variable business cycle. However enthusiastic, employers must still attend to market pressures and allocate staff and resources to survive. No single employer is immune from such pressure, and flux in the involvement of individual firms is inevitable.

This reality counsels that for employers to become a significant and reliable resource for youth workforce preparation, strong umbrella structures are required to pool the resources of employers at the municipal or regional level and to guide the distribution of opportunities for

youth engagement. Indeed, such a function is envisioned as a role of Youth Councils under the Workforce Investment Act, and in Chicago, agents such as the CPS Office of Education to Careers, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Chicago's KidStart Summer Jobs Program all aim to facilitate youth-employer contact. However, ongoing difficulty in integrating these efforts suggests that employers will continue to face a fragmented policy landscape in their efforts to find partners in workforce preparation.

CHAPTER 13. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the testimony of our interviewees often converged on common themes and perspectives, differences of outlook and emphasis did emerge, and they suggest important further directions for research. First, we briefly consider open and unresolved issues posed by our informants concerning internships and the youth selected for them. Then we will make recommendations for supporting youth workforce preparation throughout the Chicago region.

Directions for Further Research

Do Internships Need to Be Educational to be Developmental?

Although program providers in our sample agreed with the general maxim to “make it easy” for employers, they disagreed about the degree of responsibility that employers ought to take for the amount and quality of learning that youth ought to derive from workplace experiences, especially internships. Cristo Rey’s Corporate Internship Program, for example, began as a scheme to offset school tuition for urban youth, and it deliberately downplayed any employer responsibility for educational quality. Employers were accountable only for providing real work, while students would derive the benefits of performing real work—exposure to the work world, socialization to professional norms of behavior, and personal confidence. Outside of certain criteria, Cristo Rey does not insist on enriched work activities and is careful not to place employers in roles of teacher or social worker.

Other program providers were more concerned about the quality of the learning experience and sought to cultivate standards of internship activities for employers to help shape and implement. Understanding that Best Practices High School (BPHS) aimed toward quality learning experiences, employer partners asked the school’s internship director to develop some guidelines to clarify the boundaries between enriched work and simply useful work. Because BPHS aims to integrate more internship experiences into the academic curriculum, the internship director feels that gradually raising standards for internship experiences is an important objective to achieve. Bank One initially considered the option of an internship for its youth workforce preparation program but opted instead for an enrichment experience focused on sustained mentoring. Mentoring was seen as an approach that allowed better quality control for the content of student experiences and the use of employee time. More detailed comparative studies of the daily quality of experience of youth and employees in workforce preparation activities should

help clarify issues about the content of workplace activities and outcomes for varied groups of youth.

Youth Internships: To Pay or Not to Pay?

The interviews revealed a range of opinions within groups of employers, program providers, and youth about whether youth should be paid for performing tasks with a strong educational dimension. Youth themselves were divided on the question. Some were inclined to emphasize their good fortune in accessing opportunities such as mentorship at Bank One or docent training at Garfield Park Conservatory. Other youth were dissatisfied with performing duties that included entry-level filing or errands without some fair compensation. Employees divided along similar lines. Some corporate informants emphasized the appropriateness of gratitude and appreciation for opportunities to learn in corporate settings and also emphasized that pay would foreclose participation in internship programs for many companies. Other adults acknowledged that opportunities for paid work were a legitimate concern of youth, especially older teens, and should be built into internship structures where possible. The issue raises a range of research questions about the impact of pay on the feasibility of involvement for employers, as well as the norms that determine how adults and youth view the legitimacy of pay.

Should Employers Be Expected to Engage All Youth?

Several threads of evidence within the interviews raise the related questions of how willing and/or competent employers are to engage youth who are less well socialized to professional settings or who face serious skill deficits. Two factors appeared to shift the focus of employer engagement toward highly motivated, cooperative, and/or academically able youth. First, it was apparent that most program providers applied some selective criteria and screened youth against those criteria in the course of matching youth to employers. Particular attention was paid to the capacity of youth to follow instructions and control emotions. A few program providers spoke of differences between teens with “some attitude” versus other youth with “too much attitude.” Second, some employers registered frustration that they could not introduce students more thoroughly to subjects in areas such as engineering, because of deficits in math or reading. They indicated a preference for instructing youth who could benefit most from exposure to complex intellectual and social environments.

The present sample does not permit comparison between internship programs for in-school and out-of-school youth. As a scan of the PEPNet awardees will attest, such programs do

exist across the country, but no research addresses how these youth compare with in-school youth interns, or how the experiences of employer mentors or supervisors vary by category of youth. Although there are legitimate and pragmatic reasons to assume some bounds on the ability of employers to serve all youth equally, closer research into the degree and nature of these limits is critical to gaining access to employer resources for more urban and minority youth.

Recommendations

Although the findings do not derive from a large program sample, the convergence of the research results with findings from other studies warrants two broad recommendations for advancing employer engagement in the Chicago region, and especially in the City of Chicago.

Establish an Intermediary Organization to Expand Employer Involvement

A number of advocates for youth in the Chicago region have supported the expansion of opportunities for youth engagement with employers in enriched learning activities. Most recently, Festen and Hass have recommended expanding the focus of employer engagement to include a full range of career development activities, especially for middle school and high school youth (Festen & Hass, 2002). The present study provides support for this proposal in two key respects: a) employers are shown to be willing and capable partners in a range of career development activities; b) employer activities can contribute unique resources and capital to youth development, while helping to improve the quality of programs for youth workforce preparation.

Although this study shows that many businesses, employer organizations, and civic and policy bodies are addressing employer engagement, no organization currently exists in Chicago to coordinate these efforts. We recommend developing a comprehensive, intermediary organization in Chicago to act both as an information clearinghouse and coordinating agency linking employers with schools and youth employment programs, in order to expand employer engagement in the City of Chicago. This intermediary should have four essential features:

- The intermediary organization should include strong employer leadership and management, to ensure that the basic requirements for building employer engagement are observed.
- The intermediary organization should link businesses and employer organizations currently involved in youth workforce preparation with the policy bodies that are working to address the workforce needs of disadvantaged and out-of-school youth—most notably,

the Chicago Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council, and programs such as the KidStart Summer Jobs Program in Chicago. The goals would be to establish and implement a unified strategy for deepening employer involvement in the preparation of both in-school and out-of-school youth, and to pool local, state, federal, and private funding to support collaboration between employers and other youth-serving institutions.

- The intermediary organization should develop a matrix of opportunities for employer engagement that serves three purposes: a) to give employers an array of options for involvement that recognizes variation in the time and resources that employers can commit; b) to distribute employer resources equitably across communities and schools in Chicago; and c) to involve employers in all stages and phases of youth workforce preparation, including exposure, preparation, and postsecondary transition activities.
- The intermediary organization should associate itself closely with PEPNet and other national organizations to disseminate best practices in employer engagement, and facilitate employer involvement by supporting training and orientation for and possibly by employers.

Commission Research on the Outcomes of Employer Engagement

The present study indicates that employers both want and need better information about how employer involvement impacts the workforce development of youth, as well as how and to what degree employer involvement can benefit participating companies. Such information should help companies and policymakers develop options for employer involvement on the basis of realistic expectations about outcomes, and lead to better indicators for program evaluation. The comprehensive mapping of youth workforce preparation programs now underway at Chapin Hall Center for Children, with funding from the Chicago Workforce Investment Board, should yield a more complete picture of the current involvement of employers in youth development projects across the region, a foundation for future inquiry into outcomes.

Develop a Public Information Campaign to Encourage and Recognize Employer Engagement

Among the challenges to employer engagement that were voiced by employers was a lack of sufficient and compelling information about contributing to youth workforce preparation, the kind of information that would catch the attention of business people. As one employer volunteer put it:

We bury our noses in business all day long ... So there is a level of invisibility for corporate America and all the things they could be doing ... I think that ... there needs to be some kind of a proactive way to connect people like myself and the tremendous demand that's going on in the city.

One important way to make the opportunities visible to corporate Chicago is to develop a coordinated campaign to communicate the opportunities for business and young people who work together in well-crafted programs. The research here suggests that a number of programs and employers would be interested in sharing their stories and experiences. We recommend structuring a campaign around the experiences of these programs and employers and using both general and business-specific outlets to build public support for more employer engagement in youth workforce preparation.

APPENDIX A

Program Interviews

Program Interviews

Reginald “Hats” Adams
Director of Community Affairs
Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke’s Medical
Center

Robert D. Blackwell
CEO
Robert Blackwell Consulting

Greg Buseman
Consultant
Revere Group Inc.

Deborah Dahlen
Vice President for Institutional
Advancement
Robert Morris College

Carlos De La Rosa
Assistant Director
Corporate Internship Program
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

Philip J. Delahunt, Jr.
Project Manager
Earth Tech Inc.

Debra DiPasquale
Program Director
Bank One

Scott Diveney
Chicago East Central District Pharmacy
Supervisor
Walgreens

Benjamin Dueholm
Program Officer
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan
Chicago

Mary Dwyer
Civic and Community Development
LaSalle Bank

Daniel L. Fabbri
Consultant
Robert Blackwell Consulting

Ivan Favila
Program Officer
UIC Minority Engineering Program

Daniel Friedman
Vice President
Food and Paper Supply Co.

Sharon Garcia
Program Coordinator
Marketing Career Path
Wells High School

Cheryl Lamm Gunn
Director of Community Relations
Quaker Oats Inc.

Katherine Harlow
Consultant
Walgreens

Lee Hubbell
Senior Project Manager
Target Group Inc.

Armando H. Huevo
Mechanical Engineer
Phoenix Corp.

Khari Hunt
Director, Tech 37
City of Chicago
After School Matters

Heidi Intagliata
Assistant Director of Development,
Philanthropy and Communication
Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical
Center

Preston Kendell
Executive Vice President
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

Christopher Luecke
Executive Director
Added Chance Program

Mary Ann Mallahan
Manager, Community Relations
Illinois Tool Works Foundation
Illinois Tool Works Inc.

Carla J. Mayer
Internship Coordinator
Best Practices High School

Glenn Rathke
Consultant
Robert Blackwell Consulting

Gary Peter Rejebian
Vice President
Illinois Retail Merchants Association

Sheila Rogers
Program Coordinator
Career Links
Women Employed

Michelle Salerno
Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical
Center

Gary Sutton
CEO
TEC Services Consulting Inc.

Renee Tucker
Program Director
Associated Colleges of Illinois

Credell Walls
Program Coordinator
Garfield Park Conservatory

Margo Weiser
Program Director
Bank One

Background Interviews

Davis Jenkins
Senior Fellow
UIC Great Cities Institute

Linda Kaiser
Executive Director
The Chicago Workforce Board

Peggy Luce
Vice President, Education and Workforce
The Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce

Peter Saflund
Associate Director
National Workforce Center for Emerging
Technologies

Dennis Sienko
President
Sienko & Associates

Joyce Malyn-Smith
Center for Education, Employment, and
Community
Educational Development Center

Katherine O'Sullivan
Director
PEPNet
National Youth Employment Coalition

David Osman
Associate Director
National Skills Standards Board

Jeffrey Thielman
Executive Director
Cassin Educational Initiative Foundation

David Wilcox
Senior Policy Advisor
National Skills Standards Board

Jack Wuest
Executive Director
Alternative Schools Network

Meg Zimbeck
Former Welfare and Workforce Policy
Specialist
The Illinois Caucus for Adolescent
Health

APPENDIX B

Methodology

Methodology

Selection of Program Sample

The goal of program sample selection was to interview key informants from 4 programs within 3 broad program classifications, yielding a total of 12 focal programs. Identification and selection of the program partnerships for the interview study proceeded in three phases. In phase one, a review of literature was undertaken to identify categories of career pathway activities to which employers actively contributed time and expertise, beyond financial support. This review was compared with a parallel review of the literature of adolescent career development to identify categories bridging adolescent needs and program goals. Three categories of programs addressing distinct career development needs were specified:

- *Exposure programs* focused primarily on introducing youth to varieties of careers and workplaces, with the goal of deepening career awareness.²⁰ It encompasses two subcategories of career education identified in the literature, namely exposure to career options, and exploration of specific options through information gathering and “hands on” experiences.
- *Preparation programs* focused primarily on enabling youth to acquire necessary knowledge, skills, and credentials to successfully make the transition from high school to a specific career pathway.
- *Postsecondary transition programs* focused primarily on providing youth with knowledge and skills necessary to succeed as postsecondary students.

In the second phase, a pool of candidate partnerships was identified from three sources: the review of literature, including a scan of corporate and program web sites pertaining to youth workforce programs in the Chicago region; interviews conducted in 2001 as part of our study of youth workforce policies; and discussions with national and regional experts in workforce education and preparation. The content of these programs subsequently was reviewed, and programs were classified as primarily exposure, preparation, or postsecondary transition in orientation.

In the third phase, the pool of programs for the study was narrowed further within each of the program classifications. Programs were prioritized for study selection if they focused on low-income and urban youth, involved significant direct contact between employer personnel and youth, and included particular attention to issues posed by minority status, gender, or disability. This yielded a pool of between six and eight programs within each program classification. It was understood that the willingness of programs and employer partners to participate would influence the final selection of programs for study. In fact, of the top 13 programs contacted about their interest, only 1 program declined to participate, and the goal of

²⁰ There is broad consensus that early career development experiences for children and young adolescents should provide both exposure to a range of career options and opportunities to explore the activities involved in a range of professions that particularly interest individual youth (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Mortimer, 2003). In this study, exposure and exploration emphases are summarized as “exposure” for two reasons: a) they appear often to overlap in the activities of programs with strong employer involvement, and b) three classifications fit well with a target of about 12 programs for study.

12 programs was realized. Table 1 (p. 81) presents the 12 programs that agreed to participate in the study, along with partner organizations included among the interviews.

Program Characteristics

A priority in choosing programs was to sample a wide range of employer experiences with urban youth, engaged in a diverse set of career education activities. Table 1 indicates that a diverse program sample was achieved in terms of workforce preparation activities, gender of youth participants, the roles and responsibilities of employers, and the numbers and roles of program providers. The sample includes 12 employer organizations and 14 program providers, including 3 organizations providing specialized services (“intermediaries”). Ten “employers” are private sector firms, ranging in size from major international banks and manufacturers to mid-sized engineering and technology consultancies. The other two employers are a large teaching hospital on Chicago’s west side, and the Garfield Park Conservatory, a large unit of the Chicago Park District.

Certain common characteristics also define the program sample. The majority of programs in the sample:

- Focus on the needs of in-school, high-school-aged youth (ages 15-19).
- Include low-income Latino and African American youth as participants.
- Serve both male and female youth.
- Collaborate in varied ways with schools as primary or secondary partners.
- Bring employees and youth into contact in shared activities and settings.

Only one program partnership focuses primarily on out-of-school youth, the Added Chance program. The research results are informative primarily about the interactions of employers with in-school youth from low-income working families and their program advocates.

Interview Participant Characteristics

Thirty-two adults involved in programs were interviewed for the study, including 17 employer representatives and 15 representatives of program providers. About half (8) of the employer representatives were senior managers, while the remainder brought the perspectives of mid-level managers and clerical staff. About half (7) of the program provider representatives also were senior managers, and the remaining respondents were program managers with extensive responsibility, including responsibility for employer relations. With few exceptions, all interviewees were active collaborators in the provision of services to youth.

Twenty-two youth were included in three focus groups, each representing one of the program categories. All youth currently were enrolled in Chicago public high schools, and the majority were juniors and seniors (ages 16-18), from Latino or African American families. Participation in focus groups was distributed as follows:

Table 1. Overview of 12 Programs Included in Study, with Program Providers, Employer Partners, and Other Partners Interviewed

	Program Name	Program Provider	Employer Partner	Other Partners	Primary Activities	Youth *
Exposure	Career Links	Women Employed	Quaker Oats Inc.	Wells High School	Mentorship; job site visits	Female; 16-18; multi-ethnic; mixed income
	Tech 37	City of Chicago	Earth Tech Inc.	Not interviewed	Career education; work-based learning	M/F; 14-18; multi-ethnic; low income
	Corporate Internship	Cristo Rey Jesuit High School	AMRO/LaSalle Bank, Inc.	Not interviewed	Part-time internships	M/F; 14-18; Hispanic; low income
	Community Internship (YFG)	Best Practices High School	Garfield Park Conservatory	Not interviewed	Part-time internships	M/F; 14-18; multi-ethnic; mixed income
Preparation	TeraU	TEC Services Inc.	Revere Group Inc.	Wells High School	Career education; work-based learning	M/F; 16-18; multi-ethnic; low income
	EXCITE (YFG)	Illinois Retail Merchants Association (IRMA)	Walgreens Inc.	Target Group Inc. Westinghouse High School	Career education; internship; certification	Female; 16-18; African American; low income
	Added Chance	Added Chance	Food and Paper Supply Co.	Not interviewed	Job training and placement	M/F; 16-21; multi-ethnic; low income
	Science and Math Excellence (SAME)	Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center Department of Community Outreach	Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center Benefits Department	Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center Philanthropy Department	Academic preparation; internship; career education	M/F; 14-18; African American; low income
Postsecondary Preparation	STEM Program	UIC Minority Engineering Program	Armando Huevo, Phoenix Co. of Chicago	Not interviewed	Academic preparation; career education; mentorship	M/F; 16-18; Hispanic; mixed income
	College Readiness Program	ACI (Associated Colleges of Illinois)	Illinois Tool Works Inc.	Not interviewed	Career education; academic preparation; college exposure	M/F; 17-18; multi-ethnic; low income
	Project-Based Classes	Robert Morris College	Blackwell Consulting Services Inc.	Not interviewed	Work-based learning; job site visits	M/F; 18-25; multi-ethnic; mixed income
	Bank One Academy (YFG)	Bank One Inc. Diversity Dept.	Bank One Inc. Employees	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago	Mentorship; career education; academic support and tutoring	M/F; 17-18; multi-ethnic; mixed income

Exposure programs focused primarily on introducing youth to varieties of careers and workplaces, with the goal of deepening career awareness.

Preparation programs focused primarily on enabling youth to acquire necessary skills and credentials to move successfully from high school to career pathway.

Postsecondary transition programs focused primarily on providing youth with knowledge and skills necessary to succeed as postsecondary students.

(YFG) denotes program selected for youth focus group.

* Order of information on youth: Gender (Male; Female; M/F); age range of program youth; ethnic composition of program youth (African American; Hispanic; multi ethnic); income level of program youth (predominantly low income; mixed income).

- Exposure: Best Practices High School (9 youth)
- Preparation: EXCITE Pharmacy Technicians Program (4 youth)
- Postsecondary transition: Bank One Academy (9 youth)

Consent Procedures and Research Protections

In accordance with University of Chicago informed consent procedures, all interview participants received a description of the project and research procedures and signed a written consent form detailing their rights as research participants. Adult participants were asked to consent separately to four research activities: a) an interview; b) audiotaping of the interview; c) identification in resulting reports as a research participant; 4) direct quotation from interview without prior review by participant. Only 2 of 32 participants refused to be audiotaped, and 3 requested further contact from the research team before agreeing to be acknowledged as a research participant. Nineteen (19) participants refused permission to quote without prior review. Among this group, all quotations were reviewed by participants before final inclusion in this report.

Research Protocols and Data Collection Procedures

Interviews were conducted between early December 2002 and mid-April 2003. Given the busy schedules of participants, interviews were scheduled and conducted at the convenience of the participant, with no priority given to status as “employer” or “program provider.” In the case of three programs selected for youth focus groups, adult interviews were completed first to provide necessary background information to be collected and processed.

Three interview protocols were developed for the study, each requiring about 75 minutes for complete administration. These included separate interviews for employers, program providers, and youth. In all interviews, the participants were asked to identify themselves, their organization and responsibilities, and to describe the roles they fulfilled within the program. All protocols then addressed a core set of research issues regarding the engagement of employers in youth workforce preparation, with wording varied slightly to gain the perspective of each group. Core interview questions included the following:

- Why did [the employer] initially become involved in this program or activity, and has [the employer’s] motives for engagement changed over time?
- How did [the employer] initially become engaged, through what steps and mechanisms?
- What resources were helpful in keeping [the employer] engaged in this program?
- What needs or goals among youth does the program address, and how does the employer contribute to meeting these needs or goals?
- Does the program address any issues in youth workforce preparation posed by race/ethnicity or gender? How do employers connect to these issues?
- What challenges are posed by the involvement of [the employer] in this program? How are these challenges addressed?
- What benefits does [the employer] realize from participating in this program?

- What benefits are realized by youth and program providers, and how do employers contribute to these benefits?
- How are benefits measured, if at all?
- Are there further ideas or lessons about the involvement of employers in youth workforce preparation that have emerged from participation in this program? Any recommendations for employers considering involvement in similar programs?

Coding and Analysis

A qualitative coding procedure was devised corresponding to the major research questions in the study. The qualitative research software package “Nvivo” was employed to facilitate coding and analysis. Verbatim transcripts from all interviews first were labeled as either “employer” or “program provider” and further identified according to program classification. In two cases of nonrecorded interviews, detailed summaries were prepared by the interviewer. Each transcript then was hand-coded for issues related to the research questions (e.g., challenges of engagement; how partnerships were initiated; benefits or outcomes for youth, employers, and program providers).

Next, employer and program provider interviews were analyzed separately to detect broad themes and lessons pertaining to each research question and discernible differences of perspective within each group. Two analysts focused respectively on the employer and program provider transcripts. Finally, the employer and program provider analyses were compared on each major research question to detect convergence and divergence in perspectives between the two groups. A final conference between the two primary interview analysts was conducted to identify unresolved issues within the interviews, and between the analysts’ readings of the interviews. The final dataset contributing to this report includes both the separate analyses of employer and program provider interviews as well as the comparative summary of common and distinguishing themes.

APPENDIX C

Descriptions of Interview Programs and Partnerships

Descriptions of Interview Programs and Partnerships

Exposure Programs

Exposure programs are defined as programs focused primarily on introducing youth to varieties of careers and workplaces, with the goal of deepening career awareness. Exposure programs are not intended to initiate youth in the practice of a particular craft or profession. The four programs selected to represent the participation of employers in exposure activities include the following:

The Career Links Program

Women Employed (WE) is a not-for-profit organization committed to the improvement of the economic status of women, with a focus on the Chicago region. According to its web site, WE “conducts advocacy and public education programs on issues such as equal opportunity policy and enforcement, fair workplace practices, access to education and training, and welfare reform.” WE includes initiatives for young women, including the Career Links program. Career Links provides mentorship and career education activities for teenage girls, including small-group contact with working women in a wide range of professions. Sessions take place on weekly, bi-weekly, and bi-monthly schedules during the school year. Locations include schools and community organizations. Mentors are recruited from industry and the not-for-profit sector, and they receive training and support.

Quaker Oats Company, a subsidiary of Pepsico, has deep roots in the Chicago area. Quaker provides financial support and volunteer mentors to the Career Links program at Wells High School as part of the company’s broader commitment to Wells. Quaker’s commitment to Wells High School is part of a strategy to concentrate volunteer and financial support on three Chicago public schools in order to maximize impact for teachers, students, and volunteers.

Tech 37

Tech 37, a part of the City of Chicago’s After School Matters initiative, attempts

[T]o leverage the knowledge of Chicago’s premier technology corporations to engage high school students in new and emergent technologies and to introduce them to career paths in the field of technology.²¹

Tech 37 aims to reach male and female high school students, with a particular focus on helping inner city and minority students overcome obstacles that block access to technology-related careers. Students meet professionals, engage in technology projects with community-based organizations, and learn about technology options in presentations by technology and engineering professionals. Teams of 20 students at each participating high school meet three days each week in three-hour sessions during the school year. Students learn skills such as HTML programming while cultivating a broader palette of business and customer service skills.

²¹ See: <http://www.ci.chi.il.us/tech37/overview.html>.

The city also incorporates Tech 37 into its Summer Internship Program, with the aim of offering Tech 37 participants internship opportunities.

Tech 37 has partnered with a number of Chicago corporations to supply curricula and volunteer presenters to the program. Earth Tech Inc. is the employer partner featured in this study. Earth Tech, a subsidiary of Tyco International Ltd., is a large, international firm specializing in water, environmental, transportation, and construction projects. The firm has completed large municipal engineering projects for the City of Chicago, and it connected with Tech 37 through channels in city government. Earth Tech convened a team of volunteer engineers in autumn 2002 to create materials and presentations to expose youth at Wells High School to a wide range of environmental engineering applications.

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Corporate Internship Program

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, founded in 1996, is a private, college preparatory high school serving the Little Village and Pilsen neighborhoods of Chicago. The student body is almost 100 percent Latino. From its inception, student schedules and classes have been built around each student's commitment to the Corporate Internship Program (CIP). CIP combines features of job sharing and employee leasing to assign teams of four students to cover one full-time internship position at a company or organization in the Chicago region. By working one day each week at the internship site through the school year, students are able to defray about three-fourths of their annual tuition. Students are employees of CIP, not their sponsor companies, and CIP provides companies with services comparable to a professional temporary services firm. More than 90 companies and not-for-profit organizations currently participate as sponsors.

ABN AMRO/LaSalle Bank has participated in CIP since 1998. In 2003, the firm sponsored 12 Cristo Rey students as interns (3 teams of 4 students each). The students are supervised by staff attached to the bank's Civic and Community Development Office and perform a wide range of basic clerical tasks through departments in the bank's Chicago headquarters.

Best Practices Public High School, Community Internship Program

Best Practices High School (BPHS) is an experimental secondary education program within the Chicago Public School system. The small school of about 400 students aims to integrate cutting-edge instructional practices and a college preparatory curriculum with service learning internships, extensive use of technology, and partnerships with civic, scientific, and cultural institutions around the city. The goal is to create new learning options for a diverse, nonselective student population that "build a connection between school and students' future lives."²² One half-day each week, unpaid BPHS student interns contribute to local businesses and not-for-profit organizations around Chicago in a wide range of roles, with many opportunities to assume responsibility. Approximately 70 organizations hosted interns during the 2002-2003 school year.

The Garfield Park Conservatory has sponsored BPHS interns since 2000 as part of its youth docent program. The Conservatory is located about 5 miles directly west of Chicago's

²² Quoted from *BPHS internship program* (2002). Chicago, IL: Best Practices High School.

Loop, and has enjoyed a significant revival of programs and public interest, particularly through the efforts of the not-for-profit Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance. Mindful of building strong relationships with its surrounding community, the Conservatory partners each year with neighboring high schools, including BPHS, to train youth docents as guides to the extensive collections housed in the facility. The two-year docent program begins with a volunteer training year and continues as a paid internship for youth who meet requirements of the position.

Preparation Programs

Preparation programs focus primarily on enabling youth to acquire knowledge, skills, and credentials to move successfully from high school to a specific career pathway. These programs can also incorporate features of career exposure and preparation for college, particularly in introducing youth to the range of subspecialties within a field. The four programs selected to represent the participation of employers in preparation activities include the following:

TeraU Program

TeraU is the creation of TEC Services Inc., a technology consulting firm based in Naperville, Illinois.²³ This school-based education-to-careers program focuses on integrating rigorous classroom instruction with work-based learning opportunities, in partnership with schools and businesses. The program arose from TEC Services's efforts in the mid-1990s to "grow their own" qualified entry-level technology specialists, in the face of a tight labor market for technology skills. Although developed as a highly adaptable model of instruction, the program aims particularly to open access to technology careers to women and minorities. The program begins with intensive staffing from TEC Services personnel, and transfers instructional responsibility to local school faculty through a team teaching process. Currently, variants of the program are being developed in Australia and China.

TeraU links students to businesses in the local community and across the Chicago region. Businesses are recruited to give presentations, construct work-based learning projects, and provide internship opportunities during and after the program. Revere Group Inc., the employer partner to TeraU in this study, headquartered in Deerfield, Illinois, is a technology consulting firm specializing in services to middle-market companies.²⁴ Revere became involved in providing work-based project opportunities to Wells High School students through common affiliation with the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce.

²³ From the TeraU web page: "TeraU is designed to provide high school students with highly focused technology experiences, participation in the processes of the real world of work and relevant career experience through the management, completion and documentation of projects that provide valuable career experience. TeraU students participate in an education-to-careers program that provides not only skills leading to industry certifications, but also employability that are coupled with appropriate technical job skills." For more information on TEC Services and TeraU, see: <http://www.tecsinc.com/>.

²⁴ For more information on Revere Group, see: <http://reveregroup.com/>.

EXCITE Pharmacy Technicians Program

The EXCITE Pharmacy Technicians Program is the product of a collaboration between the Illinois Retail Merchants Association (IRMA), Walgreens Inc., Target Group Inc., and the Chicago Public Schools. In the mid-1990s, IRMA established the READY retail training program, a school-to-work curriculum designed to expose high school youth to a wide range of retail career directions and skills.²⁵ IRMA adapted the READY model in the late 1990s to focus more centrally on business sectors facing needs for high-skilled labor. This included the pharmacy industry, which nationally faces a shortage of certified entry-level pharmacy technicians.

According to IRMA's web site, the organization created EXCITE

[W]ith a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity and in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools. The education-to-careers program, designed to attract health sciences students to the many opportunities in pharmacy retailing, is run by IRMA and Target Group, a Chicago consulting firm, and prepares students for careers in pharmacy retailing. It includes comprehensive preparation for PTCB certification as a pharmacy technician; work exposures and experience in a retail pharmacy; national skill-standards-based pre-employment training; skills assessments, remedial education, social service supports and more.²⁶

Target Group particularly is responsible for managing relations between schools and corporate sponsors, and providing counseling and referral support services for students as needs arise.

As the largest retail pharmacy chain in Illinois, Walgreens was approached by IRMA to provide instruction and internship training for EXCITE students at Westinghouse High School. Walgreens integrates the EXCITE program within a broader initiative to build awareness of pharmacy and retail career opportunities, particularly in underserved and minority communities.²⁷ As the primary corporate partner in EXCITE, Walgreens commits to provide an experienced pharmacist as an in-school employer, provide training internships for EXCITE students, and guarantee pharmacy technician positions to students who successfully complete the program.

²⁵ READY stands for "Retail and Education Alliance for Development of Youth." For more information, see: National Retail Federation (1999). *Retail skill standards at work: Success stories*. Washington, DC, National Retail Institute.

²⁶ For more information on EXCITE and recent successes of EXCITE students in Chicago, see: < <http://www.irma.org/news/contentview.asp?c=6471>>.

²⁷ According to Walgreens' web site:" Walgreens is launching an exciting new program to introduce students to careers in pharmacy, and we would welcome the chance to have your high school classroom participate. Key Walgreens employees from around the country are prepared to deliver a presentation that will show your students exactly what a career in pharmacy entails. They will also discuss Walgreens' history, the benefits of a career in healthcare, working as a pharmacy technician, scholarship opportunities, life as a pharmacist and potential career paths and growth." See: < <http://www.walgreens.com/about/careers/pharmacy/presentations.jhtml>>.

Added Chance Program

Added Chance is designed to help youth in the Chicago area who are leaving foster care to obtain employment training and placement services. A member of the Alternative Schools Network, Added Chance is highly regarded for providing strong support and follow-up services for youth following the first placement and for maintaining close ties with employer partners to help resolve issues with youth employee clients. Added Chance works closely with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to help youth who are aging out of foster care services to obtain job training and placements.

Added Chance continually recruits business partners for employment opportunities. Our featured employer partner, Food and Paper Supply Company, is a medium-sized food service distribution company located on Chicago's southeast side. The company is committed to hiring from the surrounding, largely African American community and has worked with Added Chance to identify entry-level employees for over 10 years.

SAME (Science and Math Excellence) Program

SAME is a project of the Department of Community Affairs of Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's (RPSL) Medical Center, under department director Reginald "Hats" Adams. The aim of SAME is to provide Chicago children with superior resources for learning science and mathematics, while fostering the skills and love of learning necessary to pursue science-related professions. The program partners closely with public elementary and high schools in Chicago to enhance laboratory facilities, establish science and math clubs, improve science and math instruction, arrange visits to science and medical facilities, and arrange visits with speakers and mentors from science-related professions. SAME also sponsors a high school internship program at RPSL Medical Center in which low-income and minority youth receive academic enrichment and serve as volunteer interns. The program currently is being replicated in South Africa.

RPSL Medical Center also serves as the primary host of youth interns during the school year. Students intern in many departments, including administrative and medical practice offices. Managers and doctors interview internship candidates and select intern finalists, and they are free to participate or not participate in the program. Interviews for this project were conducted with representatives from the Benefits and Philanthropy and Communications departments.

Postsecondary Transition Programs

Postsecondary Transition Programs focus primarily on providing youth with knowledge and skills necessary to succeed as students in two-year and four-year college and university programs. Again, they may include many general career education components, as well as introduce students to specific fields of study and career specialty (e.g., engineering). But their location and mission primarily targets preparation for university study. The four programs selected to represent the participation of employers in preparation activities are the following:

STEM Institute of Chicago

According to its web site, the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) Institute of Chicago is

[O]ne of several enrichment programs throughout the country organized by the Center for the Advancement of Hispanics in Science and Engineering Education (CAHSEE).²⁸ The purpose of the STEM Institute is to introduce advanced analytical concepts to high school students who will explore topics in science, engineering, and mathematics. They will meet successful professional engineers and scientists through lunch-time discussions and other activities. Hispanic and other underrepresented students are the focus of the program.

The program is hosted each summer by the Minority Engineering Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The program draws on curricular and program guidelines developed by CAHSEE, but it also adapts programming to fit the needs of Chicago students. External grants are used to defray program costs, and students come to UIC for a five-week summer course at no charge. In 2002, about 50 students participated in the summer coursework. Follow-up academic support and activities are also provided through the school year.

Armando Huezo is a consulting associate with the Phoenix Company of Chicago, a manufacturer of components and support infrastructure for high technology systems.²⁹ Mr. Huezo is a volunteer member of the board of directors of STEM and provides financial support and volunteer mentorship to STEM students and college instructors. Mr. Huezo also has participated in Glenbard East High School's Career Internship Program.

ACI College Readiness Program

Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) is an association of 24 private liberal arts colleges and universities in Illinois, dedicated to advancing the interests of higher learning and students in the state through public advocacy, business partnerships, scholarship, and faculty training programs.³⁰ The College Readiness Program aims to provide low-income Illinois high school students with information and preparation for the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. The program annually provides more than 500 high school students with academic remediation and enrichment, exposure to college campuses and student life, career education activities, and assistance with college application and financial aid processes. In 2002, the

²⁸ From CAHSEE's Internet site: "The Center for the Advancement of Hispanics in Science and Engineering Education is a national educational and scientific non-profit organization based in Washington DC created by Latino scientists and engineers. Our mission is to prepare talented Hispanic and other underrepresented minority science and engineering students achieve academic excellence and professional success through CAHSEE's pipeline of rigorous educational and leadership development programs." See: <http://www.cahsee.org/>.

²⁹ According to its Internet site: "Established in 1969, The Phoenix Company has evolved into a network of four component manufacturing companies. Today we offer products from coax connectors and delay lines to surface mount assemblies and box-build manufacturing. Our commitment to excellence is demonstrated by state-of-the-art equipment, high quality standards, and our dedicated employees. See: <http://www.phoenixofchicago.com/>.

³⁰ See: <http://www.acifund.org/index.htm>.

program was recognized by the Workforce Board of Metropolitan Chicago with its Promising Practice Award.

Illinois Tool Works, Inc. (ITW) is a large, publicly held machine metal and industrial tool manufacturer headquartered in Glenview, Illinois, employing more than 48,000 workers, with over \$9 billion in annual sales.³¹ ITW has maintained an active philanthropic and employee volunteer program through its Office of Community Relations and the ITW Foundation. Although ITW has a history of association with ACI, the present partnership focuses on support for College Readiness students associated with the after-school programs of the Chicago Youth Centers (CYC).³² CYC is the largest independent youth service provider in the city, serving 11,000 children and youth annually through 16 neighborhood centers and 1 summer camp.

Blackwell/Robert Morris Project-Based Learning Partnership

In 2001, Robert Morris College and Blackwell Consulting Services initiated a high-level discussion about collaborating to provide students with challenging work-based learning experiences. The discussions were facilitated by Chicago Metropolis 2020, an arm of the Commercial Club of Chicago, which focuses on finding regional solutions to challenges facing Chicago and Northeast Illinois.³³ Robert Morris College, with a main campus in the Chicago Loop, offers two- and four-year degree programs in a wide range of applied disciplines, with noted specialties in business and technology.³⁴ The College specializes in meeting the needs of first-generation and minority urban students from the Chicago region, and it maintains extensive partnerships both with the Chicago Public Schools and area employers. An ambitious internship program places most students into part-time paid positions in disciplines associated with a student's major area of concentration.

Blackwell Consulting Services (BCS) describes itself as

[T]he largest minority-owned management consulting and information technology consultancy in the Midwest. We provide full lifecycle services with an emphasis on architecting and implementing custom application solutions and infrastructures. Blackwell Consulting Services is a privately held company with over 200 full-time consultants and technical professionals, with remote offices in Atlanta; Bloomington, IL; and Cincinnati, OH.³⁵

³¹ For information on Illinois Tool Works, see: <http://www.1jump.com/cgi-bin/contentdisplay.cgi?c=I092000000&o=t&u=1Jump>.

³² According to its web site, CYC "is the largest independent youth services agency based in Chicago ... More than 11,000 kids, ages 3-19, come to our neighborhood centers, overnight camp or child and family welfare services each year. CYC was founded in 1956 to serve kids in Chicago's toughest neighborhoods, a mission that continues today. CYC has many types of academic, athletic, arts and counseling programs for children." See: <http://www.chicagoyouthcenters.org/>.

³³ See: <http://www.chicagometropolis2020.org/>.

³⁴ See: <http://www.robertmorris.edu/academics/>.

³⁵ See: <http://www.bcsinc.com/bcs/bcsweb.nsf/configuration/home.html>.

The company is committed to developing a diverse workplace culture that benefits both employees and clients. In 2001-2002, two Blackwell consultants, with supporting staff, collaborated with Robert Morris faculty to provide two work-based learning experiences: a simulated installation of a new network server for a large business client, and the development of business software.

Bank One Academy and Saturday Scholars

Bank One Corporation is among the nation's leading financial institutions, as well as a recognized leader in corporate philanthropy. In 2002, Bank One contributed over \$40 million in cities and communities in 15 states. Contributions to youth include grants and programs that encourage financial literacy, exposure to business and financial careers, and general youth development.³⁶ Bank One directly manages two youth programs in Chicago as part of its corporate diversity initiative: the Academy Program and Saturday Scholars. Bank One Academy is a mentorship program for seniors in Chicago public high schools. Seniors come to the bank's downtown Chicago location to meet with employee mentors, hear presentations from bank speakers, and participate in project teams that include other youth and adult mentors. Students who complete the program qualify for small college scholarships. Bank One Saturday Scholars is a weekend program for students beginning in ninth grade. About 150 students are recruited from four predominantly minority public elementary schools in Chicago and receive a wide range of college readiness and career education experiences through four years of high school. About 75 employee mentors work with these students on two Saturdays per month, primarily in the bank's downtown headquarters.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago (BBBS) was retained by Bank One Academy to help improve the recruitment and support of adult mentors and youth participants. BBBS is known primarily for its own approach to matching adult mentors to youth in need of guidance and companionship.³⁷ BBBS also consults for other organizations engaged in mentorship and youth development activities. In the case of Bank One Academy, a BBBS program specialist interviews mentor and youth candidates, helps match youth to appropriate adult mentors, and provides coaching and support to mentors and youth through the year.

³⁶ For a guide to youth programs sponsored or operated through Bank One, see: <http://www.bankone.com/answers/BolAnswersDetail.aspx?top=all&segment=ABO&topic=CorporateContributions.WhatWeFund&item=YouthEducation>.

³⁷ For more information, see: <http://www.bbbsa.org/>.

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