

Two Steps Ahead

Following Up with This Way Ahead Alumni

APRIL 2018

Prepared for
Gap Foundation

Prepared by
Informing Change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this first-ever This Way Ahead (the Program) alumni study, Informing Change gathered data from former This Way Ahead interns dating back to the Program’s inaugural year, 2007. In gathering, analyzing, and sharing these data, we sought to answer the following question:

What are the longer-term outcomes of This Way Ahead alumni, and how do these outcomes differ by length of engagement in This Way Ahead and as a permanent Gap, Inc. employee?

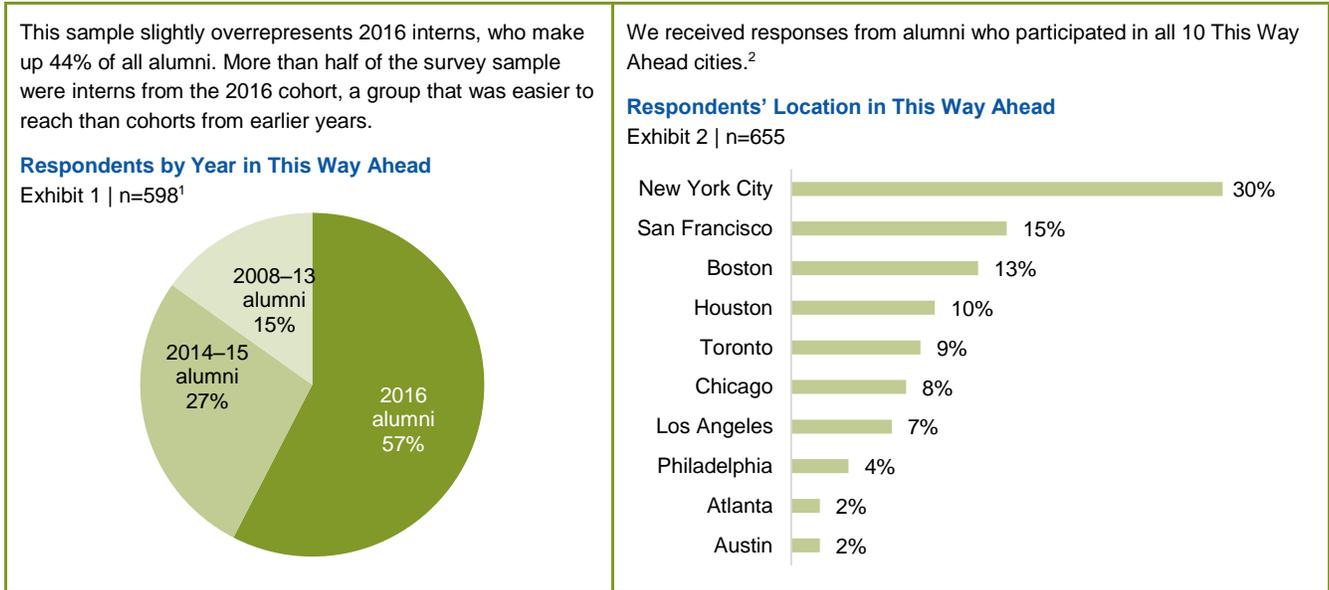
FINDINGS	
	Most This Way Ahead alumni go on to secure stable employment on an hourly, part-time basis: 72% currently have one or more paid jobs, a higher rate than the equivalent age group (16 to 24 year olds) of the general population, which is 55%.
	Given their ages, most alumni are on track with their educational attainment. The high school graduation rates of This Way Ahead alumni (83%) are similar to the general US public school population (85%) and higher than the graduation rate of opportunity youth (50%).
	Alumni from earlier cohorts of This Way Ahead tend to have full-time, career-track positions with higher salaries. Alumni in older cohorts (2007–2013) are three to four times more likely to have higher income and education attainment outcomes than alumni in the most recent cohort (2016).
	This Way Ahead gave alumni the skills and confidence boost they needed to jump into the working world. Alumni ranked gaining work-ready and soft skills and having a first job experience as the two most valuable elements of This Way Ahead.
	Almost a third of alumni continue to work at Gap Inc. stores as associates, although an even greater proportion work in entry-level or associate positions outside of retail.
	When thinking back to their time in This Way Ahead, alumni most frequently cite their relationships with different individuals in their This Way Ahead experience as the most memorable aspects of the Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
Continue providing supports that help participants manage responsibilities within and outside of This Way Ahead.	Build in mechanisms for alumni engagement, both to enrich the Program and to improve data collection.
Continue to track alumni’s education attainment as a proxy for earning potential.	Survey alumni every three to five years.
	Foster supportive relationship for interns.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

With critical support and outreach from nonprofit partners, we received survey responses from 655 young people who participated in This Way Ahead between 2007 and 2016. The survey analysis is very statistically sound, with a 99% confidence level and a margin of error of +/-4%. In addition, we conducted 30 follow-up interviews to add texture and nuance to our understanding of where alumni are now and what they think of This Way Ahead.

About This Sample

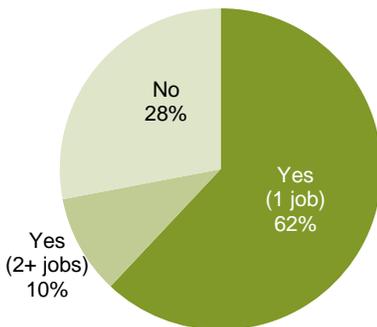


WHERE ARE THIS WAY AHEAD ALUMNI NOW?

Most This Way Ahead alumni go on to secure stable employment on an hourly, part-time basis.³

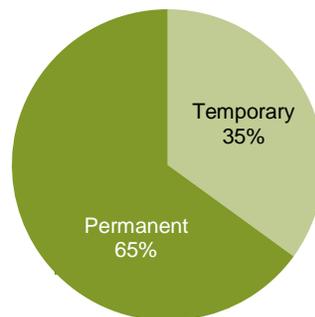
Are you currently working in a paid job?

Exhibit 3 | n=646



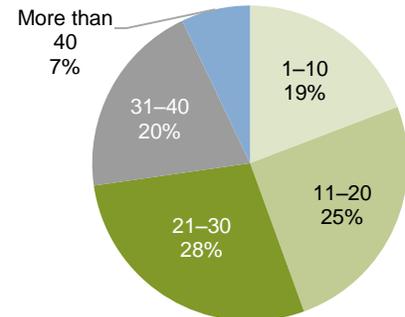
Is this job temporary or permanent?

Exhibit 4 | n=573



How many hours a week do you work?

Exhibit 5 | n=573



¹ This graph only includes data from alumni whose response to year of participation aligned with TWA implementation in their city. We could not verify participation years for all alumni.

² As of 2016, 10 cities had implemented This Way Ahead. Two additional cities were added in 2017 (Miami and Vancouver). This study did not include 2017 participants. Furthermore, no alumni from the 2007 cohort responded to our survey.

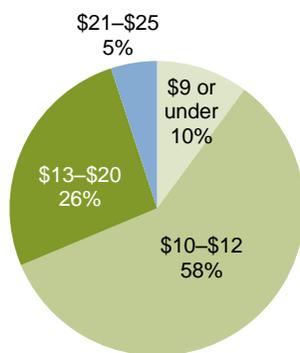
³ This finding holds true, even excluding 2016 interns, some of whom are still in high school. The two areas where the two groups—all alumni vs. alumni from 2015 and earlier—differ in the proportion working in a paid job (72% vs. 80%, respectively) and the proportion working 31 or more hours (27% vs. 36%, respectively).

Alumni are employed at higher rates than the equivalent age group (16 to 24 year olds) of the general population. Keeping in mind that This Way Ahead alumni have a different demographic makeup both in terms of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status than the broader US population, 54.8% of 16 to 24 year olds were employed in July 2017 (according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics), compared to the 72% of Gap alumni who are employed.⁴ This statistic can serve as a mixed indicator: in general, young people in the 16 to 24 years age group are focusing on their education. While alumni are employed and earning money, their higher rates of employment may mean that they are juggling work and education, a challenge many of their similarly aged peers may not face.

Of the alumni who have jobs, nearly all (91%) have formal jobs (versus informal jobs—for example, jobs not on a formal payroll). Most alumni make between \$10 and \$20 per hour if employed on an hourly basis and between \$20,000 and \$40,000 if employed with an annual salary. This income range aligns with the national median pay rate for full-time workers ages 16 to 24, which according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics is \$13.72 per hour, or \$28,548 annually.⁵ This finding is relatively consistent when excluding 2016 alumni—who are generally younger—from the analysis, although a larger proportion of alumni from 2015 and earlier earn at the highest hourly rates, compared to all alumni (33% vs 26% for \$13–\$20/hour, and 9% vs. 4% for \$21–\$25/hour).

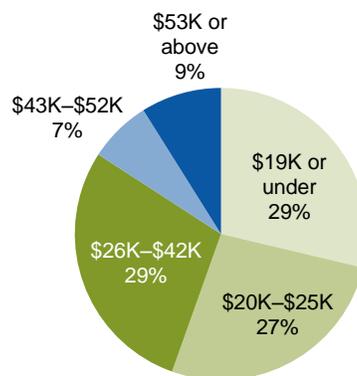
What is your job's current hourly rate?

Exhibit 6 | n=481



What is your current annual salary?

Exhibit 7 | n=70



In this survey, alumni could share information about more than one job. For those who work two jobs (10% of alumni), we included only the job with the highest wages, salary, hours, or position in describing these statistics.

In their second jobs, the majority of alumni work primarily on an hourly basis, are paid between \$10 and \$12 per hour, and are working either 1–10 or 11–20 hours per week.

To understand whether these earnings are enough for alumni to live comfortably requires knowing many variables beyond the scope of this dataset, including but not limited to the number of earners in the alumni's households and the types of expenses they have, such as tuition and health care. However, we do know that many of these alumni are still pursuing their secondary or post-secondary education while also working part-time. In interviews, some alumni reflected on the challenges of balancing work and school, but more often they discussed the ways This Way Ahead taught them valuable time management skills, which have given these alumni an edge at this stage in their lives.

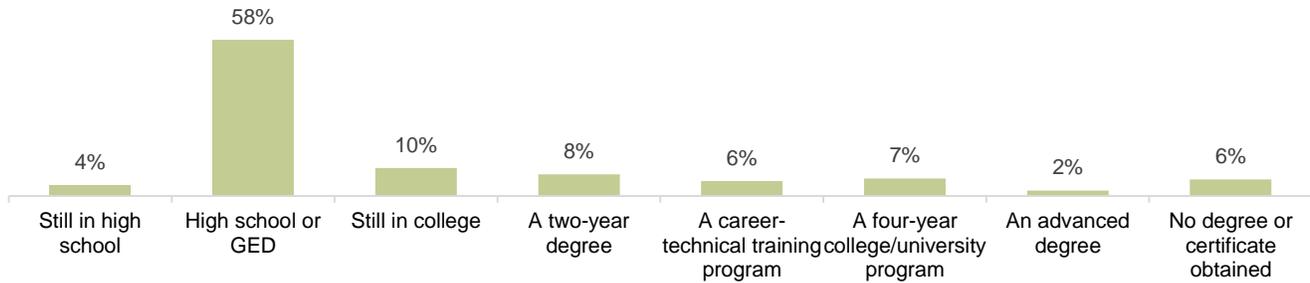
⁴ Source: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/youth.nr0.htm>

⁵ Source: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/wkyeng.t03.htm>

Given their ages, most alumni are on track with their educational attainment.

Highest Level of Education Completed Since This Way Ahead

Exhibit 8 | n=553

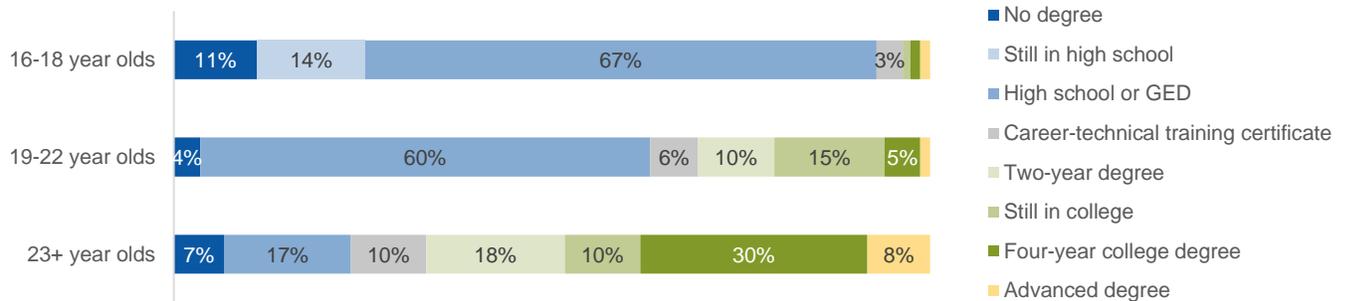


In this sample of alumni, 58% stated their highest level of education is a high school diploma or GED, which aligns with the large proportion of respondents from the most recent cohort (2016, 53% of sample) and likely younger than others in the sample.

This Way Ahead alumni graduate high school at rates more similar to the general US public school population than the more specific opportunity youth population, defined as individuals who are unemployed or not in school. This Way Ahead alumni complete high school at an estimated rate of 83%,⁶ while the general US population in public high schools completes high school at a rate of 84.9%,⁷ and opportunity youth complete high school at a rate of 50%.⁸

Highest Educational Attainment by Age Group⁹

Exhibit 9



As alumni get older, a smaller proportion lists high school diploma or GED as their highest educational attainment, and more move into attending college, or having completed two- and four-year degrees. In the 23 years and older age group, 66% have moved beyond attaining a high school degree (i.e., are currently in college or have obtained a two-year, four-year, or advanced degree).

⁶ This calculation is based on the combined percentages of the following “Highest Degree Earned” categories: High school or GED, two-year degree, four-year college degree, still in college, and advanced degree, given that those pursuing higher education would have needed to receive their high school diploma or GED.

⁷ Source: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2015-16.asp

⁸ Source: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/employment-and-disconnection-among-teens-and-young-adults-the-role-of-place-race-and-education/>.

⁹ Four 16–18 year olds indicated they had a college degree—two said they had a four-year degree and two said they had an advanced degree. While this may be the case, it is more likely that respondents indicated their aspirational statuses, rather than their degree attainment (i.e., they selected “four-year college degree” as what they were pursuing, rather than what they had attained).

Alumni from earlier cohorts of This Way Ahead tend to have full-time, career-track positions with higher salaries.

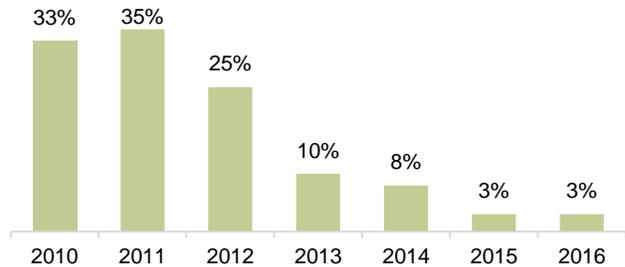
Older cohorts of alumni (2007–2013) are three to four times more likely to have higher income and education attainment outcomes than alumni in the most recent cohort (2016). Despite differences in age, location, and life before This Way Ahead (e.g., previous employment, level of education), these data suggest that Program participants need a few years after the Program to make significant progress in their careers and education.

In interviews, many alumni shared that their experience with This Way Ahead gave them a jump-start in the working world; because of the skills they learned during the job training and the experience they gained in their internship, these alumni were able to secure jobs that many peers their age could not. Further, alumni from early years of the Program have positioned themselves for advancement, either with education or by pursuing a particular career track. Alumni with four-year degrees are more likely to have a permanent, full-time job with higher wages, which aligns with research that educational attainment is a strong indicator for earning potential.¹¹

These older alumni are continuing to progress in their careers and education trajectories after their This Way Ahead experience, rather than stagnating—or worse, losing ground.

Percentage of Alumni with a Bachelor’s Degree⁴

Exhibit 10 | n=42 | Within each This Way Ahead cohort year



The following comparable or near-comparable programs—while not necessarily highlighting long-term outcomes—can provide a point of reference for This Way Ahead in terms of how participants emerge from the program and how their careers may unfold.

Program	Post-Program Employment Outcomes
Opportunity Knocks ¹¹	44% of interns over 18 years old converted to long-term employees
Urban Alliance ¹²	Over 75% of program alumni remain "connected" to a pathway (including college, employment, or a career training program) one year after completing Urban Alliance
Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection (HW-SC) ¹³	80% of all graduates reported being employed post-graduation; attrition rates among employees who were minors reduced to 30% (compared to 100% in 1987); 84% retention rate for employees
Genesys Works ¹⁴	Alumni (over 5 years out of the program) report 84.6% working full-time and 7.7% working part-time; median income working full-time is \$40K–\$45K; percentage of alumni in college majors with high labor market returns is less than 50%
JUMA Ventures ¹⁵	90% of youth placed in a full-time job

¹⁰ Each bar represents the proportion of alumni in each year who received a bachelor's degree. For 2010, n=18; for 2011, n=23; for 2012, n=28; for 2013, n=30; for 2014, n=71; for 2015, n=93; and for 2016, n=271. For respondents who participated in This Way Ahead in 2007, 2008, and 2009, n=1, n=11, and n=7, respectively; these samples were too small to provide conclusive evidence of these cohorts' educational attainment as a whole.

¹¹ Source: Martha Ross and Nicole Svajlenka (2016), "Employment and Disconnection Among Teens and Young Adults: The Role of Place, Race, and Education," available at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/employment-and-disconnection-among-teens-and-young-adults-the-role-of-place-race-and-education>

¹² Source: Diversity in the Workplace | Talent Acquisition |. (n.d.). Retrieved March 27, 2018, from <https://gradsoflife.org/>

¹³ Source: Theodos, B., Pergamit, M. R., Hanson, D., Edelstein, S., & Daniels, R. (2016, May). Embarking on College and Career: Interim Evaluation of Urban Alliance. Retrieved March 27, 2018, from http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/80591/2000788-urban-alliance-evaluation-interim-report_0.pdf

¹⁴ Source: Graduation. College. Career. Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection Outcomes Report. (2017). Retrieved March 27, 2018, from <https://www.hillside.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HWSC-Outcomes-Report-2017.pdf>

¹⁵ Source: Genesys Works. (2017). Creating Pathways to Economic Self-Sufficiency 2016 ALUMNI SURVEY SUMMARY. Retrieved March 27, 2018, from <http://www.genesysworks.org/media/2245/genesys-works-2016-alumni-survey-summary.pdf>

¹⁶ Source: Year In Numbers. (n.d.). Retrieved March 27, 2018, from <http://www.juma.org/year-in-numbers/>

Snapshots of This Way Ahead Alumni¹⁷

<p>Jocelyn</p> <p>This Way Ahead Year: 2012</p> <p>Pre-This Way Ahead: Sophomore in high school; This Way Ahead was her first job</p> <p>Post-This Way Ahead: Senior in college studying interior design; works part-time at a design firm</p> <p>Career impact: “Setting goals at the internship made me a better individual. I got to network with people, and developing those communication skills has helped me in interior design work.”</p> <p>Educational impact: “Working with teams is a skill everyone needs. [Without This Way Ahead] it would’ve taken me longer to get these basic skills for collaborating with others.”</p> <p>Program rating: 5/5 “This Way Ahead was the starting point for all the things I learned that got me to where I am now.”</p>	<p>Kaya</p> <p>This Way Ahead Year: 2013</p> <p>Pre-This Way Ahead: Junior in high school</p> <p>Post-This Way Ahead: In college studying sociology and anthropology; works on campus</p> <p>Career impact: “This Way Ahead granted me the opportunity to have a first job experience where I was challenged and learned how to ask for help. This was useful for everyday life and work life.”</p> <p>Educational impact: “[My experience with This Way Ahead] made me want to look for a career I’m passionate about, but I don’t think my education would be different without This Way Ahead.”</p> <p>Program rating: 4/5 “It would have been cool to have a few more life lessons on practical skills that could apply to any work environment, not just retail.”</p>	<p>Kendra</p> <p>This Way Ahead Year: 2014</p> <p>Pre-This Way Ahead: Junior in high school; had worked previously in fast food</p> <p>Post-This Way Ahead: Junior in college; works part-time in college financial aid office</p> <p>Career impact: “The Program allowed me to travel around the city, work with different types of people, go to interviews, build a resume, and develop customer service and leadership skills.”</p> <p>Educational impact: “I learned how to balance and manage my time. I was really busy during This Way Ahead, and now, I make sure I’m always being productive by having a job and going to class.”</p> <p>Program rating: 5/5 “At that age I didn’t know what I was doing and didn’t have a lot of guidance. [It helped] to go somewhere where they taught me skills that I can take to a future career... and to be around other young adults looking for different careers.”</p>	<p>Lucas</p> <p>This Way Ahead Year: 2016</p> <p>Pre-This Way Ahead: Senior in high school; This Way Ahead was his first job</p> <p>Post-This Way Ahead: Full-time college student studying public health; works as a store associate at Staples</p> <p>Career impact: “I learned customer service skills: working with different personalities and handling people who were upset.”</p> <p>Educational impact: “This Way Ahead didn’t make a difference in my education.”</p> <p>Program rating: 3/5 “My location wasn’t great. I liked the experience as a whole, but I didn’t give it the last two stars because of management and because I didn’t get my guaranteed hours... Sometimes they’d send me home if it was slow, which was hard because I lived 45 minutes away from the store and they didn’t reimburse bus fare.”</p>
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¹⁷ These snapshots represent individuals we interviewed. To maintain their confidentiality, we have used pseudonyms and removed identifying information.

This Way Ahead gave alumni the skills and confidence boost they needed to jump into the working world.

This Way Ahead is an opportunity unlike most that are available to young people in high school, and alumni recognize that This Way Ahead gave them a leg up in the working world. Alumni ranked gaining work-ready and soft skills (59%) and having a first job experience (42%) as the two most valuable elements of This Way Ahead. Thanks to This Way Ahead, many alumni learned how to write a resume, ask for references, dress professionally, and develop customer service skills.

“When I applied for jobs I would have This Way Ahead in my mind because that is the place that taught me how to do resumes, cover letters, and references.”

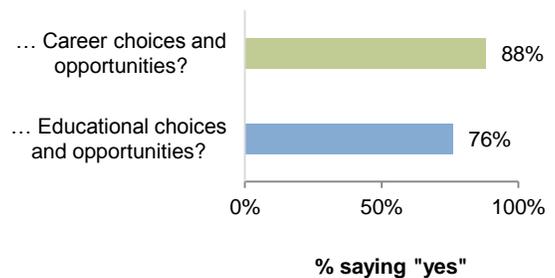
“This Way Ahead gave me a baseline on what to do and what not to do. Without This Way Ahead, it would have taken me a whole lot longer to figure out how the professional world works.”

This Way Ahead influences more alumni in their career than in their education, although alumni report the Program had positive effects on both of these aspects of their lives. In learning how to manage their time, some alumni noted that This Way Ahead helped prepare them for working while in school.

“My previous experience plus everything I learned at This Way Ahead just builds on each other. You look at someone else’s resume compared to mine, and I have more experience. I know what it’s like to actually work.”

Did This Way Ahead—the skills you learned, the people you met, and the experiences you had—make a difference for you related to...

Exhibit 11 | n=635



Almost a third of alumni continue to work at Gap, Inc. stores as associates, although an even greater proportion work in entry-level or associate positions outside of retail.

With a high percentage of alumni working outside of the retail industry, the skills alumni gain from their This Way Ahead experience translate outside of the job training and store context. It is a promising sign that This Way Ahead can promote advancement beyond the retail track.

Of those who work at a Gap Inc. store, the vast majority are from recent cohorts of This Way Ahead, very likely because many receive job offers after the internship. 66% of 2016 alumni work in a Gap Inc. store (see Exhibit 13). In general, there are no differences between alumni who do or do not

Where do you work?

Exhibit 12 | n=573



work at Gap Inc. stores due to demographic variables, such as status before This Way Ahead, age, location, or educational outcomes after the Program. The exception is that, regardless of cohort year or location, Latino alumni are three times more likely than alumni of all other ethnic groups to be working at a Gap Inc. store after the internship. However, these alumni work primarily as associates and are not progressing to manager positions. Future evaluations could provide additional data from TWA Alumni to confirm if this is indeed a trend—and if attention should therefore be paid to creating a more intentional pipeline for moving these alumni from associates to managers—or if this finding is simply a facet of this year’s sample.

The longer alumni are away from the Program, the less likely they are to work at a Gap Inc. store, with a large drop-off even two years out of the Program. The jobs they have vary: some work in finance or research, others have administrative positions, and several interview informants attending college have work-study jobs. Those working at Gap Inc., however, do not meaningfully differ from their peers who do not continue employment with Gap Inc. Although working at a Gap, Banana Republic, or Old Navy store is a common next step for recent alumni, continued employment does not appear to affect longer-term earnings, employment, or education.

Percentage of Alumni from Each Year Working at a Gap, Old Navy, or Banana Republic Store

Exhibit 13 | n=189 | Breakdown by year in This Way Ahead



When thinking back to their time in This Way Ahead, alumni most frequently note their relationships with individuals in their This Way Ahead experiences as the most memorable aspects of the Program.

When alumni—some of whom are five or more years removed from This Way Ahead—look back on the Program, many remark on the importance of the relationships they formed. There are all kinds of ways these important relationships can manifest, as evidenced from the range of individuals that alumni connect with, such as job coaches, nonprofit staff, other interns, intern managers, and other store associates. These relationships helped alumni grow as individuals during what was, for many of them, a challenging first-time experience. While intern managers and job coaches are not the only individuals that interns can connect with, they are formal sources of support that can ensure interns have some kind of positive relationship-building in their This Way Ahead experiences.

Most alumni rated This Way Ahead positively (81% rated it a four or a five on a five-point scale).¹⁸ When we spoke to a sample of individuals who rated the Program as three or less, they all mentioned having a challenging relationship with someone in their stores—for example, a manager or fellow store associate. Alumni’s reflections on their relationships with people during their time in This Way Ahead reinforce what we know from interns at the end of their internship. When alumni connect in some way with a mentor—a Job Coach, manager, or fellow associate—This Way Ahead becomes a positive formative experience that boosts participants’ professionalism and confidence.

“The people who taught me about the Program—the ins and outs—they were a big part of the Program for me. They opened my eyes to many things.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings in this report present a picture of where This Way Ahead alumni are in their lives now, one or more years since participating in the Program. Taken together, the findings provide a view of the different paths This Way Ahead alumni take and the benefits of the Program for many of them. We offer the following recommendations for the future, based on these findings.

Continue providing supports that help participants manage responsibilities within and outside of This Way Ahead.

The way participants in This Way Ahead are challenged to manage their time and responsibilities effectively is a Program strength that should continue. When alumni expressed appreciation for This Way Ahead and talked about its influence on their lives, they frequently referenced how the Program helped them, at a relatively young age, to balance demands from school and work. The Program does this by supporting interns in their stores through their managers and Big Sibs, as well as by providing Job Coaches. Furthermore, alumni value the interpersonal and customer service skills they developed, especially in a busy store environment where they encountered many different types of people. These skills and the confidence This Way Ahead engenders provided a foundation for participants’ future careers.

Continue to track alumni’s educational attainment as a proxy for earning potential.

Tracking alumni’s educational attainment provides helpful information about their overall growth. Our findings align with well-established research that advanced educational attainment increases the likelihood for higher earning potential. Educational attainment, while not an area This Way Ahead aims to influence directly, appears to indicate increased earning potential among alumni and is a useful data point to continue to track. Given the finding that the Program had a stronger influence on alumni’s career trajectories than their educational ones, it will be important to clarify that tracking educational attainment data does not necessarily imply that This Way Ahead aims to play a direct role in alumni’s educational growth.

¹⁸ For comparison, 99% alumni of Genesys Works, a similar program, would “highly recommend” Genesys Works to their friends and family. Source: <http://www.genesysworks.org/media/2245/genesys-works-2016-alumni-survey-summary.pdf>

Build in mechanisms for alumni engagement, both to enrich the Program and to improve data collection.

The benefits of engaging alumni are two-fold. Alumni participation could enrich current cohorts' experiences when alumni serve as mentors or Big Sibs. Furthermore, increased alumni engagement will provide more current contact information for future data collection efforts. The bulk of respondents for this study came from the most recent This Way Ahead cohorts, as there was less current contact information for alumni from earlier cohorts. Future studies that explore how individuals change as they become further removed from the Program will require up-to-date alumni contact information a number of years after alumni have completed the Program.

Survey alumni every three to five years.

We found that the longer alumni are away from the Program, the more likely they are to have progressed in their education, careers, or both. This means that it takes several years after their time in This Way Ahead for alumni to show significant progress toward This Way Ahead's longer-term outcomes. Conducting this survey again in three to five years has the potential to surface stronger findings about the Program's longer-term influence on alumni's lives.

Foster supportive relationships for interns.

Strong, positive in-store relationships—with Intern Managers, other associates, other interns, and Big Sibs—are critical to a positive This Way Ahead experience. The relationships that alumni form persist as the most memorable aspect of the Program; alumni who develop supportive relationships tend to have a better experience overall than those who have difficult or challenging in-store relationships. Because these relationships are so important, ensure that interns have at least one person in-store providing support (e.g., Big Sib, Intern Manager, other store managers or associates). Providing good support to interns requires time and effort. Consider maintaining an intern-to-manager ratio that allows Intern Managers and Job Coaches adequate time for quality relationship-building, and provide managers and Job Coaches with guidelines for interacting with interns (e.g., recommended amounts of face-to-face time). When interns experience problematic relationships, address these difficulties swiftly so as not to taint the interns' overall This Way Ahead experience.