Career and Work Readiness for Urban Youth: Elements of Success

RU Ready for Work Program: A New Paradigm for Youth Development

Office of University–Community Partnerships | Rutgers University–Newark, New Jersey

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INSIDE FRONT COVER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than a decade, The Office of University-Community Partnerships (OUCP) has been central to the Rutgers University-Newark's community engagement strategy. Its mission is to bring the University's intellectual capital and resources to bear upon issues of import in the community. It accomplishes this by engaging faculty, staff, students, and community partners through four operating units: campus and visitor information; conference and event management; community partnerships and engagement; and faculty partnerships and civic networking. OUCP utilizes its expertise in brokering partnerships for faculty community-based learning and research initiatives, and developing processes for cataloging activities and outcomes for institution-wide community engagement initiatives.

Among its community partnerships and engagement activities, OUCP has been especially effective in developing initiatives that impact Newark-area youth. Key among them is the ***RU Ready for Work Program***. As in many urban school districts, stakeholders are employing various strategies to improve educational, social and economic outcomes for its youth. The ***RU Ready for Work Program*** represents one of the initiatives that has proven successful in achieving these objectives.

Over the past five years, the staff has applied best practices and other research-based strategies to develop an innovative and comprehensive youth development demonstration model to serve some of Newark's most at-risk high school youth. These efforts have yielded a framework for career and college readiness that has changed the trajectory of its participants' lives. During the past year, staff focused on developing and/or refining tools to assess student needs and to evaluate program impact. Some key outcomes measured during the 2013 program will be highlighted. This report also will describe the genesis of the ***RU Ready for Work Program*** and summarize significant developments during the program's evolution, promising practices and strategies that have emerged, some key challenges and future plans.

SECTION I

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS THE RU READY FOR WORK PROGRAM?

RU Ready for Work (*RUR*) is a school-based youth workforce and career readiness development demonstration program model created and administered by the Office of University-Community Partnerships (OUCP) at Rutgers University-Newark. Begun in 2008, *RUR* fosters the development of skills that prepare Newark youth to compete successfully for positions in today's workforce. The program's goals are to prepare students to:

- graduate from high school

- identify long-term career interests and pathways

- comport themselves appropriately in the work place
  (e.g., etiquette, negotiation and self-management skills)

- seek and obtain employment or admission to post-secondary higher education,
  vocational institution, or military services.

These goals are met via an after school component and a summer program component, both of which include work internships for the participants.

RU Ready for Work Objectives and Intended Impacts
Most experts agree that the most effective way to address teen unemployment is to develop a comprehensive youth development and employment strategy. Year-round programming is more effective in keeping students engaged. The *RUR* model serves as a vehicle for addressing this well-recognized need to bridge the gaps between youth and employment in communities where there is lower than average workforce participation. *RUR* also embraces the need to generate a proactive citizenry that is both wage-earning and service-oriented.

To this end, the *RUR* model addresses three primary areas of development that promote better work outcomes among youth: (1) retention, persistence, and graduation; (2) promoting career awareness and college preparation; and (3) providing work readiness skills. The program provides career exploration, internships, and a wide variety of academic support, enrichment activities, intervention and social services that support retention and the transition from school to work. Using campus facilities and some of OUCP/*RUR* staff and students as instructional and support personnel, providing an innovative curriculum and instructional tools, and reinforcing and/or supplementing instruction

and training with new experiences and contexts for learning (e.g. teleconferences, plays, community service programs) have all served to broaden students' perspectives and to elevate aspiration levels. The Community Service component provides venues for students to collectively make positive contributions to their neighborhoods and fellow citizens. It also helps them to fulfill a graduation requirement. Our target population has continuously been economically and socially disadvantaged Newark-area youth. Summarily, the program encompasses five key program objectives, and intended impacts are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES	INTENDED IMPACT
1. A coordinated program of career/work readiness skills for Newark High School students	1. Increase school-to-work readiness for Newark youth and post-graduation job placement, education or training
2. Need-based tutoring and counseling services for students engaged in the program	2. Improve academic success, retention and graduation of students
3. Career exploration and career counseling services	3. Prepare students to pursue careers or additional education and training that will lead to career success
4. Internship opportunities that connect students with valuable community-based resources; and professional role models	4. Provide students with references, mentors, and supportive resources to aid in career development.
5. Programming to develop student leadership skills; promote volunteerism, public service and civic engagement; and, improve GRIT and interpersonal skills.	5. Increased student self-awareness, passion, empowerment, and capacity to effect change in his/her own life and community.

More than140 Hours

RU Ready annually provides participants with more than 140 hours of programming for the afterschool component.

BACKGROUND: THE MCJ AND OUCP PARTNERSHIP

Office of University-Community Partnerships at Rutgers University-Newark
Since 1999, OUCP at Rutgers University-Newark has fulfilled its mission as a major conduit for achieving the university's community partnership and outreach objectives. Programs that enhance youth development in the City of Newark and surrounding areas have been consistently among its extensive compendium of initiatives linking the university to the community, including: programs such as America Reads/Counts and Celebrity Reads, which support student learning and literacy at select schools; partnerships with the Essex County Prosecutors Office, Programs for Parents, and Newark Mayor's office that bring hundreds of youth onto the campus; and Rutgers' Newark School Initiative (NSI), Jumpstart and several summer program initiatives.

The MCJ Amelior Foundation
The MCJ Amelior Foundation, based in Morristown, New Jersey, has a long-term commitment to creating college access and opportunity for Newark youth, particularly those at West Side High School. The Foundation has a longstanding connection to West Side and its founder, Ray Chambers, is an alumnus of both West Side High School and Rutgers University-Newark. In 2007, the foundation approached Rutgers University-Newark, Office of the Chancellor and the Office of University-Community Partnerships to redesign and implement an innovative pilot program to promote work readiness and career opportunities for students at Newark's West Side High School. Key among the foundations' concerns were West Side students' lower than average graduation rates, entry into post-secondary education, and/or work force, military, or other career oriented positions, compared to other schools in the Newark Public School District. In 2008, MCJ's "YouthWorks" program was transferred to Rutgers University-Newark under the auspices of the Office of University-Community Partnerships and renamed ***RU Ready for Work***.

Addressing Critical Needs for Youth in
Low-income Communities and Communities of Color
Employment among teens has been declining over the past decade, falling from 45 percent in 2000 to 26 percent in 2010. According to an article on the GRIO, an African American Opinion website:

> *Low-income youth and minority youth of all income levels are far less likely to obtain*
> *employment than whites. In June 2010, black teens of all socioeconomic levels had an*

employment rate of only 15.2 percent, making them 53 percent less likely to work than white teens. Low income black teens fared far worse, with only 9 percent of them employed. Although Hispanic youth were the most likely minority group to work, they still lagged behind whites. Black male teenagers living in urban communities are the least likely to obtain summer employment. They are also the ones most at risk for engaging in perilous activities due to lack of connection to positive summer opportunities. The teens who need employment and stand to gain the most from the experience are the least likely to get it.

Teens who cannot obtain employment are at a disadvantage. Summer employment is known to reap several benefits for youth, particularly low-income youth, including academic gains in mathematics and reading, greater attachment to the labor market, higher earnings in early adulthood, and decreased involvement in violent or criminal activities. Many low-income youth also use the earnings from summer jobs to supplement family income, to purchase necessary clothing and school supplies for the upcoming school year, and to support their recreational activities that parents could not otherwise afford.[1]

Although written in 2011, this article capsulated the stark realities and dire consequences that prevailing unemployment presented for Newark youth. The RU Ready for Work program undertook to ameliorate these circumstances and to improve educational outcomes for program participants.

Serving Targeted Populations of Need

Another salient reason for selecting West Side High School as the program site was to address overwhelming evidence of disproportionate disadvantage among these students. The student population of West Side High School is overwhelmingly Black and African-American (98%) and lives in single parent households or with guardians. The surrounding community is characterized by higher than average rates of poverty.

The census tracts in the community around West Side High School are among the most impoverished in Newark. Census data estimated that the percentage of people living below the federal poverty level range from 34.88% to 66.97%. For the period beginning April 1, 2005, to September 1, 2008, home foreclosure rates in the area were estimated to range from about 10% to more than 14%. These rates are

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[1]**A long, hot, jobless summer in store for teens: Opinion**
 by Rhonda Tsoi-A-Fatt. GRIO, May 9, 2011

among the highest in the city. The analysis of need was derived from data obtained from the New Jersey Department of Education, U.S. Census Bureau, and Newark Kid's Count 2008. These data supported a finding of disproportionate disadvantage for students at West Side High.

In terms of educational outcomes, West Side students had higher than state average dropout and mobility rates, and a lower percentage of students who go onto college or full-time employment. Approximately 56% of the students were eligible for free lunch and an additional 5% are eligible for reduced-price lunch. The student mobility rate was 37.9% in 2007, almost four times the state average of 9.9%. West Side's dropout rate was 4.3% (compared to 3.4% and 1.7% for the district and state, respectively).

West Side High School failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress on student assessments for the seven year period between 2003-04 and 2009-10 and is one of the state's persistently lowest-achieving high schools. In August 2010, West Side High School was ranked 319 out of 322 public high schools in New Jersey.[2] According to the New Jersey Schools Performance Report 2010-2011 released in April, 2013, West Side High School's overall performance outcomes in some key domains have not improved significantly. It stated:

> *This school's academic performance **significantly lags in comparison** to schools across the state. Additionally, its academic performance **significantly lags in comparison** to its peers. This school's college and career readiness **significantly lags in comparison** to schools across the state. Additionally, its college and career readiness **is about average when compared** to its peers. This school's graduation and post-secondary performance **significantly lags in comparison** to schools across the state. Additionally, its graduation and post-secondary readiness **lags in comparison** to its peers. *NJ School Performance Report 2011–12: NJDOE, April 2013*

*Explanation of terms

Very High Performance is defined as being **equal to or above the 80.0th percentile.**
High Performance is defined as being **between the 60.0th and 79.9th percentiles.**
Average Performance is defined as being **between the 40.0th and 59.9th percentiles.**
Lagging Performance is defined as being **between the 20.0th and 39.9th Percentiles.**
Significantly Lagging Performance is defined as being **equal to or below the 19.9th percentile.**

NJ School Performance Report 2011-12: NJDOE, April 2013

Table 2. West Side High School Performance Rankings

PERFORMANCE AREAS	PEER RANK (PERCENTILE)	STATEWIDE RANK (PERCENTILE)	PERCENT OF TARGETS MET
Academic Achievement	13	5	50%
College & Career Readiness	45	19	0%
Graduation and Post-Secondary	38	19	50%

Given the performance outcomes at West Side, MCJ Amelior Foundation and Rutgers University-Newark were judicious in targeting students in this high school and at the forefront of developing a strategic partnership to address critical needs for youth in urban communities like Newark. Newark youth need to be engaged in initiatives that provide opportunities to gain both the experience and skills that are requisite to becoming productive, wage earning, and civically responsible citizens. **RUR** meets this need.

Implementing RU Ready for Work

The MCJ Amelior Foundation provided start-up funding to support the development of a viable program, collaboration building, and grant seeking. Together, the partners developed a program plan in response to an RFP from the City of Newark's Mayor's Office of Employment & Training's (MOET) NewarkWorks youth program.

The resulting proposal sought to implement **RUR**, a comprehensive employment training demon-stration project for Newark youth and the agencies that serve them. As originally conceived, **RUR** was comprised of two elements: 1.) **RUR** as a capacity building and network learning component designed to provide information and support to all NewarkWorks youth program grantees and youth service providers in the city, and 2.) a replicable youth employment, academic, and community engagement demonstration initiative based at West Side High School in Newark. However, funding limitations precluded implementation of the full proposed model.

[2] **New Jersey Monthly** magazine conducts periodic reviews of high schools across the state based on:
1) school environment (e.g., class, size and student-faculty ratios);
2) student performance (statewide assessment, SAT, and AP test scores); and,
3) student outcomes (e.g., graduation rate and post-secondary education).

RUR was launched in May 2008, with a modified program that continued through the summer and fall 2008. Fifty-six students were grandfathered into the program from the previous YouthWorks program, and additional students were recruited to reach the contracted goal of 60 students. Importantly, the student population differed somewhat from that anticipated during the writing of the initial grant proposal. Approximately 25% were special needs students, an aspect not previously anticipated, and one that would impact intended outcomes.

The original program plan focused on developing students for emerging occupational clusters in Newark and the surrounding area. At that time, we hypothesized that the post-graduation plans of the majority of the students might include vocational training, apprenticeships, and/or support with job placement. Based on coursework and interaction with the students, staff made another discovery: a number of the students demonstrated both an aptitude and desire for pursuing career fields that would require higher levels of education (e.g., two or four- year college education).

In its first year of operation, funding for the program was delayed until the fourth quarter of the academic year. As a consequence, there was not ample time to prepare students for work internships during the summer. To meet this challenge, an alternative summer experience was designed.

EVOLUTION OF RU READY FOR WORK

Overview

RUR has evolved into an intensely-structured, comprehensive program model developed to optimally provide youth employment and career readiness services using the best currently available information. The program is built upon best practices for individual development that are designed to address the special needs of disadvantaged student populations. The program goes beyond traditional academic, personal, and career development activities to address the broader social and environmental development issues that confound career readiness among urban youth. The program also engages families and caregivers, as well as school faculty and administration, to promote more successful outcomes. The after-school program offers a curriculum and programming that addresses the five key program objectives.

During the summer, **RUR** offers participants an innovative and comprehensive program that incorporates a more abbreviated curriculum that is contiguous with that of the after-school program and is designed to enhance academic, cognitive, GRIT and life skills development and to provide work internships, mentoring and role modeling. The summer program has evolved into a theme-based model that broadens and enhances participants' context for learning and development. The co-curricular enrichment and community service activities play an equally vital role in achieving program objectives for all of the participants.

Creating the Model

The initial framework for the model was built upon a review of best practices compiled by faculty and graduate students from the Rutgers University School of Public Affairs and Administration. These individuals have considerable background in developing and implementing research-based program models. Furthermore, the NewarkWorks grant is funded via the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Accordingly, **RUR** expands upon the student development strategies embedded in the WIA's 10 Essential Elements for Youth Programs as a framework upon which to address these critical needs (see Appendix A). Over time, a variety of factors have precipitated organizational, pedagogical and logistical adjustments which have generated new programmatic strategies/techniques as the model evolved. In the early years of the program, an external evaluator was hired to consult with **RU Ready**

staff and OUCP leaders to design the summer program evaluation instruments. The after-school course material included daily/weekly tools to assess student learning. The staff has consistently utilized research-based strategies along with evaluation/assessment data and feedback to develop and refine and program services and activities.

Over its five year lifespan, the **RUR Program** has devised a number of approaches to program administration and implementation. A number of the most salient strategies and techniques are outlined below. Administrative and programmatic components were evolving as well. Expanding recruitment to more high schools, implementing significant pedagogical changes, expanding the social work component to include a licensed MSW and graduate social work students, securing additional funding to support enrichment activities such as a summer global education compo- nent and a career immersion track model are among the developments highlighted in Table 3.

Outline of Programmatic Techniques

PROGRAMMATIC TECHNIQUES: **RECRUITMENT STRATEGY**

- Marketing
  - Partnership with school personnel
    - Administrators
    - Guidance counselors, teaching faculty and coaches
    - Recommendations/referrals from current and former program participants
  - Brochures
  - Multimedia presentations
- Minimum GPA helps assess student motivation
- Intensive follow-up with parents, guardians

(page 19).

PROGRAMMATIC TECHNIQUES: **ADVISEMENT**

A professional advisor assists each student with planning and career advising, academic and career goal setting, and developing an Individual Success Plan (ISP), a document that includes information that can be used to help advise each individual to prepare for careers. ISP Elements include the following:

- Demographics
- Career goals
- Planning to achieve career goals
- Short-term goal identification and planning
- Self-assessment inventories (career planning, learning styles, study styles, relationships with parents, peers, instructors) to identify:
  — Strengths
  — Challenges
  — Areas needing assistance
- Personal resources

PROGRAMMATIC TECHNIQUES: **SERVICE DELIVERY SETTING**

Deliver curriculum and services on both the high school and college campus

- Engage participants in college educational, community service and cultural events
- Utilize/employ college students and staff to deliver services

PROGRAMMATIC TECHNIQUES: **AFTER-SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

- Career/Work{ Employment} Readiness
  - The Work, Achievement, Values, and Education (WAVE) Curriculum was originally employed for students in the program
  - Over time, a work readiness curriculum was adapted for **RU Ready** students by our staff that includes explicit techniques and issue areas adapted for the local environment
- Leadership (public and community service) courses
- Self-exploration and personal development
- Academic skills (e.g., test taking, SAT prep, math skills, writing improvement)
- Train undergraduate and graduate students to provide curriculum support, tutoring, and peer academic support (interpersonal skills, leadership, etc.)

PROGRAMMATIC TECHNIQUES: **SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

Supportive services led by a professional social worker (MSW)
- Trains and supervises team of professional social workers and interns
- Reviews case files
- Makes recommendations, referrals, and supervises follow up
  - Process
    - Identify and address student service needs;
    - Administer structured assessment instrument (Bio/Psycho/Social Assessment) to all students to collect information on non-academic elements that can influence a child's performance.
- Team can consist of
  - MSW Social Worker
  - Trained professional social workers
  - Social work student interns

Outline of Programmatic Techniques (continued)

PROGRAMMATIC TECHNIQUES: **SUMMER PROGRAM**

- Paid internships
  - — Experiential learning [practical experience]
  - — Mentoring/relationship building
- Courses, workshops, and guest lectures
  - — Leadership skills
  - — Responsible citizenship
  - — Self-exploration
  - — Academic enrichment
  - — Cultural studies (local and global)
- Other Activities
  - — Breakfast roundtable discussions on internship experience
  - — Luncheon seminar series
  - — RU Fit Day (healthy living)
  - — Educational/Cultural excursions (Broadway, museum tours, etc.)
  - — Community service

PROGRAMMATIC TECHNIQUES: **COMPREHENSIVE/ONGOING EVALUATION**

- Multi-method strategy
  - — Focus groups, surveys, pre-and post-tests, self-assessment tools
- Input-outcome analysis
  - — Use State Department of Education scoring rubrics to track progress in academic supports (e.g., writing improvement).
  - — Implement assessment tools

COMPREHENSIVE/ONGOING EVALUATION *(CONTINUED)*

- ◆ Pre- and post-subject area assessments (to measure skills development and levels of acuity)
- ◆ Self-administered behavioral assessments (e.g., how students study, how students learn, self-efficacy, GRIT scales) to help students and advisors identify ways to assist students in their learning
- Continuous feedback assessment
  - — Questionnaires of staff, students, parents, school personnel, employers, instructors, etc. to help assess program strengths and weaknesses
  - — Conducted routinely throughout the year so that mid-course correction may be addressed in a timely fashion

PROGRAMMATIC TECHNIQUES:
FOLLOW UP STRATEGIES/STUDENT TRACKING

Tracking of students who complete the program is contract mandated for a period of one year. However, students often stay in contact with the program for considerably longer periods as they engage in academic pursuits, pursue employment, and seek advice for other activities. The one-year protocol is outlined below.

- Quarterly contact with graduates that have been accepted into 4-year universities
- Bi-monthly contact with graduates that have been accepted into 2-year colleges
- Monthly contact with graduates that have secured employment post-graduation
- Monthly contact with graduates that have not secured employment, enrolled in a post-secondary institution, or are in pursuit of an alternate means of advancement
- Proposed annual reunion of all program participants
- Opportunities to maintain contact with current and former participants through social media is being explored
- Former students are encouraged to remain in contact and often call for references, advice, or assistance

Table 3: Administrative and Programmatic Highlights

Outline of Programmatic Techniques (continued)

YEAR		Administrative and Programmatic Highlights
SUMMER 2008		Fifty-six students were grandfathered into the program: 25% special needs population; ***Enrichment Track*** met at Rutgers University-Newark 4 days per week; ***Employment Track*** students reported to their work sites Tuesday through Thursday; Educational/enrichment trips: Community service projects.
Students Enrolled (YouthWorks)	56	
FALL 2008-SUMMER 2009		
Enrollment Goal	60	***Academic year:*** Abbreviated school-based West Side program/ Small # of new recruits; Individual Success Plan (ISP): Tier Learning Hierarchy: Modified WAVE Curriculum; Undergraduate Social Work Interns.
Students Enrolled	65	***Summer:*** Tier I- PreCollege program enrollment: Tier II & III-Work Internships: Tier II Sadie Nash Leadership Program
Students Certified	59	
FALL 2009-SUMMER 2010		
Enrollment Goal	60	***Academic year:*** School-based West Side Dare to be King/Queen curriculum; Professional Mentor
Students Enrolled	64	***Summer:*** Victoria Foundation support for enrichment activities, luncheon seminar series and global education; Prudential Foundation support-RU Ready for Public Service career track; Tier II & III Work Internships; Tier II & III Sadie Nash Leadership Program; NSLA CASP evaluation
Students Certified	59	

Over 4,000 Hours
of work experience is completed each summer by the group of RUR interns.

FALL 2010-SUMMER 2011		Administrative and Programmatic Highlights
Enrollment Goal	60–70*	**Academic year:** *Arts H.S. students were added; Invited to Victoria Foundation and the National Summer Learning Association 's Newark Professional Learning Association (PLC); grade level improvement instruction required by NewarkWorks;
Students Enrolled	70–75	**Summer:** Theme–based program; "Civil Writes" course added; Global Education/Ghana Teleconference; Public Service track was expanded to include Healthcare Services: Olympian Joetta Clark
Students Certified	69	Diggs featured for RU Fit Day: NSLA CASP evaluation: MLK Lead-
*Art HS added		ership delegates; MCJ/Drew Pre-college Program

FALL 2011-SUMMER 2012		
Enrollment Goal	70	**Academic year:** School-based offered on three campuses, West Side Main, West Side Academy of Finance, and Arts High School; Part of Extended Learning Time Curriculum at West Side cam-
Students Enrolled	76	puses: Chemistry Study group; Tier I – Life Inc. course; MSW designed needs assessment;
Students Certified	68	**Summer:** Theme–based program; Breakfast Roundtables: "True Colors"; Public/ Healthcare Service Career Immersion Model; MLK Leadership delegates; MCJ/Drew Pre-college Program.

FALL 2012-SUMMER 2013		
Enrollment Goal	60	**Academic year:** West Side Finance Academy closed; After–school program held on Rutgers-Newark Campus; Participants who transferred to other Newark high schools retained; Intensive post –graduation planning for seniors.
Students Enrolled	65	**Summer:** Theme–based program: Entrepreneurship focus; Alternate summer internship options; Enhanced program evaluation/ assess-
Students Certified	60	ment; Victoria PLC-CASP evaluation: Updated **RU Ready** Video

RU READY FOR WORK TODAY: 2012–2013

In spring 2012, the Newark Public Schools adopted a school reform strategy that increased the number of available charter schools for Newark students while simultaneously closing and consolidating some regular and magnet schools. The West Side Finance Academy was closed and several **RU Ready** participants elected not to attend West Side High School. Among our more high achieving students, the staff undertook a retention strategy to keep them engaged in the program. We brokered with the city funding agency to extend student participation beyond West Side and Arts high schools so that the **RU Ready** students enrolled elsewhere could be retained. This concession subsequently led to extending participation in **RU Ready** to students in more high schools in the district. In 2013, 61 students initially enrolled and 56 were retained; five students who were enrolled moved out of the district during the program. Distribution by high school appears in Table 4. For 2014, the **RU Ready Program** will enroll students from at least 12 comprehensive and charter high schools.

Table 4: Enrollment by School, 2012–2013 Academic Year
Schools N=56

West Side H/S	Arts H/S	Bard H/S	Weequahic H/S	University H/S	Visions Academy	American History
29/52%	17/30%	5/9%	2/4%	1/2%	1/2%	1/2%
Male/Female	Male/Female	Male/Female	Male/Female	Male	Male	Male
10/19	7/10	1/4	1/1	1	1	1

Focused efforts to design consistent outcome measurement strategies were refined during the 2012–2013 cycle. Previously developed instruments were carefully reviewed along with the data generated to determine where revisions were needed. Because of the multiplicity of program activities offered during the summer, the decision was made to evaluate some activities weekly or at the conclusion of the activity rather than at the end of the program. The revised course evaluation instruments will be adapted and utilized for the 2014 after-school curriculum. However, efforts to improve evaluation and assessment tools and data collection/compilation are ongoing. This section will highlight some key objectives and measured outcomes that were achieved.

Process Objective: To gather more specific data regarding participants to guide and refine developmental support services.

Population Profile

During the academic year a social work team comprised of a licensed MSW and two graduate social work students administered a bio/psycho/social assessment to after-school participants via one-on-one interviews using an instrument of our design. Not only did these interviews provide a wealth of insight into the life of these Newark adolescents, but they also provided cathartic opportunities for the students and, in some instances, alerted the staff to the need for more professional intervention or referral. The instrument covered a number of topics, including:

- Basic demographic data
  (i.e. ethnic identity and association, languages spoken at home, address, etc.)

- Current living situation, including a full profile of the type of home in which the student resides, number of household members, composition of family members, perceived relationship status with siblings vs. parents, child's emotional/financial/social support, etc.

- Spiritual and religious affiliations

- Self and family medical history

- Presenting stressors

- Substance abuse history

- Educational history, including academic challenges, behavioral problems, perceived barriers to success, etc.

- Social activity and resources, including hobbies, significant other status, sexual activity, possible traumatic events, history of abuse or neglect, need/desire for external services, etc.

The following tables provide a sample of data collected which profiles the ***RUR*** participants. A detail, such as "primary language spoken at home," often impacts a student's performance in class, and it can guide staff in their communications with parents/guardians and other family members. Head of household and support system data are utilized in the development of parent workshops and other

program components. The instrument generates data that is utilized in several areas of program development; For example, it provides insight into individual academic performance, can impact the design of the study skills curriculum and helps to guide staff in assisting students with developing their individualized success plans to prepare for the future. Overall, the **RU Ready** staff is better equipped to suggest specific courses of action and tailor tutoring and other support services, which generally aids in individualizing certain program components to better serve the service population.

Table 5: Demographic Statistics, 2012-2013 Academic Year
Demographic Statistics N=56

GENDER	22 males; 39%	34 females; 61%
SCHOOLS	West Side – 52% Arts HS – 30% Weequahic – 4%	University HS – 2% Visions – 2% American History – 2%
LANGUAGES	30% of the total population speaks English and another of the following languages fluently: Spanish (14%) • French (5%) • Creole (4%) Broken (2%) • Twi (4%) • Portuguese (2%)	

Figure 1: Household Living Situation, 2012-2013 Academic Year

Number of Adolescents Living in Households Run By Zero or More Parent(s)
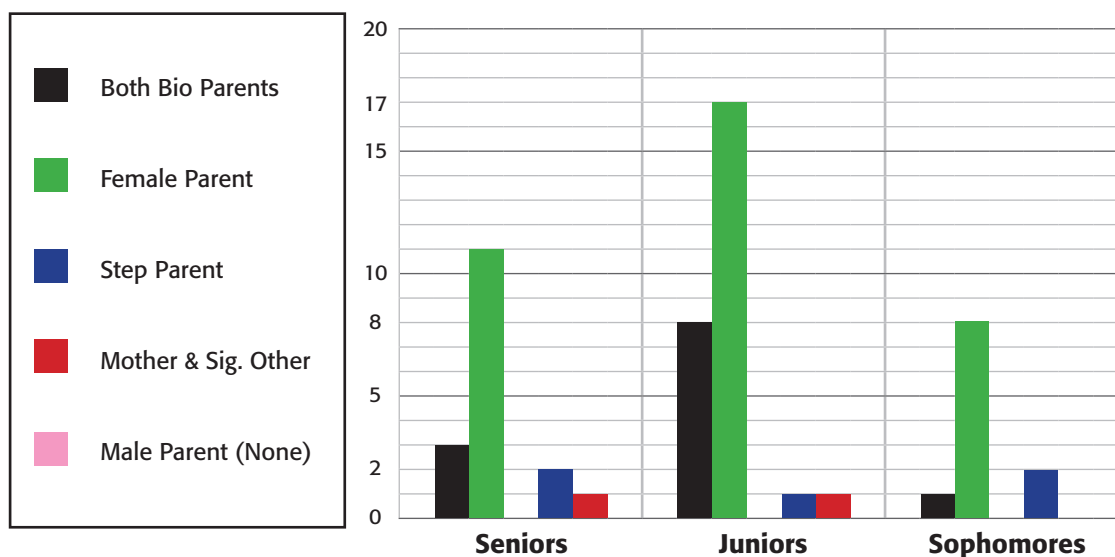
Table 6: Current Support System, 2012-2013 Academic Year

SENIORS		JUNIORS		SOPHOMORES	
Family & Friends:	16	Family & Friends:	24	Family & Friends:	10
Brother and Coach:	1	Limited:	1	Close Group of Friends:	1
Sister and Girlfriend:	1	Friend only	1	Peers & Close Friends	1
Total:	**18**		**26**		**12**

PROGRAM IMPACTS: SUMMER 2013

Process Objective: To provide a comprehensive summer program experience that will enhance individual development, increase career/work readiness, expand cultural awareness, provide experiences that broaden participant's awareness of future possibilities available to them, and reinforce commitment to their community.

RU Ready students are engaged in a six-week summer program that includes a tier-based curriculum (one day per week), work internships (three days per week), and community service and enrichment activities (one day per week). The program is theme-based so that at least one course focuses on content specific to that theme. For 2013, the theme was Entrepreneurship. Other courses, where applicable, related content to some aspect of the theme, and enrichment activities were theme-related, as well. The curriculum also included course content designed to be contiguous with what students have already learned and transition them to the following year/term after-school, tier development curriculum. Enrichment activities, primarily funded by the Victoria and Prudential Foundations, further supported program objectives.

As indicated previously, evaluation instruments were refined to better measure program impact. The outcome data and students' responses in open ended queries not only aided in determining program success but also helped to guide staff in refining the after-school curriculum and planning the next summer program. The following are samples of **RUR** Summer 2013 evaluation results:

Individual Development

Leadership Development for Tier II (Rising Juniors): Leadership 101 for rising juniors explored leadership styles as well as how to take a "lead" role in navigating the various arenas in which students have to function. The course also linked the students' learning in the after-school course, Work Readiness (in which they enrolled during the spring term), and prepared them to take a more proactive role in preparing for academic challenges and opportunities during their junior year. During training, instructors were encouraged to utilize creative pedagogical strategies to engage students in a more interactive learning experience. Table 7 displays the data, which demonstrates that key objectives for this course were met.

Table 7: Leadership 101, Summer 2013
LEGEND: 1= Strongly Agree **2**= Agree **3**= Somewhat Agree **4**= Disagree **5**= Strongly Disagree

LEADERSHIP 101	AVG.
I consider this course valuable to me	1.33
The material/ handouts used were appropriate	1.33
I developed new skills/knowledge	1.56
The instructor was enthusiastic and motivating	1.33
The instructor's explanation and examples were helpful	1.22
The instructor involved students in the learning experiences	1.33
The class session was the right length of time	1.67
The instructor/program staff have addressed my questions	1.44
The program staff is positive and supportive	1.56
I learned how to identify and follow a specific leadership style	1.11
I learned how to use a combination of styles when required in school, at work, or with the family	1.22
I learned to apply leadership styles in current activities at school, work, home, and community	1.89

Career/Work Readiness Training

Work Internships: RU Ready partnered with 31 community-based agencies and municipal and university offices to provide work internships for program participants. One or two students were assigned to each site. Each site mentor completed an internship planning form that detailed the project/work that the intern(s) would engage in during the six-week program. The career coaches/ mentors used these documents to guide their discussions with both the site mentor and the student

regarding the latter's progress and performance. Tier I students, engaged for the first time, were assigned to "incubator" sites. This experience afforded them the opportunity to apply work readiness skills learned during the after-school program. Assigned duties were developed by the site mentors to be apropos to entry level interns. Site mentors also shared information about their own educational and career paths. The following table displays the evaluation data which affirms that key impacts were achieved during the students' first work internship experience.

Table 8: 2013 Summer Work Experience, Tier II

SUMMER WORK EXPERIENCE	
I was well matched with my job	1.6
I was able to improve my organizational skills	1.4
I learned to dress appropriately for the workplace	1.2
My job included meaningful work activities	1.4
My job activities allowed me to set and meet goals	1.3
The work was interesting to me	1.5
I was given enough support and supervision	1.2
My supervisor spent time with me	1.5

Enrichment Activities: Commitment to Community

Community Service: The community service activity is intended to provide students with an experiential learning opportunity that facilitates understanding the value of proactive citizenry to society and to self. The program partnered with the Essex County Division of Senior Services (ECDSS) to create an inter-generational service experience for the students. This "kick off" for the Annual Essex County Farmer's Market was held at the Cherry Blossom Welcome Center in Branch Brook Park, Newark, New Jersey. **RUR** students served as youth ambassadors for the event and assisted Essex County senior citizens in a variety of capacities. The data in table nine affirm that key intended impacts were achieved.

Table 9: Essex County Senior Farmer's Market Student Evaluation Data

LEGEND: 1= Strongly Agree **2**= Agree **3**= Somewhat Agree **4**= Disagree **5**= Strongly Disagree

ESSEX COUNTY SENIOR FARMER'S MARKET STUDENT EVALUATION DATA	AVG.
I enjoyed working with the seniors at the market	1.75
The experience taught me about patience, tolerance, and compassion for others	1.63
I believe I can apply these qualities to other areas of my life	1.58
The overall experience met my expectations	1.83
I would like to participate in this type of community service project in the future	87.5% Yes

RU Student Response

The Essex County Senior Services Farmer's Market

"This was a great experience for me. I was able to meet new older people and have conversations with them."

"I loved helping the elderly people. They were really kind and nice. I wish I could come back and help them again next time."

"It was good being able to give back and be a supporting hand to the seniors. This experience meant that everything is not about me and others need help, too."

Global Education

Ghana Teleconference: Global education is one of the enrichment components featured during the summer program. While 30% of the students are bi-lingual, the majority of the students have never traveled internationally. In addition, there are internationally born students enrolled in their high schools, but **RUR** students rarely have opportunities to gain insight into other cultures. The International Teleconference with Ghana provided an interactive experience through which students gained a snapshot into another culture. After an introduction by staff from the Akomo Ntoso Cultural Center staff, who partnered to sponsor the event, the Ghanaian students began by providing background information and facts regarding their country, culture and mores. Musical performances demonstrated crossover elements within contemporary Western musical genres. **RU Ready** students from the Leadership/Influence, Entrepreneurship and Public/Healthcare Service classes prepared Power Point/Green Screen presentations regarding what they were studying. During the Q & A exchange, the students discussed issues regarding education, lifestyle and social issues. The teleconferences provide a unique forum for international exchange through which students can discover both their differences and similarities to youth in another country. It is yet another strategy that has been developed to broaden the world view and to expand opportunities for growth and development among a youth population whose range of experiences are highly parochial.

As table ten demonstrates, this experience was not only impactful but also ignited interest in exploring other countries and cultures among the participants.

Table 10: Ghana Teleconference

LEGEND: 1= Strongly Agree **2**= Agree **3**= Somewhat Agree **4**= Disagree **5**= Strongly Disagree

GHANA TELECONFERENCE					
	I thought the teleconference was very informative	I would like to attend another teleconference	Who would you like to teleconference with?	Overall, I thought the teleconference experience was...	Name some things you learned about Ghana
SUM	113	114		111	RU Student Response pg 23
AVERAGE	4.33	4.38	*	4.43	
RESULTS	Agree	Agree		Agree	
*Sample responses: Japan; Business people from other countries; Asia; China: Females from Puerto Rico: Paris: Students from London; France; People from Nigeria; Germany; Spain; Jamaica; Hawaii; and Other African countries.					

RU Student Response

Ghana Teleconference

"We learned so many things about Ghana—its lifestyle, goverment, culture. I learned about the importance of music and dance. Oh, and then there is the food. Did you know that the cocoa bean actually comes from Ghana, and that it is actually a fruit? Also interesting is the fact that the country is Africa's second largest producer of gold."

Broadening the Scope of Possibilities: Role Models

Luncheon Seminar Series: A speaker whose professional pathway correlates with the program theme is featured during lunch. With this summer's theme, Entrepreneurship, local business and social entrepreneurs were featured. Some were born and educated in Newark and provided vibrant and inspiring examples of how they advanced from their beginnings in single parent, low income households to achieve professional success. Most speakers also shared how they were engaged in giving back to their communities via projects and philanthropy. Two of the presenters provided students with autographed copies of books they had written. Significantly, many of the speakers advised students to develop effective money management strategies and to be willing to fully invest themselves in whatever they undertake. An Admission and Financial Aid panel was also offered featuring Rutgers University-Newark staff and currently enrolled students, including former *RU Ready* participants who encouraged the summer students to pursue higher education. Each session was evaluated individually with both the coded responses and an open ended question. The results revealed that the students were positively impacted by the speakers.

Table 11: Aggregate Data- Luncheon Seminar Series

Questions:

1. The speaker was engaging. **2.** The speaker's content was useful. **3.** Overall, I though the speaker was...

LEGEND: Questions #1 and #2:

1= Strongly Disagree **2**= Disagree **3**= No Opinion **4**= Agree **5**= Strongly Agree

Question #3: 1= Poor **2**= Fair **3**= Average **4**= Very Good **5**= Excellent

TOPIC	Tier 2	Tier 3	Pub/ Heal
Making Bold Moves: Creating Multimillion-Dollar Success in 500 Days or Less!	4.4	4.5	4.3
College Admissions and Financial Aid Workshop	4.2	4.3	4.3
Social Entrepreneurship: Empowering people and organizations	4.8	4.8	4.9
Global Entrepreneurship: Products created by indigenous Ghanaian entrepreneurs	4.2	4.3	4.2
How to Become a Successful Entrepreneur: A special message for youth	4.6	4.6	4.9

Expanding Cultural Experiences

Motown-the Broadway Musical: In keeping with the Entrepreneurship theme, the students were taken to the Broadway musical, *Motown*. The play brilliantly depicted how Berry Gordy started the re-cord company, how he grew it, the challenges faced in a competitive marketplace, how his leadership style impacted employees, and critical factors that impacted his decision-making. Many of these issues coincided with what was addressed in the leadership development and entrepreneurship classes.

For many of the students, the **RU Ready Program** provides their first experience attending a Broadway production. Seventy percent of the rising juniors indicated that this was the first Broadway production that they had attended. Only 20 percent indicated that they had attended a production

RU Student Response

A Formula for Success

Making Bold Moves
"Always have a dream to push you to be successful"

"If I want to own my own business, I need to think big
and work hard."

Social Entrepreneurship
"There is power in owning your own business."

"Take the good things from life and use them wisely."

Social Entrepreneurship
"You should choose your passion, and put 100 percent
into everything you do."

"Three major things needed to succeed—crystalization focus,
extreme hustle and positive attitude.

under other auspices. Fifty percent of the rising seniors indicated that this was their first Broadway play. Of the remaining students, 83 percent indicated that the only other production that they had attended was under the auspices of the program.

Students in the Entrepreneurship courses were able to relate several topics that had been addressed in class (e.g. assessing the need for a product, securing financing, branding and managing competition) to what was portrayed in the play. While they were all too young to have experienced the impact of Motown during its heyday, they were aware of its legacy. Thus, this activity provided both a novel enrichment experience and a unique context for reinforcing learning objectives.

Expanding Developmental Experiences

Every summer a select number of students are offered the opportunity to participate in other activities that supplement the summer experience. One such program is the weeklong, residential Drew University program that introduces students to college courses and student life. Female students participated in the two day Unstoppable Girls 2013 Empowerment Summer Retreat program, which is designed to empower girls by embracing self-esteem and other key personal development issues. Students rated both experiences highly. Comments from Drew participants – such as "The program made me 100% sure that I want to go to college" and "I really think this program was helpful and should continue" – affirm the positive impact of the experience. From Unstoppable Girls participants, comments such as "Let us stay overnight the next time" and "[We should] have another experience like this" affirms their receptivity and desire to grow personally.

FOCUSED CAREER READINESS

A Career Immersion Model: RU Ready for Public /Healthcare Service

In 2010, funding was secured from the Prudential Foundation to launch a career track in public service. The program was designed to introduce students to the broad range of career options that one could pursue in the field of public service. Staff members from the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA) were enlisted to teach the core course. The rest of the courses were integrated with the **RUR** Ready curriculum. Funded RU Ready students and other students from Greater Newark-area high schools were recruited for this focused career enhancement experience. In 2011, the program was expanded to include healthcare service, one of the region's high demand career fields. In 2012, the program was restructured to provide an enriched, career immersion experience.

This career immersion model provided a comprehensive curriculum and enrichment experience in which all content---courses, workshops, internships and field trips, etc. ---focused on some aspect of public and healthcare services. One of the enrollment requirements was to have an interest in pursuing a related career field. As a final project, students produced PowerPoint presentations that integrated what they had learned during the program. Pre and post-test results further corroborated the achievement of expected learning outcomes. On the pre-test, only 21% of the responses were correct and "no response" was 46%. On the post-test, correct responses increased to 85% and all questions were answered. These results corroborated the efficacy of the immersion model. All of the rising seniors who

had participated in the track graduated in 2013, were admitted to four-year colleges and indicated an intention to pursue a major that would lead to a career in the public or healthcare service sector. Figures two and three display the 2012 pre- and post-test results. The immersion model was implemented again for the 2013 Summer Program with comparable success (see Figure four).
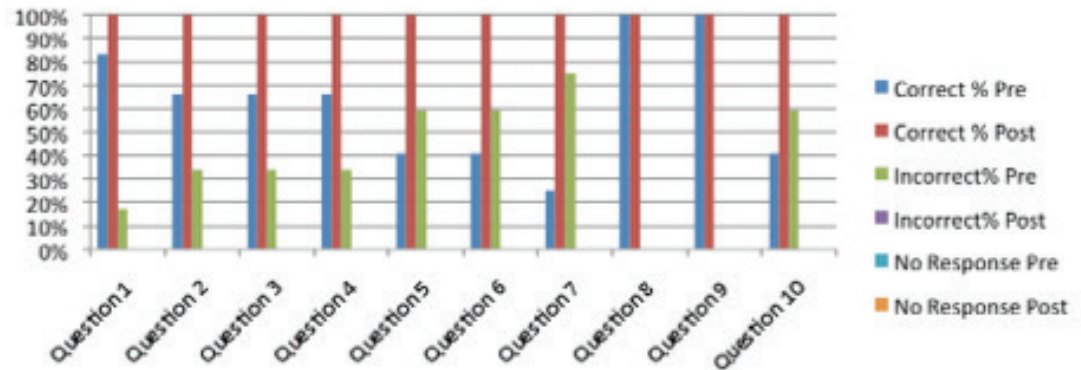
Figure 2: 2012 Pre-Test Results by Student
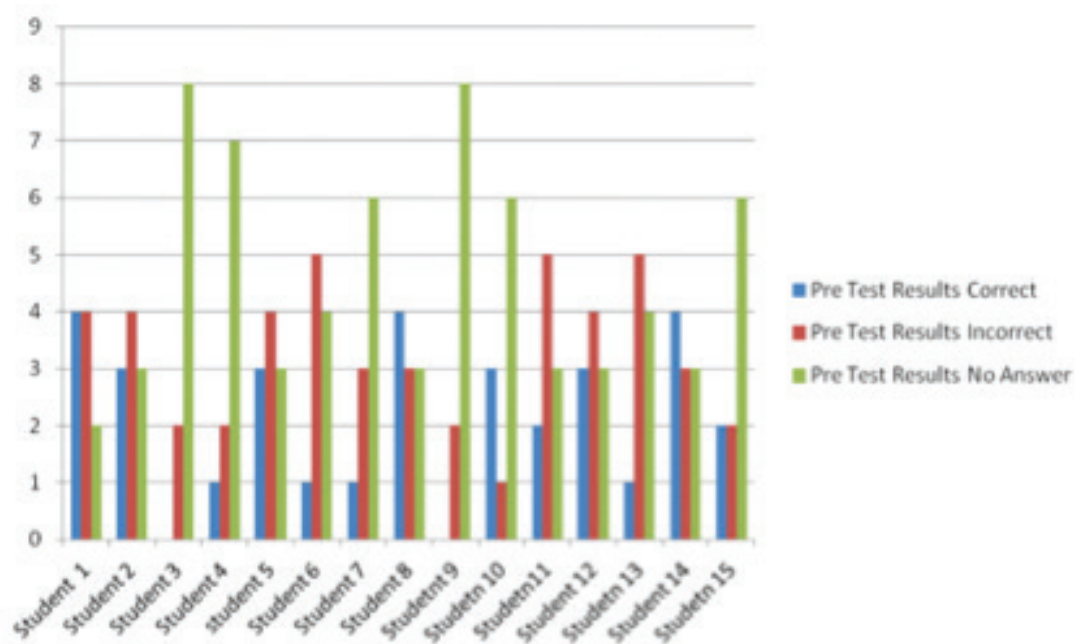
Figure 3: 2012 Post-Test Results by Student
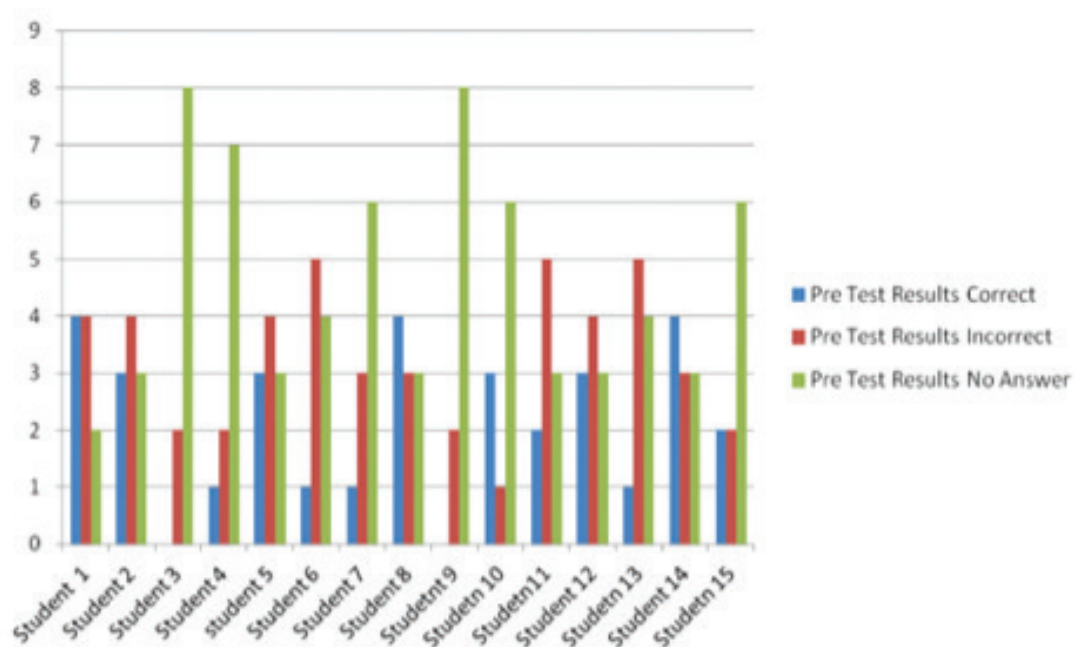
Aggregate Pre-Post test Results 2013 Public/Healthcare Service Track

Figure 4: 2013 Aggregate Pre/Post-Test Results

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Closing Luncheon Ceremony
The Student-Mentor Luncheon has become an important annual venue for convening students, worksite supervisors/mentors, parents, key community and university stakeholders, funders and the summer faculty and staff to acknowledge the partnerships and support that enabled a successful summer program. Along with parents/guardians or an adult family member, over 90% of the worksite mentors/supervisors and/or other staff who worked with the student attended and sat with their summer intern. Also in attendance were representatives from the City of Newark and representatives from various funding organizations and agencies. Additionally, **RU Ready** June graduates received their certificates of completion. A longtime staff member was also honored for his years of service to the program. During his tenure, he had served as an instructor and follow-up counselor for graduated students, and developed workshops for students and parents. Most importantly, this event provided parents the opportunity to meet their child's worksite mentor and RUR staff, and to thank them for the positive impact they had had on their child.

SHOWCASING SUCCESS

The RU Ready for Work Video
A special feature of the closing luncheon program was the debut of the new **RUR** Video. The video highlights the evolution of the **RUR Program** with particular focus on the students. Significantly, some of the students featured were members of the first graduating class and are currently enrolled in Rutgers University-Newark. The filmmaker who shot the footage was assisted by a former RU Ready student who is currently majoring in Graphic Arts at Rutgers University-Newark. The video can be viewed at http://vimeo.com/75763076.

TRACKING SUCCESS OUTCOMES

Through an evolutionary process, the **RUR Program** has achieved primary program goals and intended impacts over the past five years. Yet, the impact of the **RU Ready** experience cannot be expressed fully via the data displayed in this report. Graduation rates and post-secondary placement data implicitly represent youth who have been empowered with positive self-identity, self-determination, resiliency and belief in the future. As indicated in the previous sections, various constructs were developed to achieve these ends, along with various processes and tools to document, track/monitor progress and assess outcomes. The program has incorporated multifaceted strategies to also enhance:

- **Self-efficacy—** perception that one can achieve desired goals through one's own actions
- **Prosocial norms—** healthy standards and clear beliefs; e.g. how to respond appropriately to negative peer influence
- **Opportunities for prosocial involvement—** events and activities that encourage youth in prosocial actions
- **Bonding—** social attachment and commitment to others, including family, peers, school, community and culture[3]

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[3]***Prosocial Norms as a Positive Youth Development Construct: A Conceptual Review.***
Andrew M. H. Siu, 1 Daniel T. L. Shek, 2, * and Ben Law, May 1, 2012

However, we continue to research tools to more effectively codify these and other affective and qualitative attributes. One new instrument that is being piloted during 2014 is the GRIT[4] scale, which will be used as a pre/post measurement tool.

Another remaining challenge has been to codify data from the Individual Success Plans (ISP), a program tool for students to set educational and career goals. The ISP is updated as the students advance through the program. Where applicable, the evaluation tools that were developed and refined during summer 2013 will be adapted for the 2014 after-school program.

Efforts are also underway to compile longitudinal data on program graduates. One of the grant requirements is to provide support for and track participants for twelve months following graduation. However, we are in the process of conducting follow up on graduated students from previous years through individual outreach and working with university staff to track students via The National Student Clearinghouse database. However, student and family mobility, which inevitably generates changes in contact information, presents a significant challenge for locating a number of the graduates. We are hopeful that social media will offer an additional tool for completing this project.

Table 13 displays program completion, graduation and post-graduation placements for participants from 2008-2013. It should be noted that program completion data includes **positive attrition,** i.e., students who withdrew either because their families relocated out of the district or they transferred to other schools. Others dropped out due to competing commitments, namely sports, or to meet family needs. During the early years of the program we could not retain funding for students who did not attend the target high schools. However, with the closing of the West Side Academy of Finance in 2012, we were granted the option of retaining funded students who had transferred to other high schools. Those that remained within a reasonable commuting distance to participate in the after-school program were retained.

As the data indicates, a significant achievement is the graduation rate among the **RU Ready** partici-

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[4]"Grit is the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals" (Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 92(6), 1087-1101.) GRIT scales were developed in the Duckworth Lab at the University of Pennsylvania to determine how gritty the individual is.

pants. Recent changes in the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) data reporting formats have facilitated a comparative examination of **RU Ready** graduation rates and those for the district. RU Ready graduation rates have consistently exceeded those of the district. District-wide rates for Newark published by NJDOE in their report on Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates appear in table 12.

Table 12: District-wide Graduation Rates

2013	2012	2011
67.70%	68.72%	61.26%

Table 13: RU Ready for Work By the Numbers

Class	Program Outcomes					Placement Outcomes (among those completing the program)		
	Initial Cohort #	Completed program #	Graduated (from total) #	Completion % of total	HS diploma %	Unsubsidized work %	Postsecondary education %	Unknown/ Undecided %
2009	20	16	16	80	100	31.3	56.3	12.4
2010	20	20	19	100	95	10	75	15
2011	22	17	20	77.3	100	11.8	76.4	12.2
2012	19	14	19[1]	73.7	100	0	85.7	14.6
2013	19	18	19	94.7	100	(11.1)	100[2]	0
2014*	20	20	20	100	100	0	100	0
# / %	100	85	92	87.6	99	9	82	9

[1]Student completed RU Ready but did not receive a diploma due to a shortage of PE credits but enrolled in Project Graduation at Essex County College and completed in May, 2013.

[2]Two students worked in fall 2013; accepted/ will attend Community College in Spring, 2014.

*Among the Class of 2014 there were two Valedictorians (Bard Early College High School and West Side High School) and a Salutatorian (West Side High School) as well as several individuals who graduated in the top ten percent of their class.

Since the program's inception, **an average of 82%** of the graduates have enrolled in Post-secondary educational institutions.

For 2013 and 2014, 100% of the graduates have enrolled in Post-secondary educational institutions.

Among 2014 graduates, two were valedictorians and one was a salutatorian. RUR has a **92% average program completion rate!**

PROMISING INNOVATIONS: PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES

Over the course of five years creating a demonstration model, OUCP and *RUR*'s professional staff have developed an array of operating policies, procedures and strategies to address the needs of the population.

Strategies

Many of these strategies, built upon feedback and program assessment, are promising practices that may be employed by similar programs. Key among them are.

- Employing a broad-based funding strategy to augment programs

- Providing centrally located service delivery and programming

- Developing a tiered development strategy to improve student outcomes over the life of their program participation

- Implementing a global awareness curriculum to broaden students' world view

- Role modeling

- Employing a whole-person development strategy that expands upon the WIA 10 Essential Elements for Youth Programs and providing social support assessment and referral services

- Develop career immersion tracks to provide focused pedagogy and enrichment to introduce students to high demand and new career field options

Funding Partnerships

The RUR program's development has been enhanced by engaging a broad-based coalition of funders whose unity of purpose and common values have facilitated successful program implementation and expansion of the enrichment and developmental components. Funding and sponsorship for **RUR** have been provided by the following agencies:

More than 30
Rutgers-Newark and community-based professionals
sponsor RUR interns each summer.

Table 13: Funding Sources

FUNDER / SPONSOR	TYPE OF SUPPORT
MCJ Amelior Foundation	Start-up funding
City of Newark	Operating support
Rutgers University-Newark	Administrative, facilities, research
The Prudential Foundation	Enrichment program funding
The Victoria Foundation	Enrichment program funding

Location

Establishing a single site for the after-school program that serves students from multiple high schools was not only essential to effective service delivery, but also was the most cost effective means to do so. The cost of providing bus tickets is far less than paying for administrative and instructional staff at multiple locations. It enables the integration of students from different schools into a positive learning environment and program culture, a rare experience for most participants, but one that will facilitate transition into post-secondary placements.

Tiered Development Strategy

The Tiered Development Strategy was created to provide students with increasingly advanced approaches to key curriculum elements. The strategy allows students to advance through a progressive and integrated curriculum that builds upon each successive level. It provides a framework of innovative and creatively delivered pedagogy that actively engages students in a developmental progression designed to achieve intended impacts.

The Global Exploration Strategy

RUR designed the Global International Experience component as a vehicle for building upon community relevant experiences and prosocial skills to enhance students' awareness of themselves in relationship to others within the global community. The teleconference provides an interactive experience that serves to dispel some common misconceptions about life in Africa and to cultivate a sense of affinity toward other youth in a foreign country. It ignites curiosity about other countries and cultures and lays the groundwork for students to enter into an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural society.

Role Modeling and Participant Re-engagement

Positive role modeling significantly impacts students' capacity to envision "future possibilities." Students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and communities have limited exposure to successful individuals whose experiences mirror theirs. The program has developed a multifaceted role modeling strategy. Through the Luncheon Seminar Series and other guest speakers, professional and support staff, and site personnel, students are continuously exposed to and interact with successful professionals and students who either are from Newark or are from similar urban environments. The program intentionally employs graduate and undergraduate students enrolled at Rutgers University-Newark who are former *RU Ready* participants or from Newark, to serve in a variety of positions. The former program participants are especially effective because they serve as both role models and ambassadors for the program. They convey how the program impacted them, as well as how OUCP continues to support them and their continuing commitment to the *RU Ready* program.

Whole-Person Development Strategy

RUR employs a development strategy that addresses both the individual and environmental influences on student success. The three-tiered development continuum, curriculum and enrichment activities, in tandem, promote the development of multiple skill sets, along with prosocial norms and involvement that enhance their functioning in the various arenas that they must navigate in their daily lives. When needed, there is also support from social work staff to assist both students and families. Facilitated group work, community-based internships, community service and parental engagement promote bonding with others in their community. Thus, rather than feeling constrained by negative environmental factors, they discover how to forge positive supportive relationships to better navigate them.

Career Immersion Strategy

The Career Immersion model offers an effective strategy for guiding students with specified career interests towards promising pathways to achieve their objectives. Through research, work internships, and in-depth career exploration, along with exposure to career professionals and venues, students not only increased their commitment to the career, but in most cases, elevated their aspirations within that career field. They recognized the need to earn advanced degrees and aspired to become leaders in the field. The six-week intensive summer experience for Newark high school students can be an innovative strategy for increasing the college attendance rate for these youth.

CHALLENGES

Sustainability-Funding

Stable, multi-year funding and timely, sequential funding cycles are essential to the efficient running of a program of this type. The sheer number and type of funding changes throughout the five-year cycle might have devastated a less fiscally stable and well-positioned program. Scope, scale, and continuity of programs are negatively impacted by inconsistent funding cycles and one-year commitments of dollars that alter the number of funded students from year to year. The **RUR** program plan is based on tiered development and a full year of program activities, extending throughout the academic year and into the summer. Planning for programs and staff to meet these commitments had remained constant throughout the five years, but the amount of dollars (predicated on the number of students contracted to be served) did not. Grant commitments were seldom made well in advance of the time required to adequately plan for this programming. Thus, oftentimes, these activities were almost always conducted in anticipation that the good works and excellent track record of the program would be recognized and an award adequate to meet the demands of the program would ensue. However, new funding sources and strategies must be acquired for longer term sustainability. Collaborative funding and programming are among the strategies that are being explored.

Funding Delays

Because **RUR** is embedded in a university financial structure, program management was able to secure a commitment to pay salaries and other program elements based on a notice of funding intent. After successive years of delayed funding and the extended fiscal deficits that resulted, the university now only allows payment of contracted full time personnel. For 2014, grant funding notification was not received until December, which impacted program enrollment, staff hiring and implementation since the number of students and the grant amount were significantly reduced. Yet, the same funding benchmarks (enrollment, attendance, etc.) were applicable. Staff members have had to take several measures to adjust while retaining program integrity and efficacy, but some program impacts will be diminished. Timely contracting, disbursement of funds, and two-year cycles are highly recommended to mitigate these problems.

Siting

As stated previously, executing the program on the Rutgers campus did facilitate programming, generate costs savings, and allow expansion of participating high schools. However, there are accompanying challenges. Key among them is the variability in dismissal times among Newark high schools. Coupled with variability and sometimes unreliability of local bus schedules, staff are challenged to construct an after-school schedule that preserves the tier model and accommodates the inevitable variations in students' arrival times. The complexities of this task increase as the number of high schools that the students attend increases. As a consequence, we must take into account the availability of reliable, proximate public transportation when targeting schools for recruitment.

11 Newark High Schools

By 2014, RUR enrolled students from 11 Newark High Schools.

CONCLUSION

This report provides a summary of program development and data gathered, which indicate that *RUR* has achieved primary goals and intended impacts. The increased proportion of graduates who elected to enroll in higher education institutions and have been admitted is significant: it meets the post-graduation placement objectives; and it indicates that students have adopted long-term interests and career goals rather than simply seeking a job after graduation. This reflects the impact of the whole-person development strategy. Most participants successfully complete at least two summer work internships, which enhances work readiness skills and career preparation. Efforts are underway to revise and codify work internship performance reports to facilitate compilation, reporting and analysis of the data to better measure impact. Significantly, the role of site supervisor was redefined to that of site mentor, which rendered a more supportive relationship to promote career development. Students thus acquire both the intended work-related skills and participate in a positive mentoring relationship. Moreover, they earn much-needed summer income.

Work internships, an innovative curriculum, and engaging enrichment activities have provided Newark youth, many of whom are at-risk, with a unique experience that has changed their lives' trajectory. This record of *RUR* success reflects an ongoing process of creative and strategic program development, improvement and refinement, executed by a highly skilled and dedicated staff working in partnership with key stakeholders. While there are challenges, there are also promising practices and innovations that can be adopted by other youth development programs.

RUR was intended to be a demonstration model that would generate information that was applicable to other youth programs and that would be replicable and adaptable for implementation with similar youth populations. As stated previously:

RUR was comprised of two elements: 1) capacity building and network learning component designed to provide information and support to all NewarkWorks youth program grantees and youth service providers in the city, and 2) a replicable youth employment, academic and community engagement, demonstration initiative based at West Side High School in Newark.

We believe that we have made significant progress in achieving these objectives and equipping students with key 21st Century Skills. The program's successes have already garnered invitations to participate in local and nationally sponsored learning communities that are attempting to broaden opportunities for more Newark youth to achieve greater success, educationally and personally. These forums provide an opportunity to both share best practices and lessons learned, and to develop collaborative programming and funding models. Furthermore, the assistant chancellor was recently approached by a nearby school district to implement the program there. These are all positive developments that support sustaining and growing **RUR**.

RUR staff members continue to research and develop strategies to enrich and expand the model. Some recent developments include:

- A partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife's ***Hooked on Fishing–Not on Drugs–New Jersey*** program to adopt their year-round curriculum and enrichment component. This will provide a new career focused track that will expose students to less traditional STEM-related and environmental career options.
- Partnering with the Rutgers Office of Enrollment Management's Research and Enrollment Information Services to improve data collection, compilation and reporting for program participants and graduates.

Longer Term Priorities for Promoting the Model include:

- Constructing an outreach campaign to promote the program and to increase public and private sector funding sources to increase the number program participants.
- Develop a manual that will guide other staff in implementing the program.
- Sponsor a forum that will present the model and our findings.

It is anticipated that this report will generate further interest among key stakeholders and funders who support youth development and career readiness programs for urban students.

APPENDIX A

WIA COMPONENTS

APPENDIX A

WIA Components	RU Ready for Work Strategy/Innovation AY=Academic Year S=Summer ON=Ongoing
1. Tutoring, study skills, and dropout prevention strategies	**A.** Individual and group tutoring provided by college students (AY) **B.** Study groups coordinated with school teacher (AY) **C.** Study skills assessment and improvement (ON) **D.** Monitoring academic progress (AY) **E.** Work with parents, teachers, and guidance staff to prevent dropouts (ON)
2. Alternative secondary school offerings	**A.** Counseling and assessment (ON) **B.** Referrals and individual student support (ON) **C.** Opportunity for placement in the RU Ready for Public Service/Health Care Service Track (six-week internship and enrichment program offered on a competitive basis) (S) **D.** Leadership training and academic enrichment placement opportunities (ON)
3. Summer employment opportunities linked to academic and occupational learning	**A.** Six-week summer internships in non-profit, community-based organizations (S) **B.** Orientation, internship development, intensive support and follow up with internship supervisors (S) **C.** Efforts made to match by area of interest where possible (S)
4. Paid and unpaid work experience	**A.** Supervised community service opportunities for the group as a whole and for individual/small group cohorts (ON) **B.** Monitored academic year internship placements for upper tier students 1) in good academic standing, 2) upon successful completion of work-readiness training, and 3) having successfully completed a summer internship or with other prior work history (AY)
5. Occupational skill training	**A.** Skill instruction and applied practice **B.** Exposure to jobs in local employment clusters
6. Leadership development	**A.** Component included in academic year curriculum (AY) **B.** Summer leadership course (S) **C.** Facilitated placements in summer and academic year programs and institutes (competitive) (ON)

APPENDIX A (continued)

WIA Components	RU Ready for Work Strategy/Innovation AY=Academic Year S=Summer ON=Ongoing
7. **Supportive services**	**A.** Individual student assessments led by MSW social worker referrals **B.** Mentoring **C.** Program staff liaison with students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and school administration
8. **Adult mentoring for at least 12 months**	**A.** Intensive follow up **B.** Facilitated longterm relationships with worksite mentors **C.** Referrals to the Big Brother Big Sister program
9. **Comprehensive guidance and counseling**	**A.** Academic counseling and advising (ON) **B.** Individual Student Plans (ON) **C.** Post-graduate planning, application, and financial aid assistance (ON)
10. **Followup activities for no less than 12 months after completion of participation**	**A.** Quarterly contact with graduates that have been accepted into 4-year universities. (ON) **B.** Bi-monthly contact with graduates that have been accepted into 2-year colleges. (ON) **C.** Monthly contact with graduates that have secured employment post-graduation. (ON) **D.** Monthly contacts with graduates that have not secured employment, enrolled in a post-secondary institution, or are in pursuit of an alternate means of advancement. (ON) **E.** Proposed annual reunion of all program participants. (ON Opportunities to maintain contact with current and former participants through social media is being explored. (ON) **F.** Former students are encouraged to remain in contact and often call for references, advice, or assistance. (ON)

APPENDIX B

Curriculum Domains By Tiers	
Sophomores Tier I	***Academic Year:*** Work readiness training, soft skills development and academic skills development. Needs-based tutoring. ***Supplemental Saturday Workshops*** and on campus enrichment programs provided by internal and external sponsors ***Summer Work Internships*** with site and coach mentoring, theme-based and transitional curriculum and enrichment activities. ***During the early years*** of the program Tier I students were assigned to academic and interpersonal enrichment activities provided by partnering agencies.
Juniors Tier II	***Academic Year:*** these students continue participation in tutoring and academic skills improvement activities. ***They receive*** more advanced work readiness skills development and are aided in practicing these skills through classroom-based activities. ***College/Career Planning:*** College bound students participate in SAT preparation courses; the others work on resume and cover letter preparation, alternative training opportunities, or identifying job search engines.

APPENDIX B (continued)

Curriculum Domains By Tiers	
Seniors Tier III	***Students receive*** intensive advisement and assistance to prepare them for their transition to post-graduation work or for higher educational pursuits: • ***career counseling;*** • ***job search assistance;*** • ***completing college and financial assistance applications*** • ***complete exit interview and processing***

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