



Final Evaluation Report of Year Up's Professional Training Corps in Philadelphia

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About the Social Innovation Fund

This report is based upon work supported by the Social Innovation Fund (SIF). SIF was a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) that received funding from 2010 to 2016. Using public and private resources to find and grow community-based nonprofits with evidence of results, SIF intermediaries received funding to award subgrants that focus on overcoming challenges in economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. Although CNCS made its last SIF intermediary awards in fiscal year 2016, SIF intermediaries will continue to administer their subgrant programs until their federal funding is exhausted.

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Executive Summary

Year Up's Professional Training Corps program in Philadelphia is one of 15 Professional Training Corps (PTC) programs currently operating in the United States. Year Up modeled PTC on its "core" program—a stand-alone, one-year program that provides intensive full-time training and work experience for low-income young adults aged 18-24 in nine cities throughout the United States. Both the core and the PTC versions of Year Up provide training in professional skills, arrange and monitor internships, support participants through a learning community environment and ancillary supports, and monitor behavior in relation to Year Up's code of conduct (the "participant contract").

Unlike Year Up's core program, its PTC programs are located on the campuses of college partners, rather than in stand-alone offices. An important goal of this partnership is to leverage college resources in order to lower costs. Although there is strong evidence that Year Up's core program improves employment and earnings of participants (Roder & Elliott, 2014; Fein & Hamadyk, 2018), its high cost makes it infeasible to operate at the scale required to meet the high need for services of this type. Thus, Year Up's primary goal in creating the PTC program is to develop a financially sustainable and scalable version of its core program.

In 2013, Year Up received a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Administered by the GreenLight Fund, the grant covered the launching and support of a new PTC program in Philadelphia (PTC-P). Both Year Up and the GreenLight Fund saw Philadelphia as a promising location for testing the PTC Standard Program Model because the city had a large population of disconnected youth and a large public community college system. Additionally, Year Up had well-established relationships with several national information technology (IT) firms with operations in Philadelphia.

Year Up selected Peirce College as a partner based on the college's facilities and specialization in career-based degrees, as well as the energy and flexibility its administrators displayed when deciding on strategies to accommodate a rapid start-up. Within a few short months, the program was in place, and the first cohort of 21 participants began classes in September 2013 (referred to as the July 2014 cohort, which connotes the expected month and year of program completion).

As required by the SIF grant, Year Up contracted with Abt Associates for an evaluation of the program, which was to include both an implementation and a random assignment impact study. An interim report provided early implementation findings covering the first 18 months of program operations (Fein & Maynard, 2015). This final report updates the findings from the interim report and adds findings from an impact study of staff-designed strategies for improving academic performance and persistence in the program.

Program Overview

Year Up targets economically disadvantaged urban young adults aged 18-24. The program recruits young adults (termed "opportunity youth") who are partially or completely disconnected from school and work or judged to be at risk of such, but who show evidence of readiness to take advantage of the skill-building opportunities offered by its PTC or core model. Specifically, Year Up's PTC programs target young adults with a high school degree or equivalent, who can be accepted and enrolled at the college partner, and whose personal challenges are judged to be manageable with the level of assistance the PTC programs provide.

PTC programs have two enrollment cycles a year, aligned with the college partner's academic schedule. As a cohort, participants enrolled each cycle concurrently enroll in the PTC program and as students at the college partner. During the first six months of the program—the Learning and Development (L&D)

phase—participants take customized courses to build professional and technical skills amounting to a full-time college course load. The technical skills classes are designed to prepare participants for jobs in high-demand occupations (e.g., IT, business operations, financial operations, and cyber security).

During the second six months of the program—the Internship phase—participants work full-time four-and-a-half days a week at an internship site and spend the other half-day in an Internship Seminar at the PTC program site. Internship placements are typically at major area firms that allow participants to apply and expand their technical and professional skills while also forging connections with prospective employers. Some participants elect to take additional courses during their internship in subjects that reinforce their job skills and/or support progress towards academic credentials. Emphasis on post-program employment and education transition planning intensifies towards the end of the Internship phase.

Like the Year Up core program, PTC programs promote a philosophy of “high expectations and high support.” The model includes policies and practices specifically aimed at fostering professional behavior, addressing academic and non-academic support needs, and cultivating a supportive social environment, including:

- **Stipends.** Participants receive weekly stipends of up to \$50 during L&D and up to \$150 during their internships.
- **The “participant contract.”** Upon enrolling in the PTC program, participants sign a formal contract that specifies the behaviors they are expected to exhibit at all times during the program. Contract infractions lead to reductions in stipends. Participants whose Year Up contract points drop below zero are considered to have “fired” themselves and must leave the program.
- **Learning communities.** Each cohort of participants is grouped into learning communities (LCs) of approximately 40 participants each, although LC configurations and sizes vary across PTC programs due to variations in enrollment and judgments of local staff about optimal configurations. The LCs are intended to help foster a supportive social environment.
- **Coaching.** Participants receive advising and mentoring from Year Up staff members. Regardless of their formal role, all PTC staff members are expected to serve as a coach, with the responsibility of monitoring participant experiences and helping to address issues that arise.
- **Social and academic supports.** PTC programs provide varying types and levels of tutoring and other forms of assistance to participants who need additional academic support beyond what is provided by their local college partner. In addition, they offer varying types and levels of social support services, commonly involving referrals to local service providers.

PTC programs continue to work with graduates after they complete the program. Staff maintain contact with alumni to track their employment and educational status and, as they can, to assist with career guidance and placement support. Additionally, all PTC graduates are eligible for free ongoing support in perpetuity from Year Up's affiliated job placement and staffing agency, [YUPRO](#), which serves Year Up alumni nationwide.

Evaluation Design

This report on the PTC-P program includes findings from an implementation study and an impact study. Although the primary focus of the evaluation was on the Philadelphia PTC program, both study components draw on experience at other PTC programs for added perspective.

The **implementation study** focused on how program staff implemented the program, their experiences operating it, and outcomes. The four key research questions were:

1. How is the PTC-P program organized and staffed?
2. How does the program recruit participants, and what were the results?

3. How do the services received by program participants align with plans?
4. How did the program change over time in terms of inputs and/or outputs, and why?

The **impact study** used an experimental design to test the effectiveness of alternative strategies for monitoring and supporting participants during the L&D phase of the program. The strategies tested were identified and implemented with the aim of boosting program persistence during the L&D phase, as well as fostering continued enrollment in college after participants' transition to the Internship phase. This focus of the impact study reflects a shift away from the initial plan to study the PTC-P program's overall impacts and towards a focus on strategies for improving intermediate outcomes judged to be critical for full implementation of the program model. Recognizing that an overall impact study would have less relevance if implementation was incomplete, CNCS and the GreenLight Fund supported this shift in focus of the impact study.

Year Up and GreenLight originally conceived the Philadelphia pilot as a test of the PTC model's scalability. Accordingly, the pilot's initial goals included expanding to serve at least 320 young adults per year over the five-year grant (Fein & Maynard, 2015). Greater than anticipated challenges—documented in this and our earlier report—prompted a decision to focus on strengthening implementation while continuing to operate on a small scale. This change reflects a key Year Up planning principle—that critical program components must operate as intended at each level of scale before expanding to the next level.

With support from the evaluation team, Year Up National staff and local PTC program staff developed the enhanced academic monitoring and support strategies that were implemented and tested with a sample of 317 participants in three PTC programs—Philadelphia, in partnership with Peirce College (PTC-P); New York City, in partnership with Borough of Manhattan Community College (PTC-BMCC); and Jacksonville, Florida, in partnership with Florida State College at Jacksonville (PTC-JAX).

The impact study addresses two primary research questions:

1. What is the difference in the proportion of participants completing the PTC program's six-month L&D phase for those randomly assigned to the Alternative Strategies Group as compared with those assigned to the Usual Strategies Group?
2. What is the difference in the likelihood participants will continue enrollment in college in the first month following completion of L&D?

Secondary questions pertain to impacts of the alternative strategies on months of college enrollment during the L&D phase of the program and participants' compliance with the participant contract.

Implementation Study Findings

As it enters its fifth year of operations, the PTC-P program is generally operating well from the perspective of the academic and work-based skills training opportunities it offers participants. However, the program is struggling to expand enrollment, improve alignment of participants' vocational interests with training tracks offered, and achieve internship sales compatible with becoming financially self-sustaining. The following are highlights from the implementation study.

- **The program has experienced ongoing struggles with staffing.**

Since its inception, the PTC-P program has experienced substantial staffing changes stemming from staff turnover, expansion, and role restructuring. For example, the PTC-P program staff grew from six full-time members in 2015 to 21 in 2018 while enrollment grew from about 20 to 50 participants. Over this same period, there also was substantial staff turnover, much of it due to poor fit or performance. This turnover negatively affected staff and participant morale, placed strain on the relationship with Peirce College, and

hampered efforts to build lasting and consistent partnerships with community-based organizations and corporate partners.

Year Up National has been nimble in shoring up the PTC-P staffing through a combination of embedding Year Up National staff members on-site, aiding with recruitment, and retraining and supporting staff. The most recent changes included naming a member of Year Up National who had been temporarily detailed to the site in 2016 as a permanent member of the PTC-P staff, sizeable staff expansions, and role re-definitions. They seem to have created a sense of cooperation and optimism among staff, as well as strengthened relationships and communication with Peirce College. However, as of this writing, there is no hard evidence that the staffing challenges have been resolved.

- **Communication and relations between PTC-P and Peirce College are good.**

Staff report generally strong (and strengthened) collaboration between the PTC-P program and Peirce College admissions teams. There are shared systems for tracking applicants and clear processes for ensuring participants receive support throughout the financial aid process. The PTC-P program has assumed responsibility for scheduling placement tests, and Peirce College has recently begun administering to PTC-P participants a pre-enrollment survey that it uses with its traditional students to assess their support needs. There is frequent and constructive communication between the PTC-P program and the Dean of Academic Operations and Faculty Support. Within the past year, PTC-P and Peirce College staff have established systems for scheduling courses and ensuring participants have textbook access—systems that were not in place at the time of the interim report.

The two notable areas of opportunity in the partnership with Peirce College relate to information flows on participant performance and some instructional formats being used by the college. Communication with instructors continues to be infrequent and inconsistent, as was the case in 2015. This hinders the transfer of participants' academic performance information to PTC-P program staff and inhibits consistent enforcement of the Year Up participant contract during participants' time on campus. However, as discussed below, PTC programs have identified some promising workarounds to address this challenge.

Some PTC-P staff members raised concerns about the use of non-traditional instructional approaches (e.g., reliance on online learning course modules) in Peirce College courses, as they found them to be challenging for the PTC-P participant demographic. However, for the most part, complaints from PTC-P participants about instructional methods and formats used by college instructors were less common in the most recent round of interviews than they were in the interviews and focus groups conducted for the interim report in 2015.

- **PTC-P is broadening its recruitment strategies in efforts to increase enrollments and improve the “fit” of participants.**

Recruitment has been an ongoing challenge for the PTC-P program, as in most other PTC programs. Despite strong efforts by program staff to meet targets, enrollments have averaged about seven percent below target levels in Philadelphia, even after targets for the site were adjusted downward. Across all PTC programs, enrollments have averaged 10 percent below target. The PTC-P program has varied its recruitment strategies over time as it has struggled to both meet targets and enroll youth judged to be ready for the program. Initial cohorts were recruited primarily through referrals from Peirce College and community groups serving disadvantaged young adults (Fein & Maynard, 2015). Now the program is more proactively seeking to boost referrals of eligible and interested youth from non-traditional high schools, including technical and trade schools that have multiple graduation dates per year, and from a broader array of community-based organizations, including churches and community centers. However, this has also increased the burden of screening to identify youth who meet Year Up's age, education, and other requirements judged as key to success.

- **Securing enough paid internship seats remains a challenge for PTC-P.**

A major challenge the PTC-P program still needs to overcome in order to achieve financial self-sufficiency is securing more and more paid internship seats. Achieving this goal has been complicated by the fact that many of the area's IT-intensive firms are in parts of the city that are not easily accessible for program participants. Staff described the root of the problem as "the insular nature of the labor market," by which they mean a market that is not especially welcoming to new organizations such as PTC-P as community partners. A major priority for Year Up National in its recent decisions about staffing roles, size, and hiring was enlarging and strengthening the PTC-P corporate engagement team, which is responsible for expanding the corporate partnership base and securing more paid internships.

- **The PTC-P program has improved support for interns and the Internship Managers.**

With support from Year Up National and building on feedback from participants and employers, the PTC-P program has instituted bootcamps (e.g., further Excel training) to improve participant readiness for internships, strengthened monitoring of performance during internships through weekly calls with internship managers, and intensified follow-up with interns and the internship managers in response to concerns that arise. Like other PTC programs, the PTC-P program has instituted a formal orientation for managers, providing them with greater familiarity of Year Up and expectations for internships, as well as a support network.

- **The program has substantially strengthened its approach to participant services.**

The program built on its early experiences to strengthen supports for participants encountering challenges ranging from acute medical concerns to major issues such as homelessness or major traumatic events. Most recently, it created a Student Services Team to aid in early identification of issues and, more importantly, to respond more quickly and effectively to them. The impact study (see further discussion below) focused specifically on the development and testing of strategies to support early identification and quicker and better responses to academic challenges participants encounter during the program. One of the highly valued products of that study is a compendium of support resources developed by the staff testing the alternative strategies.

- **The program is developing a more robust alumni support system.**

As the program has matured and the number of alumni increased, PTC programs, including PTC-P, have intentionally started to pay greater attention to the quality of job placements and to the creation of an alumni support network. Towards this end, roughly two years ago the PTC-P program created a new position of Employment Placement Manager, and more recently, the program designated a staff person to serve as Alumni Engagement Steward (in addition to current responsibilities) to promote professional networking and support among alumni.

- **PTC-P program costs are well above the financial break-even threshold.**

Year Up's goal for new PTC programs is for them to reach break-even—fully covering costs with internship revenue—within three years of program launch. Year Up developed a PTC Standard Program Model illustrating one set of targets for cost and revenue drivers. Under this model, programs can achieve financial break-even by meeting four conditions: (1) enrolling at least 160 full-time equivalent (FTE) participants a year; (2) retaining 83 percent of participants through L&D and transitioning them to internships; (3) having 90 percent of participants enter internships remain in the program through graduation; and (4) limiting discounts for employer-sponsored internships to no more than two percent of

aggregate internship seat pricing.¹ At these levels, corporate partner operating costs will average just under \$20,000, and internship revenues will be \$20,233 per participant.

In 2017, the PTC-P program's costs were more than 50 percent higher than break-even, largely because the program was staffed at a level slightly above that projected for a program serving 160 participants while serving 30 percent fewer participants than the 160 assumed in the break-even model. Per-participant costs for college tuition and transportation were well above the model targets. However, because they are a relatively small share of total costs, this is a relatively modest factor in the total gap between actual costs and those projected under the PTC Standard Program Model.

The PTC-P's program revenues were just over 50 percent of the target level for the number of participants it served—a shortfall attributable to the fact the program collected full fee for less than half of its internship positions. The combined effect of the higher per-participant costs and lower per-participant revenues is that revenue covered only about one third of program costs. In order to reach financial break-even at its current staff size, the PTC-P program needs to increase participant enrollments by about 25 percent while nearly tripling the number of sponsored internships.

Four PTC programs have average operating costs that are near the PTC Model average of about \$20,000 and participant enrollments that are at or above the FTE participant level in Philadelphia. Year Up's PTC Model assumptions suggest that if the PTC-P program could increase its enrollment by about 25 percent with its larger and newly configured staff, its costs should fall into line. Addressing the revenue gap, which appears to be an issue for most PTC programs, likely will require a combination of hard evidence for employers about the value proposition of investing in internships for the opportunity youth targeted by the PTC (e.g., through evidence of long-term pay-off such as is now available for the core program) and a much more aggressive outreach strategy.

- **Recent program changes may improve prospects for reaching break-even.**

In August 2018, Year Up decided to downsize PTC-P program from two LCs to one and to reduce its staff count accordingly. The program's improvement strategies include strengthening relationships with community-based organizations, enhancing academic monitoring and supports during the L&D phase of the program (see further discussion below), and increasing the number of conveniently located paid internship seats. The success of these efforts remains to be seen.

Impact Study Findings

The goal of the impact study was to develop and rigorously test promising strategies for addressing challenges the program was experiencing early on in meeting goals for retaining participants through the L&D phase of the program. Acknowledging concerns about academic performance and persistence during L&D, Year Up National and the evaluation team proposed to change the design and goals of the impact study. Essentially, based on program performance metrics, it was evident that the program needed to improve its retention in L&D in order to achieve its overall goals. Thus, rather than conduct a summative impact study to assess impacts of the program on employment and earnings (the ultimate goals of the program), it seemed more valuable to focus the impact study on assessing efforts to improve a key link in the program's logic—getting participants from L&D to the Internship phase of the program. The proposed shift in focus was agreed to by the SIF/GreenLight sponsors of the study.

¹ An employer-sponsored "internship seat" is an internship position for which an employer is paying Year Up an agreed upon amount. During the study period, the full suggested amount was \$23,920 when PTC-P launched, increasing to \$24,700 with the January 2016 cohort. The full suggested amount has since increased to \$26,000. Depending on the case, Year Up may discount this amount.

In order to strengthen the rigor and relevance of the impact study to test the program improvements, we included two additional PTC programs in this portion of the study. This increased the size and representativeness of the sample. The other programs are PTC-BMCC and PTC-JAX.

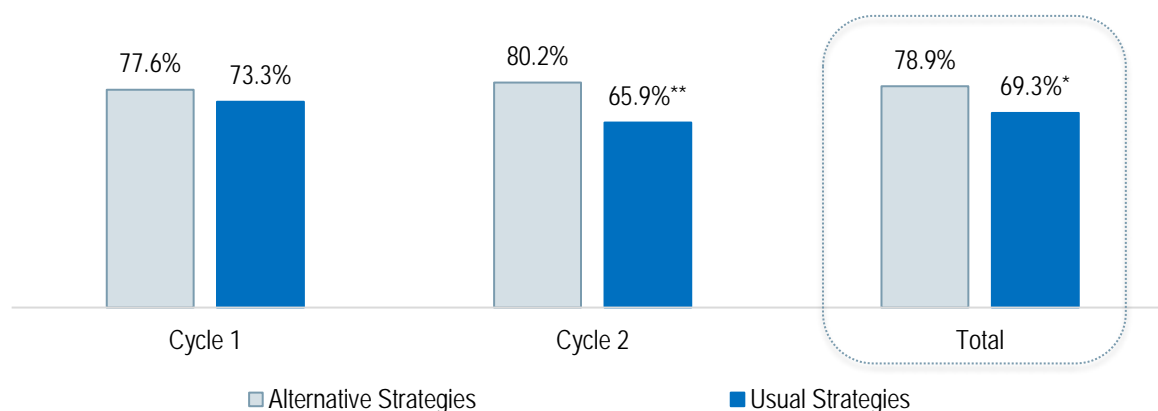
The study tested the impacts of three alternative strategies for monitoring academics and supporting participants who were identified as experiencing difficulties in their college courses. The strategies are (1) site-tailored methods for systematically gathering information on how participants are doing in their college courses; (2) systematic sharing and use of this information to inform the coaching of participants by staff; and (3) greater access to and better use of resources to assist participants who are struggling with their courses.

Over two enrollment cycles, a total of 317 participants enrolled in the three PTC programs and were randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups—the Alternative Strategies Group or the Usual Strategies Group. Outcomes for all 317 participants were then tracked using program administrative data and National Student Clearinghouse data through the first month following the end of L&D. Impacts of the Alternative Strategies are estimated by comparing outcomes for the participants who were randomly assigned to the Alternative Strategies Group with those for participants assigned to the Usual Strategies groups.

- **Participants in the Alternative Strategies Group were more likely than their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group to complete L&D.**

On average, participants in the Alternative Strategies Group had 9.6 percentage point higher rates of retention through the end of L&D than did their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group (78.9 percent versus 69.3 percent; Figure ES.1). Differences in completion rates between participants in the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups favored those in the Alternative Strategies Group across both enrollment cohorts and across all three program sites. However, for sample subgroups defined by enrollment cycle and site, only the differences in completion rates between the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups for the sample enrolled in Cycle 2 (pooled across all three sites) and for the PTC-JAX sample enrolled in Cycle 2 (not shown) were statistically significant.

Figure ES.1. Retention of Participants in the Alternative Strategies Group vs. the Usual Strategies Group through the End of the Learning and Development Phase of the Program, by Enrollment Cycle and Total



Source: Data on retention are from the Year Up program data system.

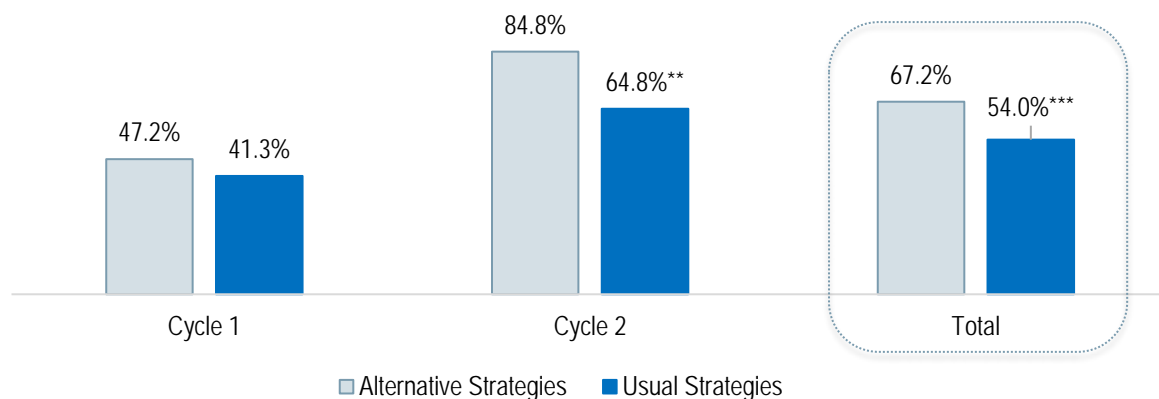
Notes: These data were weighted to account for the blocking of participants prior to randomization. The estimates of the mean difference between the treatment groups are based on regression models that included covariates for sample characteristics at the time of enrollment. Means for the Usual Strategies Group are unadjusted.

* = statistically significant at the .10 level, ** = .05 level, and *** = .001 level on two-tailed tests.

- **Participants in the Alternative Strategies Group were more likely than those in the Usual Strategies Group to be enrolled in college when internships began.**

Across the three programs, 67.2 percent of those in the Alternative Strategies Group versus 54.0 percent of participants in the Usual Strategies Group were enrolled in college during the first month following the end of their L&D phase (i.e., month seven following enrollment)—a difference that is statistically significant (Figure ES.2). As with the estimated impacts of the alternative strategies on L&D retention, the estimated impacts on continued college enrollment are much larger (and only statistically significant) for Cycle 2. Furthermore, the estimated impacts were especially large and statistically significant for those in the PTC-P (15.7 percentage points) and PTC-JAX (15.3 percentage points) programs (not shown).

Figure ES.2. College Enrollment in the Month Following Scheduled Completion of the Learning and Development (L&D) Phase of the Program for Participants in the Alternative Strategies Group and in the Usual Strategies Group, by Enrollment Cycle and Total



Source: Data on college enrollment are from the National Student Clearinghouse.

Notes: These data were weighted to account for the blocking of participants prior to randomization. The estimates of the mean difference between the treatment groups are based on regression models that included covariates for sample characteristics at the time of enrollment. Means for the Usual Strategies Group are unadjusted.

* = statistically significant at the .10 level, ** = .05 level, and *** = .001 level on two-tailed tests.

- **Coaches working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group reported quite different use of their time than did their counterparts working with participants in the Usual Strategies Group.**

On surveys administered near the end of the study period, coaches working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group reported much greater awareness of academic challenges among their coachees than did their counterparts working with the Usual Strategies Group. They also reported spending more of their coaching time (one-on-one and in group settings) discussing academic performance and support needs. Notably, the coaches working with the Alternative Strategies Group were less likely to have reported using coaching time on generic Year Up topics commonly addressed during group coaching.

- **There were few measured differences in the ways participants in the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups experienced the program.**

Participants in the Alternative Strategies Group rated the quality of the support from Year Up staff significantly higher than did participants in the Usual Strategies Group. However, participants in both groups reported taking a similar number of courses and working a similar number of hours per week. They also had similar views about the level of difficulty of the classes and the adverse effects of work on academic performance. Likewise, the two groups reported experiencing similar levels of challenge in their most difficult courses. With a few exceptions, participants in both groups also reported having

received similar types, intensities, and qualities of supports to address challenges and similar overall levels of satisfaction with the program.

- **Year Up National and the participating PTC programs are using evidence from the evaluation to improve practice.**

Year Up National and the three PTC programs in the impact study were critical partners in the evaluation and are reportedly acting on the findings, which may have far-reaching implications for practices used in PTC programming. The improvement strategies tested were designed by the PTC program staff in the three study sites, with guidance from Year Up National. Then implementation of the strategies tended to be locally managed, with a moderate level of monitoring by Year Up National and the evaluation team. At the initiative of program staff, there was a round of mid-course adjustments to the tested strategies—most notably, the sharing and more consistent adoption of a variety of coaching tools that were created (often by adapting other Year Up program tools) to better detect and address academic challenges that participants encountered during L&D.

Improving outcomes is anchored in finding ways to routinize access to information about participants' engagement and performance in their college courses, using that information to engage with participants experiencing difficulties, and eventually, identifying contributing factors and promising remedial strategies. The evaluation team conducted staff briefings on the study findings to share findings on the benefits of the alternative strategies that were tested. Now Year Up National is working on plans for how to use the study findings to improve performance across its PTC programs.

Looking Ahead

Given the PTC-P program's current state and recent decision to downsize, it is difficult to predict the likelihood that it will achieve financial break-even in the near term. However, given the size of the opportunity youth population in Philadelphia, it seems possible and desirable to institutionalize changes such as those tested in the impact study to ensure high retention rates through L&D while continuing to work on developing strategies to grow the referral pipeline, boost enrollments, and develop a larger pool of employers willing to fully support internships. Judging by the study findings, it appears that the major L&D program components and services, as well as the internship experiences and supports, appear to be functioning quite well.

In contrast, the PTC-P program is struggling with both enrollment and internship development, including securing enough fully sponsored internships and internships conveniently located for participants. Towards these ends, we offer three suggestions for Year Up and PTC-P:

1. Engage in more aggressive and broad-based strategies to strengthen the participant recruitment pipeline.
2. Expand the employer network to include more firms that are located on accessible public transit routes and firms that are willing to sponsor internships.
3. Consider the potential benefits to initiating a partnership with a public college situated in another part of the city and serving a demographic population more similar to that targeted by PTC-P, especially the benefits for growing the recruitment pipeline.

We also recommend continued use of mini-studies and embedded experiments to accelerate program improvement.

1. Introduction

The Year Up Professional Training Corps program in Philadelphia is one of 15 Year Up Professional Training Corps (PTC) programs currently operating in the United States. The programs are designed to prepare low-income young adults aged 18-24 for career pathways by linking college experiences with internship opportunities in local labor markets. In close partnership with local colleges, the PTC programs provide six months of professional and technical skills training in high-demand occupations, followed by six-month internships. Program participants receive extensive supports directly from the PTC programs, as well as through college partners.

The PTC program in Philadelphia (PTC-P) was one of three pilot programs Year Up launched between 2010 and 2013 in order to determine whether the PTC model offered an effective, financially sustainable, and scalable version of Year Up's "core" program, which is stand-alone and thus much costlier than PTC programs, which rely on college partners for the academic and technical skills training. The PTC-P program was supported in part through funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) Social Innovation Fund (SIF) to the GreenLight Fund for local investments to "accelerate the spread of proven programs that make lasting change for children, youth and families" (GreenLight Fund Mission Statement, n.d.). Year Up's PTC-P program "targets the area's approximately 111,000 opportunity youth (18-24-year olds out of work and school), seeking to empower their success through meaningful workforce training and college completion" ([Year Up, n.d.](#)).

Year Up and GreenLight originally conceived the Philadelphia pilot as a test of the PTC model's scalability. Accordingly, the pilot's initial goals included expanding to serve at least 320 young adults per year over the five-year grant (Fein & Maynard, 2015). Greater than anticipated challenges—documented in this and our earlier report—prompted a decision to focus on strengthening implementation while continuing to operate on a small scale. This change reflects a key Year Up planning principle—that critical program components must operate as intended at each level of scale before expanding to the next level.

As a condition of the SIF grant, Year Up agreed to arrange for a third-party evaluation of PTC-P and, subsequently, commissioned Abt Associates to conduct it. Consistent with SIF guidelines, the evaluation was to include an implementation study to inform operational policies and practices and an impact study to examine questions about the program's effects on key intermediate and primary outcomes identified in the theory of change (Abt Associates, 2014).

This report is the second of two reports completed under the SIF/GreenLight Fund evaluation. The prior report focused on an interim implementation study, designed primarily to provide constructive feedback to Year Up and the PTC-P program (Fein & Maynard, 2015). The evaluation team for this project also has conducted several mini-studies, supported under an Institute of Education Sciences research grant (#R305A150214), which provide additional grounding for this report and its findings. These mini-studies include a report on recruitment and retention (Maynard & Fein, 2015), a second on promoting educational persistence after completion of the PTC program (Fein & Shivji, 2017), and a third on setting up successful internships (Baelen et al., 2018). This final report updates and integrates the findings from the 2015 interim implementation study report and presents findings from the impact study. This document (Volume I) presents the main findings and a companion document (Volume II) includes supplemental material: Appendix A, Volume II, presents supplemental data tables and Appendices B through Q, Volume II, contain various supporting documents, including Year Up guidance documents and data collection protocols.

The impact study uses an experimental design to test the effectiveness of alternative strategies for monitoring and supporting participants during the Learning and Development (L&D) phase of the

program. The strategies were selected and implemented with the aim of boosting program persistence, as well as fostering continued enrollment in college after transitioning to the Internship phase of the program. The decision to test program improvement strategies reflects a shift in focus of the impact study, from measuring impacts on post-program outcomes to improving intermediate outcomes judged to be critical for achieving the ultimate goals of PTC programs—a shift supported by CNCS and the GreenLight Fund.²

The remainder of this chapter describes the development of the program model and its theory of change, its program organization and services, and the context in which it operates. It also provides a brief overview of the evaluation design and its findings.

1.1 Development of Year Up's Professional Training Corps (PTC)

The PTC program was modeled on Year Up's core program, which is a stand-alone one-year program that provides an intensive full-time training and work experience for low-income young adults aged 18-24 in eight cities throughout the United States. During the first six months, Year Up provides participants with training in professional and technical skills required for specific high-demand occupations (e.g., information technology, financial services, cyber security), intensive help with academic and personal challenges, and close monitoring and feedback on behavior in the context of a supportive learning community of peers and staff. During the second six months, Year Up places participants in full-time internships, often with Fortune 500 companies, where they gain entry-level experience in the focal occupations.

At the time the PTC program was launched, there had been only a small randomized controlled trial showing evidence of Year Up's effectiveness (Roder & Elliott, 2012; 2014). However, a recently completed large randomized controlled trial of Year Up's core program reported evidence of very large earnings increases (Fein & Hamadyk, 2018). Young adults in Year Up's core program earned 53 percent more than did their control group counterparts immediately after the one-year program, and they earned 40 percent more in the third year after enrollment—an increase equivalent to about \$7,011 a year for the average participant. Notably, the study, which included a full year's worth of program participants, showed evidence of substantial earnings gains for participants at all eight program offices. However, the study also reported that the core program's cost per participant was high. Though Year Up had successfully grown and sustained the program (to reach about 2,000 participants a year), it realized that the \$28,200 per-participant cost made dramatic upscaling infeasible. About 60 percent of the program's costs are covered by employer-sponsored internships, while the remainder is covered by philanthropic support (Fein & Hamadyk, 2018).

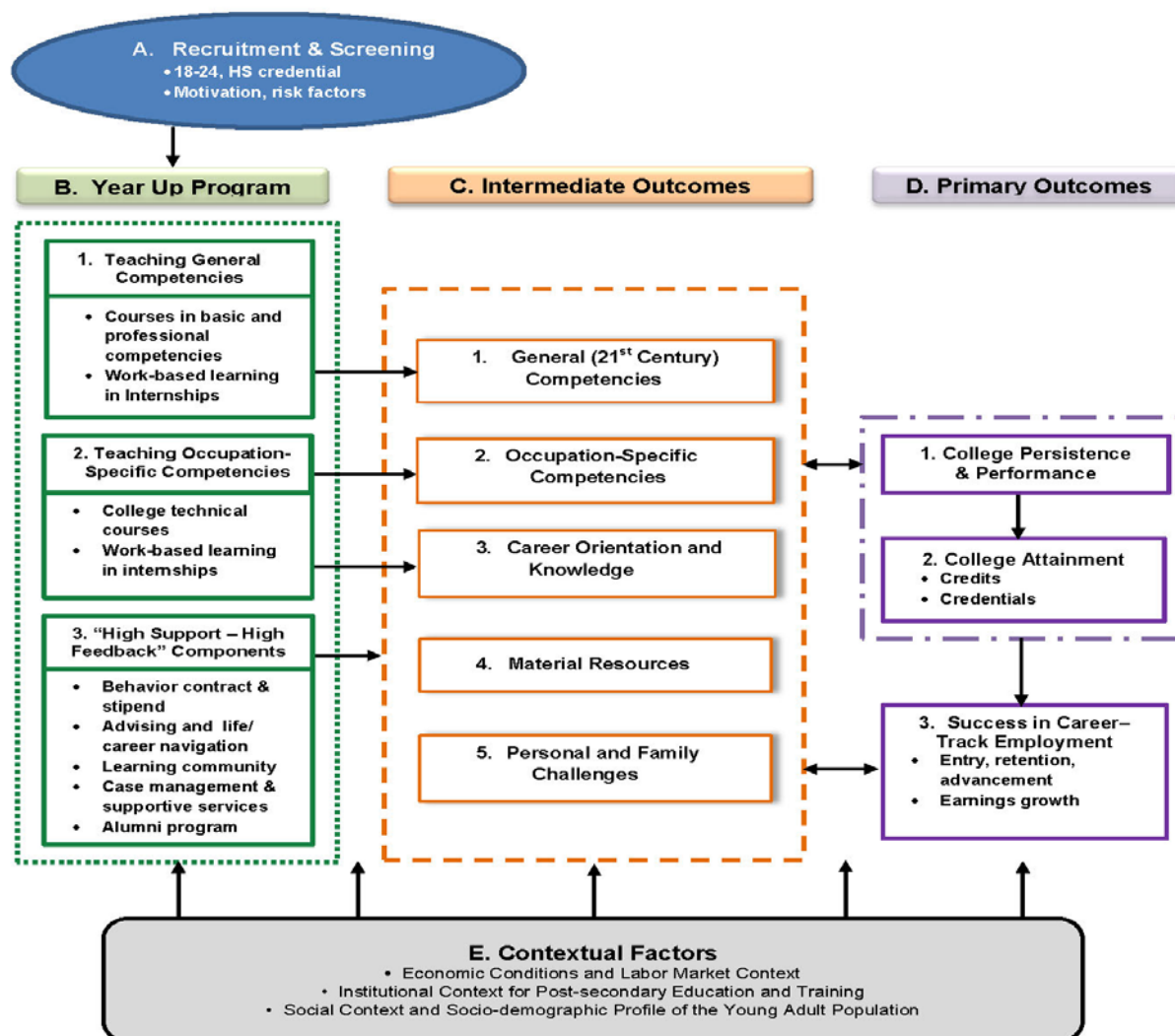
In response to the high costs of the core program, Year Up developed its PTC program—a lower-cost version of the core program designed to operate in partnership with and to leverage the resources of local college partners. Like the core program, the PTC program delivers training in professional skills, arranges and monitors internships, provides support in a cohort environment, and monitors behaviors in relation to Year Up's code of conduct (the “participant contract”). The PTC programs are located on the campuses of college partners rather than in stand-alone offices, participants enroll in the partner college for their academic and technical courses, and participants can tap into various support services offered by the college. Consequently, local PTC programs are expected to operate with a leaner staff and, at break-even, a per-participant cost that is about 60 percent of that for the core program (Warfield, 2018).

² Year Up and the Abt evaluation team recently launched an impact study to estimate post-program impacts of the PTC programs under a grant from the Institute of Education Sciences (#R305A150214).

1.1.1 Theory of Change

The theory of change underlying Year Up's PTC program model at the outset of this evaluation paralleled that undergirding Year Up's core program (Chertavian, 2012; Appendix B, Volume II). The theory encompasses multiple factors critical to success in college and careers. It also acknowledges the role of institutional and broader social and economic environments—factors that affect the nature and severity of challenges faced by highly motivated young adults lacking opportunities to enter the mainstream economy. Year Up refers to them as “opportunity youth.” Both models have three pillars: (1) personal and professional skill-building through formal coursework; (2) work-based learning experiences through internships; and (3) a high-expectation, high-support learning environment (Figure 1).³

Figure 1. Theory of Change for Year Up's Professional Training Corps Program



³ This theory of change was developed by Abt Associates staff during the planning for the SIF/GreenLight evaluation of the PTC-P program. Year Up's most recent depiction of it is included in Appendix B, Volume II.

The PTC Standard Program Model includes adaptations of the basic elements from the core program. The program is designed for young adults aged 18-24 with a high school degree or equivalent, who exhibit motivation to pursue college and a professional career, and who need, at most, a moderate level of remediation to succeed in college courses (Figure 1, Oval A).

Participants enrolled in the PTC program receive three types of services (Column B): (1) general competencies (Box B1); (2) occupational competencies (Box B2); and (3) supports and feedback (Box B3). By teaching general competencies through instruction and work-based learning (Box C1), the program aims to affect intermediate outcomes such as cognitive competencies (e.g., literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, creativity); intra-personal competencies (e.g., self-evaluation, work ethic/conscientiousness, self-regulation/meta-cognition, intellectual openness); and inter-personal competencies (e.g., teamwork, collaboration, leadership) (National Research Council, 2012). By teaching occupational competencies through classes and internships (Box C2), the program aims to build occupational skills as well as career orientation and knowledge. Supports and feedback mechanisms, including stipends, the learning communities, and advising and mentoring, aim to alleviate material resource constraints and personal and family challenges that interfere with education and employment (Boxes C4 and C5). The mechanisms for alleviating these challenges entail improving intra- and inter-personal competencies, fostering social integration and belonging, and increasing access to community services and financial supports.

Importantly, the programs are tailored to local contexts (Box E), such as employers' abilities to offer well-paying jobs, capacities of local partner colleges to provide occupationally focused instruction, and employers' demands for customized training. The ultimate goals of the services are to foster college persistence and performance, credential attainment, work-based learning, and success in career-track employment (Boxes D1-D3).

The PTC theory of change is supported by a rich body of research, including the previously cited randomized controlled trials of Year Up's core program model. There now is very strong evidence that the core model has consistently met high standards for recruitment, retention, graduation, and subsequent employment across eight sites. There also is a sizeable body of correlational evidence linking intermediate outcomes (Column C) to college persistence and completion (Column D, Boxes 1 and 2) (Adelman, 1999; 2004; Fein & Beecroft, 2006; Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010; Horn & Kojaku, 2001; Matus-Grossman & Gooden, 2002; Tinto, 1993; Bound, Lovenheim, & Turner, 2010; Robbins et al., 2004; 2006; National Research Council, 2012).

There is evidence from both randomized controlled trials and well-designed non-experimental studies of potentially effective strategies for improving outcomes of postsecondary education and training programs (Column C to Boxes D1 and D2). These include studies of accelerated courses and bridge programs (Wathington et al., 2011), learning communities (Bloom & Sommo, 2005; Scrivener et al., 2008; Weiss et al., 2010), integrated basic and occupational skills instruction (Prince & Jenkins, 2005), college success classes (Bailey & Karp, 2003), psycho-social interventions (Aronson et al., 2002; Carey et al., 2007), intensive personal guidance and coaching (Levin & Calcagno, 2008; Patel, Richburg-Hayes, de la Campa, & Rudd, 2013), and financial assistance (Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatsu, 2012; Goldrick-Rab, Harris, Benson, & Kelchen, 2011; Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2013; Castleman & Page, 2014).

There also is a growing body of evidence supporting the expectation of positive returns to sub-baccalaureate credentials (Boxes D2 and D3), particularly in technical fields (Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Dadgar & Weiss, 2012; Kane & Rouse, 1995; Jacobson, LaLonde, & Sullivan, 2005a; 2005b; Jacobson & Mokher, 2009; Jepsen, Troske, & Coomes, 2009; Marcotte, 2010). There also is a body of research showing evidence of promising strategies for strengthening particular links within the theory of change. For example, there is evidence of benefits from various types of assistance in completing financial aid applications (Bettinger et al., 2012; Bettinger & Baker, 2011) and brief interventions for mitigating

aspects of personal and family challenge (Yeager & Walton, 2011). However, often the estimated impacts are typically small and short-lived (e.g., see Patel et al., 2013; Rutschow, Cullinan, & Welback, 2012; Valentine et al., 2015). The evidence on the effectiveness of other types of interventions, such as learning communities, is mixed (Sommo, Mayer, Rudd, & Cullinan, 2012; Vischer & Stern, 2015). There has been relatively little rigorous evaluation of innovative approaches to improve career preparedness and outcomes specifically for disadvantaged populations through variations in learning strategies and internships (Fein, 2014; Jaggars, 2011; Perin, 2011).

1.1.2 Operational Experience at a Glance

The first three pilot PTC programs were launched in Baltimore (January 2011), Philadelphia (July 2013), and Miami (July 2014), with the first graduations scheduled for January 2012, July 2014, and July 2015, respectively. Since then, these programs have achieved successes and faced challenges. Interest in the PTC program has been brisk, as evidenced by the rapid expansion to 15 locations and college partners—and the nearly 4,000 young adults who have participated nationwide (Table 1, upper panel). The 392 who have participated in the PTC-P program (Table 1, lower panel) are the primary focus of this report. For the financial break-even analysis (discussed in Chapter 2), we also draw on the experiences of seven other the PTC programs that, like PTC-P, operate in a market that does not have a Year Up core program.

Table 1. Target and Actual Enrollment for Year Up's Professional Training Corps Programs, All Programs and Philadelphia

Enrollment Cohort (Projected Graduation)	Target Enrollment	Number Enrolled	Number Enrolled as a Percent of Target
All Professional Training Corps (PTC) Programs			
January 2013	n.a.	24	n.a.
July 2013	n.a.	56	n.a.
January 2014	n.a.	66	n.a.
July 2014	n.a.	100	n.a.
January 2015	n.a.	95	n.a.
July 2015	140	142	101.4
January 2016	220	194	88.2
July 2016	320	305	95.3
January 2017	372	332	89.2
July 2017	570	534	93.7
January 2018	772	665	86.1
July 2018	932	836	89.7
January 2019	994	823	82.8
Total (July 2015 – January 2019 Cohorts)	4,370	3,950	90.4
Philadelphia PTC Program			
July 2014	n.a.	21	n.a.
January 2015	n.a.	23	n.a.
July 2015	50	52	104.0
January 2016	50	50	100.0
July 2016	40	39	97.5
January 2017	40	38	95.0
July 2017	60	40	66.7
January 2018	60	55	91.7
July 2018	60	57	95.0
January 2019	60	50	83.3
Total (July 2015 – January 2019 Cohorts)	420	392	93.3

Source: Data from Year Up's Salesforce management information system received from program staff on 7/13/18.

n.a. means that the target enrollment information was not available. Boxed rows are time periods corresponding to the primary period covered by this report.

All of the PTC programs have encountered notable challenges as they have worked to expand, with most struggling to meet enrollment targets, especially early on. Across all programs, enrollments over the most recent eight enrollment cohorts averaged at 90 percent of targets, and they averaged only slightly higher (93 percent) for the Philadelphia program (Table 1, column 4).

Across all of the PTC programs, many of which are still relatively young, only 75 percent of participants were retained through the L&D phase, and about two thirds were retained through the end of the program year (see Table 2, upper panel). Retention in the Philadelphia program was even lower, with retention through L&D averaging around 70 percent and retention through the Internship phase averaging around 56 percent (Table 2, lower panel). Moreover, retention in the PTC-P program has not improved over time, and in many ways, the site is an outlier among Year Up's PTC programs. The Philadelphia program also is among the PTC programs that has experienced substantial challenges acquiring enough internship placements within easy commuting radius for participants and with full-paying sponsors (discussed further in Chapter 2).

Table 2. Enrollment and Retention in Year Up's Professional Training Corps Programs, All Programs and the Philadelphia Program

Enrollment Cohort (Projected Graduation)	Number of Enrollees	Percentage Retained thru Learning & Development	Percentage Retained thru Internship
All Professional Training Corps Programs			
January 2013	24	66.7	54.2
July 2013	56	87.5	67.9
January 2014	66	78.8	68.2
July 2014	100	80.0	70.0
January 2015	95	70.5	64.2
July 2015	142	78.9	70.4
January 2016	194	68	59.8
July 2016	305	76.4	63.6
January 2017	332	76.8	67.8
July 2017	534	80	65.9
January 2018	665	72	61.8
July 2018	836	78.5	67.6
January 2019	823	74.4	n.a.
Total – All Cohorts	4,172	76.0	65.4
July 2015 – January 2018 Cohorts	2,172	75.4	64.4
Philadelphia PTC Program			
July 2014	21	66.7	61.9
January 2015	23	60.9	56.5
July 2015	52	63.5	55.8
January 2016	50	54.0	46.0
July 2016	39	84.6	61.5
January 2017	38	73.7	68.4
July 2017	40	82.5	50.0
January 2018	55	80.0	60.0
July 2018	57	61.4	50.9
January 2019	50	64	n.a.
Total – All Cohorts	425	69.1	55.6
July 2015 – January 2018 Cohorts	274	72.3	56.6

Source: Year Up management reports generated from Year Up's management information system.

n.a. means numbers for the reference period were not available or not applicable. Boxed rows are time periods corresponding to the primary period covered by this report.

1.2 Context for the Evaluation of the Philadelphia PTC Program

Year Up and the GreenLight Fund saw Philadelphia as a promising area in which to test the PTC Standard Program Model. In its SIF grant application, Year Up cited several main draws for testing the PTC program in Philadelphia. These include the city's large population of disconnected youth, large public community college system (with low completion rates), strong base of national information technology (IT) firms with existing relationships with Year Up, its affordable public transportation system, vibrant philanthropic community, and proximity to other Year Up offices. The GreenLight Fund staff noted that Philadelphia had a gap in available services for young adults in Year Up's target age range.

In its application to the GreenLight Fund, Year Up identified the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) as a promising partner. However, shortly after the grant was awarded, the President of CCP stepped down, leaving a leadership vacuum that led Year Up to search for an alternative partner. The search led Year Up to Peirce College, a private nonprofit college with a primary focus on working adult learners who generally take evening or online classes. Leadership at Peirce College were enthusiastic about a partnership with Year Up, because it offered them an opportunity to reach participants who would attend classes during the day. This allowed the college to tap into underused daytime capacity and to develop closer ties to area employers that might be a source for referrals to the college. Year Up selected Peirce as a partner based on the college's facilities and its specialization in career-based degrees, as well as the energy and flexibility of its staff, when deciding upon program details, to accommodate a rapid start-up. Within a few short months, the program was in place, and the first cohort of 21 PTC-P participants began classes in September 2013 (referred to as the July 2014 cohort, which is the month and year when participants in the cohort were expected to graduate from the program).

A unique aspect of the Philadelphia PTC program is its partnership with a private college. All but one other PTC program operate in partnership with and on the campuses of public colleges—primarily community colleges. An obvious concern is whether the PTC-P program can be financially self-sustaining given the considerably higher tuition (more than \$13,000 per year for full-time study) at Peirce College compared to public colleges.⁴ Whereas revenues from student financial aid grants through state and federal programs cover most or all tuition costs for the public colleges, they fall short of doing so for Peirce College. Thus, an important question is whether and how Peirce College and Year Up can support PTC-P participants in continuing their education at Peirce. (This is a topic that will be discussed further in Chapter 2.)

In 2016 (after the release of the interim implementation report), Year Up National decided to open a PTC site in Wilmington, Delaware, which has a labor market that overlaps with the Philadelphia market. Wilmington was viewed as an attractive market because of its position as a major financial center, home to a number of major corporate sponsors of Year Up that had been reliable sponsors of internships for PTC-P participants. Upon opening the Wilmington site, Year Up attempted to form partnerships with local universities and community colleges. However, these efforts failed; instead, Year Up reached out and secured support from Peirce College to serve the new Wilmington site in addition to the original Philadelphia program.

Initially, the Wilmington site was viewed as a second site for the PTC-P program—that is, two sites, one market. As such, the Philadelphia and Wilmington sites shared resources, including some internship partners, an Executive Director, a Site Director (who oversaw the relationship with Peirce College for

⁴ In comparison, tuition and fees at Miami Dade College, Community College of Baltimore County, and Northern Virginia Community College are in the range of \$3,500 to \$4,000 a year. Due to the recent leadership change at Peirce College, staff were not able to provide updates on projected tuition costs during our recent site visits.

both sites), an Admissions Director, some Peirce College instructors, and the college's Academic Advisor.

However, in February 2018, Year Up moved away from this model, and Wilmington became a totally separate PTC program. The Wilmington program only recently hired its own Site Director and Director of Admissions. As of summer 2018, the Wilmington program had reached an agreement to partner with Wilmington University going forward.

1.3 Structure of the PTC Program

The basic structure of Year Up's PTC program is similar across sites. All are integrated into college settings with academic and support services provided by both Year Up and college staff. All sites also target urban young adults who meet the Year Up demographic and economic profile. When they enroll, nearly all participants are partly or completely disconnected from school and/or work or at risk of such. They also generally come from low-income backgrounds and face risks commonly associated with poverty, such as homelessness, financial hardships, domestic/family violence, health problems, and/or early parenting. Participants also have been screened by PTC program staff for interest and motivation, basic academic skills, criminal background, and substance abuse in an effort to ensure their challenges are manageable with the available level of program assistance.

As with Year Up's core program, PTC program participants engage in six months of customized professional skills training—the L&D phase—followed by six months of a sponsored internship. The program sites enroll a new cohort of participants roughly every six months on schedules that align with the academic schedules of the partner college. One cohort begins the L&D phase at the start of the fall college term and completes their internships the following July, and the next starts the L&D phase at the beginning of the spring college term and concludes their internships in December of that year or early January of the next.

1.3.1 Organizational Structure, Staffing, and Financing

Day-to-day management and operation of PTC programs is the responsibility of local program staff. In general, PTC programs have four categories of staff: (1) recruitment and admissions; (2) direct-service program delivery, including student services, internship support, and post-program employment placement teams; (3) corporate engagement and community relations; and (4) operational and administrative support. Local program leadership consists of an Executive Director and a Site Director. The Executive Director at each program provides overall leadership; the Site Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the program. Other staff assume various combinations of responsibilities related to delivering training in professional skills, arranging and monitoring internships, providing supports in a cohort environment, and monitoring behaviors in relation to Year Up's participant contract. All staff serve as coaches for up to eight participants ("coachees"). Year Up National provides central support to and monitoring of the programs, including maintaining Year Up's information management system, aiding in the onboarding of staff, and troubleshooting.

PTC programs need to be well coordinated with the local college partner. For example, recruitment and admissions are tightly integrated with the college admissions and financial aid processes, and the college coursework is both aligned with programs of study or degree majors at the colleges and tailored, as necessary, to align with the career training goals of the PTC programs. PTC programs rely heavily on the college partners for arranging space and for delivering the academic programming.

Employers sponsoring internships are critical partners in the PTC programs. First and foremost, across the full network of core and PTC programs, employer-sponsored internships provide revenue that supports a major share of Year Up's overall operating costs—roughly 60 percent of costs for the core programs and, ideally, the full cost of the PTC programs. The operating assumption is that achieving break-even will

take two to three years of program operation and enrollments of about 160 participants per year (see Chapter 2, Table 9). In addition to providing internship placements and revenue, employers also provide critical guidance in program design, often teach workshops, and help PTC staff and participants to stay abreast of the changing opportunities and skill needs in the focal occupations.

1.3.2 Program Components

The PTC program has four main components: (1) applicant recruitment and screening, (2) education and training, (3) support services, and (4) connecting participants to employment and education opportunities post program. Below we describe key processes involved within each of these components.

Recruitment and Screening

There are four steps in the PTC recruitment and screening process: (1) program staff conduct outreach to inform potentially eligible youth of the PTC program and encourage them to apply; (2) applicants submit separate applications to the college and to the PTC program; (3) PTC program staff screen and conditionally accept interested and qualified applicants (see Appendix C, Volume II, for the PTC Admissions Readiness Rubric); and (4) accepted applicants enroll in both the PTC program and the college partner, participating in orientations for both. Step 2 in the process requires especially close coordination between PTC programs and their college partners. This is the point at which the PTC program admissions team works closely with applicants to arrange for any required placement tests and interviews. Inefficiencies in coordination between the PTC programs and their college partners can delay the admissions processes, which, in turn, may prevent accepted applicants from securing the necessary financial aid and completing college enrollment in time for the start of the academic semester.

Education and Training: Learning and Development

The Year Up PTC program is a full-time commitment of on-site programming (i.e., full-day, five days a week). The primary activity during L&D is structured college courses that take place over a roughly 20-week semester. These courses are geared towards training for occupations such as IT, business operations, financial operations, and cyber security. The PTC-P program, for example, currently offers two occupational tracks: Information Technology and Business Operations.

Structured PTC activities. The cornerstone for the commitment is on-site, structured activities five days each week. Typically, the activities on three of the days focus on academic and professional skills classes; one day is usually reserved for tutoring, counseling, and homework; and Fridays are spent on Year Up–designed activities intended to foster personal growth and professional behavior. On Fridays, all PTC programs follow three practices, usually conducted as a series of structured activities: (1) “Friday Forum,” when participants receive structured feedback from staff and peers; (2) guest speakers; and (3) group meetings between coaches and coachees to review the latter’s progress and points earned under the participant contract.

Academic and professional skills instruction. During L&D, participants are enrolled in a combination of professional and technical skills classes that equate to a full-time college course load. Typically, participants earn up to 15 college credits during L&D. However, the number of degree-applicable credits earned varies depending on whether participants are required to take developmental or college-level English and math and their success in the courses.

All PTC program participants are required to take a professional skills course, which is intended to provide them with the soft skills needed in a professional environment. In 2017, the original Year Up Pro-Skills course was replaced by the Career Development and Interpersonal Relationships (CDIR) course developed by Year Up National and credentialed by the American Council on Education. That credit recommendation allows participants to transfer course credits earned for CDIR to other colleges. The 19-week course curriculum covers conflict management, resume writing, and communication (see Appendix D, Volume II).

As an example from the PTC-P context, during the first seven weeks of L&D, a PTC-P program participant in the IT track would take one college occupational skills course, an English course (developmental or college-level), CDIR, and an Excel course (Table 3). In the second seven weeks of L&D, the participant would complete two more occupational skills courses and would continue with CDIR, Excel, and another English course (if he/she took developmental English in the first session). After completing L&D and upon beginning the Internship phase, the participant would complete an Internship Seminar course.

Table 3. Illustrative Learning & Development Course Schedule for the Philadelphia Professional Training Corps Program

Session, Course Length & Instructor	Occupational Track	
	Information Technology	Business Operations
L&D Session 1		
Total Course (7-weeks) <i>College Instructor</i>	1. PC Fundamentals (3 credits)	1. Introduction to Business (3 credits)
Total Course (7-weeks) <i>College Instructor</i>	2. Developmental English or College-Level English (3 credits)	
First Half (19-weeks total) <i>PTC-P & College Instructor</i>	3a. Career Development and Interpersonal Relationship (CDIR) (3 credits for completing both sessions)	
First Half (19-weeks total) <i>PTC-P Instructor</i>	4a. Excel (non-credit)	
L&D Session 2		
Total Course (7-weeks) <i>College Instructor</i>	5. Networking Fundamentals (3 credits)	5. Business Communications (3 credits)
Total Course (7-weeks) <i>College Instructor</i>	6. Applications Software Fundamentals (3 credits)	6. Applications Software Fundamentals (3 credits)
Total Course, (7-weeks) <i>College Instructor^a</i>	7. College-Level English (3 credits)	
Second Half (19-weeks total) <i>PTC-P Instructor</i>	3b. Career Development and Interpersonal Relationship (CDIR) (3 credits for completing both sessions)	
Second Half (19-weeks total) <i>PTC-P Instructor</i>	4b. Excel (non-credit)	
Internship		
Full-semester <i>PTC-P Instructor</i>	8. Internship Seminar (6 credits)	

^a Applies only to participants who took developmental English during the first session.

PTC-P participants may earn up to 24 credits during their time in the program. In most instances, program participants take classes with only other PTC-P participants. However, electives and more advanced courses may include other Peirce College students.

Bootcamps. Since the college terms are shorter than six months, PTC-specific programming fills the gaps in the six-month schedule prior to and following the college term. The most common such offering is week-long bootcamps between the end of the college semester and the start of internships. The bootcamps are designed to round out the curriculum and provide needed instruction and services that do not fit into the busy college course schedule. Most often, they are designed to bolster skills identified by veteran employer partners as areas where interns commonly need more training than they get through the college courses (e.g., in Excel and/or anti-money laundering).

Education and Training: Internships

In the second phase of the program—the Internship phase—participants engage full-time in six-month internships with area firms. In Philadelphia, the employers include major firms such as Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, the University of Pennsylvania, and Comcast, as well as smaller, local companies and

nonprofits. The internships play a central role in Year Up's theory of change by providing opportunities for the participants to apply and expand their technical and professional skills in high-demand occupations, while also forging connections with prospective employers. During their internships, participants maintain a full-time work schedule for four-and-a-half days a week and spend the other half-day in professional development at the PTC program.

College coursework. PTC participants receive college credit for their internship, if they successfully complete its capstone project. PTC programs also support participants who elect to take additional courses during their internships that reinforce skills needed by their employers and/or support their progress towards academic credentials. For example, participants who take remedial English during the L&D phase may take college-level English during the Internship phase or they may opt to take a math course, a higher-level IT course, or an entry-level course in a new field of interest. In addition to contributing to progress towards degree attainment, the PTC program's emphasis on college credits helps to maintain participants' eligibility for student financial aid—funds that are key to covering college partners' program-related costs.

Internship on-site professional development. Interns return to the PTC site each week for a half-day professional development workshop, commonly referred to as the Internship Seminar, which is run by the Employment Placement Managers (EPMs). The seminar aims to keep interns connected with the PTC program and with one another, support them in processing their work experiences, and help them prepare and plan for their post-program career transitions.

Career support. Throughout the Internship phase, PTC program staff members provide career support services aimed at fostering positive career outcomes. The weekly seminars conducted throughout the Internship phase focus on preparing participants for post-internship transitions. The workshops include career planning and development of a "portfolio" to support job applications (e.g., resume, cover letter, LinkedIn profile, reference list). Participants receive ongoing guidance from EPMS, coaches, and outside mentors in planning for their post-program employment and education. For example, the program's Associate Director of Partner Relations works with internship supervisors and other employer partners to identify prospective job placements for interns.

Mentoring. During their internships, participants have an additional mentor from either the community or internship site. The mentor periodically meets with the interns to provide guidance and support and provides feedback to PTC program staff on the interns' accomplishments and identified support needs. But most often, another designated person functions as the job supervisor. In the case of PTC-P program, the internship mentors are typically identified, trained, and designated by the PTC-P program development staff.

Participant Services and Supports

Like the Year Up core program, the PTC programs promote a philosophy of high expectations and high support. The model includes practices specifically aimed at fostering professional behavior, addressing academic and non-academic support needs, and cultivating a supportive social environment. Participants have access to a wide range of supports offered by the programs and their partner colleges, including the participant contract, coaching, learning communities, academic supports, and supervision and mentoring during internships.

The participant contract. The Year Up participant contract, which each participant signs upon entry to the program, specifies behaviors participants are expected to exhibit during all program activities. These behaviors include attendance at specified meetings/classes, timely arrival for activities, professional dress, timely completion of course assignments, and respectful behaviors. Contract requirements apply not only to activities at the PTC program site, but also during time in their college courses and otherwise spent on campus or at their internship site. PTC staff and both faculty and staff at the partner colleges share

responsibility for monitoring participants' behavior and for reporting and following up on contract infractions.

At enrollment, participants are awarded 150 contract points. They lose points for contract infractions and gain five points for each week with no infractions. Each point lost translates into a \$1 reduction in the weekly stipend. Participants whose points drop below zero are considered to have "fired" themselves and must leave the program.

Stipends. Participants earn a weekly stipend throughout the year, conditional on meeting Year Up's behavior code outlined in the Year Up participant contract. During the L&D phase, participants receive a stipend of up to \$50/week; during the Internship phase, it may be up to \$150 a week, depending on contract performance.

Coaching. Every PTC participant is assigned a PTC staff coach at the start of the program. Coaches are responsible for monitoring participant experiences in the program and helping them address any academic or non-academic issues that arise. All PTC staff, regardless of their formal role in the organization, serve as a coach for four to eight coachees. Generally, coaches and coachees meet weekly to discuss the latter's progress and complete activities aligned with the professional skills curriculum. In PTC-P, coaching takes place in both one-on-one and group settings. Group coaching sessions are typically 40 to 60 minutes in duration and include some time dedicated to the Year Up "topic of the week" (e.g., practicing elevator pitches). Then, after the group coaching session, coaches and coachees meet individually to check in and address any issues either identifies.

Learning communities. At the start of the program, participants are grouped into learning communities (LCs). The ideal size for each LC is about 40 participants, but configurations and sizes vary across and within sites based on enrollment levels and deliberate decisions about the structuring of the LCs. In the case of the PTC-P program, for example, LC numbers have ranged between 21 and 40 participants, depending on recruitment outcomes.⁵ Each LC has a Program Manager who oversees six to 10 additional staff who serve as coaches and facilitate program sessions. Starting with orientation week, LC members engage in activities designed to establish shared norms, trust, cohesion, and a common PTC program identity. LC members continue to learn together and support one another throughout their time in the program.

Academic supports. PTC programs and their college partners provide tutoring and other assistance to participants who need academic help. The format of the academic support services varies by site. In PTC-P, for example, all participants currently are required to attend a scheduled study hall three times per week and they may elect to attend study hall on other days. During the study halls, participants may receive assistance with homework and course materials. Additionally, PTC-P participants can use the tutoring services offered through Peirce College.

Connecting Participants to Employment and Education

Year Up continues to work with its graduates after they transition out of the program. For example, PTC-P program staff (mainly the EPMs) maintain contact with former participants and help with job placements and other challenges that may arise. All PTC program graduates are eligible for free support in perpetuity from Year Up's affiliated job placement and staffing agency, [YUPRO](#), which serves Year Up alumni nationwide.

⁵ Due to recent issues with reaching recruiting targets, PTC-P will be downsizing from two LCs to one for the upcoming enrollment cycle.

Year Up tracks employment and educational outcomes for graduates at four months and 12 months after graduation. Longer-term outcomes are captured through Year Up's internal alumni surveys and external rigorous longitudinal impact studies. To help capture information on long-term outcomes, Year Up is negotiating access to state wage databases and is currently using the National Student Clearinghouse to measure employment and education outcomes, respectively.⁶

National Year Up performance standards set an expectation that all programs (PTC and core) achieve 85 percent "positive outcomes" for program graduates—defined as placement in school or work—by the fourth month following program completion. For programs following the PTC Standard Program Model, the expectation is that at least 70 percent of graduates will be placed in full-time employment that relates to the training received at Year Up and at least 75 percent of graduates will have re-enrolled in postsecondary education (see Appendix E, Volume II).⁷

Both the local PTC programs and Year Up's National Alumni Team staff provide services intended to maintain ties with and among alumni. These services often are provided in the form of social and career development events. Until recently at PTC-P, this was a shared responsibility of staff. This past year, one staff person, designated the Alumni Engagement Steward, assumed the added responsibility of fostering connections with alumni and sharing information about both alumni events and job and education-related opportunities for alumni.

1.3.3 Year Up's Financial Model for PTC

As discussed earlier, an important goal of the PTC programs is to develop a financially self-sustaining version of Year Up's core program. To this end, the PTC Standard Program Model is intended to operate at per-participant costs at or below the per-participant revenues generated through internship sales. The financial model for the PTC program has three components: (1) projections of operating costs; (2) secured internships and their payment rates; and (3) some underwriting of program costs by the college partner (e.g., through donating facilities, instruction, and other college services).

Projecting Operating Costs

Year Up uses its model to generate PTC program cost projections for various levels of participant enrollment and under varying assumptions about costs for staff, stipends, college tuition and fees, and other direct program expenses, as well as an allocation for costs of support from Year Up's national office. The projections explicitly factor in differences in the numbers of participants entering L&D over successive cohorts during program start-up. Programs are generally not expected to reach the financial break-even point during the early years, in part due to scale, but mostly because the number of participants generating costs in the L&D phase is greater than the number of participants in the revenue-generating Internship phase.

In 2014, Year Up estimated that for the typical PTC program, the average cost per participant in a steady-state program averaged \$14,882, which was 48 percent lower than in the core program (\$28,655).⁸ As of

⁶ National Student Clearinghouse data are the source of standard metrics used by colleges and universities to judge their performance and the performance of individual participants and have been used in many past community college evaluations (see, for example, publications at: <http://www.mdrc.org/issue/higher-education>).

⁷ Year Up's core program model also sets an 85 percent "positive outcomes" standard requiring at least 70 percent of the graduating class be placed in full-time jobs related to their training at Year Up, but it does not have an explicit higher education persistence target.

⁸ This estimate is based on calculations from a Year Up spreadsheet showing total costs of serving 160 participants under the PTC and core models.

2018, Year Up has adjusted the PTC program's targeted average cost per participant to \$19,944,⁹ which is 34 percent lower than the average cost per participant in the core program.

In general, it is easier to manage program costs than to ensure meeting revenue. Major inputs such as staff salaries and participant stipends are predictable and controllable. Revenue, on the other hand, depends on a complex series of factors related to participant recruitment and enrollment, retention through L&D, success in securing internship seats, employers' willingness to pay full fee for the internships, and participants completing their internships.

Generating Revenue through Internships

The business model for the PTC program, as in the Year Up core program, depends heavily on revenue from employers. Towards this end, Year Up requests a fixed contribution of \$24,700 per internship from employers for each intern position, which is expected to cover program costs once programs are in steady-state.¹⁰ However, the fee to employers may vary depending on local market factors and the employer's ability and willingness to pay the full fee. Year Up may offer an employer a discount or provide an intern to the employer at no charge. Thus, internships play important roles, not only in advancing skills and employment connections for participants, but also in the financial status and self-sufficiency of the program.

Under Year Up's financial model, new programs could be financially self-sustaining in three years under the following assumptions: (1) enrollments grow to four LCs of 40 participants each (a total of 160 participants across LCs and 80 participants in each of the two cohorts) in a given calendar year; (2) 83 percent of participants complete L&D and transition to internships; (3) 90 percent of participants matriculating to internships remain in the program through graduation; (4) discounts amount to no more than two percent of aggregate internship seat pricing.¹¹ At enrollment levels of 160 participants per year or higher, revenue is projected to exceed costs. For example, at enrollments of 160 per year (80 per cohort), revenue would be projected to exceed expenses by about six percent.¹²

Shared Resources with College Partner

Year Up anticipates that the leaner staffing structure for the PTC Standard Program Model will be compensated for by shifting much of the academic instruction and some the costs of inputs such as facilities and support services to the college partner. In Philadelphia, for example, the college partner has been quite generous in providing office space and instructional support. Year Up also recognizes that the college partner's willingness to underwrite these costs depends on the value proposition for the college (e.g., increased revenue from tuition and fees, opening a new pipeline of students, etc.).

Since PTC participants enroll as participants and receive credits at the partner colleges, the PTC programs pay the associated college tuition and fees that are not covered through Pell Grants and other federal and state grant programs for low-income participants or through tuition discounting by the college. Year Up attempts to limit expenses incurred for college tuition and fees to \$500 per participant. As a result, this

⁹ Year Up National changed its PTC program staffing model to include higher staff-to-participant ratios and it altered the way that it allocates expenses incurred by Year Up National to support local programs. Changes in target staff numbers reflect additional needs for resources identified during the early piloting of the PTC programs.

¹⁰ Year Up has since increased the suggested internship fee to \$26,000.

¹¹ Since the 2015 interim report, Year Up increased the price charged per internship seat. Based on the assumptions in 2015, employer payments needed to average approximately \$763 per week to cover program costs.

¹² This is lower than the estimate reported in the 2015 interim report, which estimated that, at these higher enrollment levels, revenue would exceed expenses by about 20 percent. The difference may be due to changes in the employer payments and increases in the standard staffing model in the PTC sites.

creates a natural incentive for the PTC programs to limit the number of participants whose tuition and fees cannot be fully covered by financial aid.

The cost-revenue balance is quite different for public versus private colleges. For public colleges, especially community colleges, tuition typically is quite low (\$3,500 to \$4,000 a year) due to public subsidies. Becoming financially self-sustaining is made more challenging for PTC programs when working with tuition-dependent private colleges such as Peirce College in Philadelphia. That said, financial self-sufficiency for a private college does not necessarily entail recouping full tuition. For example, Peirce administrators reported that, on average, the college discounts tuition and fees for participants receiving both federal (i.e., Pell Grants) and state aid by 34 percent; for those receiving no grants by 40 percent; and for those receiving only federal aid by 58 percent.¹³

1.4 Evaluation Components and Findings in Brief

There are two main components of the evaluation of the PTC-P program: (1) an **implementation study** with strong formative aspects and (2) an **impact study**. While the primary focus of the evaluation is on the Philadelphia PTC program, both the implementation and impact studies also draw on experiences in and data on other PTC programs.

1.4.1 Evaluation Components

Implementation Study

The summative portion of the implementation study, which is the portion that is central to this report, addresses four key questions:

1. How is the PTC-P program organized and staffed?
2. How does the program recruit participants, and what were the results?
3. How do the services received by program participants align with plans?
4. How did the program change over time in terms of inputs and/or outputs, and why?

In addition to drawing on continuous monitoring of administrative data, the evaluation draws on a recent round of site visits, information from the interim implementation evaluation, and various mini-studies that were conducted as part of another evaluation of the PTC program, funded by the Institute of Education Sciences. By design, these mini-studies were short-term, deep-dive studies intended to provide quick feedback to program staff on areas perceived as warranting improvement. One of the mini-studies focused on recruitment and retention strategies and challenges, a second focused on promoting educational persistence following program completion, and a third focused on setting up successful internships.

Impact Study

The impact study was designed to produce unbiased estimates of the effectiveness of alternative strategies for monitoring and supporting academic performance of participants during L&D who were identified as experiencing difficulties in their college courses. The aim of the strategies was improving L&D completion and increasing rates of college enrollment post L&D. With support from the evaluation team, Year Up National and PTC program staff developed strategies three strategies: (1) site-tailored methods for systematically gathering information on how participants are doing in their college courses; (2) systematic sharing and use of this information to inform staff coaching of participants; and (3) greater access to and better use of resources to assist participants who are struggling with their courses.

¹³ Peirce College may be more willing than other private colleges to discount tuition for PTC-P participants given its somewhat atypical situation. Because its traditional focus is on night classes and online instruction, the school has substantial unused capacity during the daytime hours when PTC-P operates, and thus, its marginal cost of hosting the PTC-P program is mainly instructor compensation costs.

The enhanced academic monitoring and supports were implemented and tested in three PTC programs—Philadelphia in partnership with Peirce College (PTC-P); New York City in partnership with Borough of Manhattan Community College (PTC-BMCC); and Jacksonville, Florida, in partnership with Florida State College at Jacksonville (PTC-JAX). The enhanced services were tested with the 317 participants who enrolled in the January 2018 and July 2018 cohorts across the three programs. These participants were randomly assigned to either a Usual Strategies Group or to an Alternative Strategies Group who received the enhanced services.¹⁴

The evaluation team reported back early findings from this evaluation to the sites in the form of a structured conversation with program staff and a “post-read” document, which detailed the design, methods, and products of the impact study in non-technical language (Maynard et al., 2018).

1.4.2 Findings in Brief

As it enters its fifth year of operations, the PTC-P program is generally operating fairly well from the perspective of the academic and work-based skills training opportunities it offers to participants. However, both the PTC-P program staff and Year Up National are still working to expand enrollment, improve alignment of the vocational interests of participants with focal vocational tracks, and achieve retention and internship sales compatible with financial sustainability.

Implementation Study Findings

Implementing the PTC-P program has been challenging but, with recent programmatic changes, the program seems well positioned to achieve sustainability. This section discusses key findings from the implementation evaluation as they pertain to (1) organization and structure, (2) recruitment and admissions, (3) improving academic success during and successful completion of the L&D phase of the program, (4) strengthening internships, (5) post-program outcomes and alumni engagement, and (6) scalability and financial sustainability.

- **Organization and structure.** Year Up's PTC programs generally operate with between seven and eight participants per full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. Among the specialized staff roles are recruitment and admissions, programming (which includes academic and professional skills training as well as employment placement), participant services, internship development and services, and alumni services. Recruitment and admissions and program services are closely connected to and depend on the college partner, whereas internship services are closely connected with the employer partners and support of Year Up National.

The PTC-P program has struggled to achieve a well-functioning organizational structure and complement of staff. Currently, it is operating with a considerably lower participant-to-staff ratio than average. However, as of this report release, there are some indications that a recent restructuring of staff roles and resizing to a level commensurate with a single LC will position the program for stronger performance, particularly with regards to recruitment and retention and the number and quality of paid internships. Notably, staff additions have been in the areas of participant services, internship services, and employment placement services.

- **Recruitment and admissions.** Recruitment and admissions continue to be a pain point for the PTC-P program. Staff reported sometimes struggling between meeting admissions targets and adhering to the readiness assessment guidelines. More generally, the program has not yet created a robust pipeline for referrals. Following recent leadership changes and staff reorganization, the Philadelphia site has been working to incorporate feedback and recommendations from the mini-

¹⁴ This study design meets the moderate evidence standards specified for evaluations supported by SIF (Social Innovation Fund, n.d.).

study on recruitment and retention (Maynard & Fein, 2015), as well as to refine its practices to purposefully target a broader set of youth-serving organizations and to be more intentional in building a strong alumni network that can generate referrals and increase the yield of accepted applicants. An expanded pipeline of referrals would make it more feasible to be vigilant in screening for program readiness, which has been historically challenging at PTC-P.

- ***Improving academic success and completion through L&D.*** Throughout most of the study period, the PTC-P program experienced higher attrition than anticipated during L&D, related in part to participants' poor performance in college courses. The redesigned impact study focused specifically on testing ways to identify academic challenges early and intervene to address them. Program staff reported that many times they were unaware of participants who were struggling in their courses until very late in the semester, giving staff little to no time or opportunity to explore the source of the difficulties and to provide assistance. Year Up National used the mini-study findings on recruitment and retention (Maynard & Fein, 2015) to inform their work with three of the PTC programs, including that in Philadelphia, to develop the interventions with promise to improve academic success and persistence through L&D that were tested in the impact study (see further below).
- ***Strengthening internships.*** Participants typically reported quite positive views of their internships. However, some programs, including the PTC-P program, are encountering two noteworthy challenges: (1) ensuring that participants are adequately prepared for and supported during their internships, and (2) securing and retaining the needed number of paid internship seats. With regard to the former, the mini-study on setting up successful internship (Baelen et al., 2018) identified several factors that limit success, including late matching of interns with employers, which inhibits strong onboarding and adequate skills preparation, and lapses in preparing participants for inevitable "down-time" during their internships. To address these concerns, Year Up National has made a number of changes in the program, including running pre-internship bootcamps to address employer-specific training needs and arming participants with strategies for productive use of downtime, surveying internship managers more routinely to solicit feedback on the preparation and performance of interns, and instituting structured onboarding of internship managers.

In response to the latter challenge, Year Up National recently re-sized and restructured its staffing guidelines. Very recent changes in the organizational structure and staffing have been specifically aimed at improving sales, support, and retention of paid internship sponsors. For example, at the PTC-P program, there are now two full-time internship services staff focused solely on supporting interns throughout their experience and a full-time Director of Partner Relations who talks weekly with managers and key contacts at the corporate partner sites. These PTC-P staff meet weekly to discuss feedback from interns and managers, troubleshoot issues, and identify strategies for preventing similar problems in the future.

- ***Post-program outcomes and alumni engagement.*** Ultimately, the program's success depends on increasing the employment, earnings, and career advancement potential of participants. Based on internal monitoring of program graduates, the PTC-P program is doing reasonably well in terms of employment and hourly earnings of graduates. For example, although only 35 percent of graduates are employed full-time in Year Up-related jobs four months after graduation, two thirds of them are in school and 87 percent are in school or working. The average wage of those who are working is \$17.61 an hour. However, at present, the program does not track education and employment outcomes for all participants, only graduates. (A separate ongoing study funded by the Institute of Education Sciences will examine these outcomes.)

In addition to the many ongoing program improvement efforts (i.e., strengthening the selection of program-ready participants, promoting academic success and retention during L&D, and strengthening the quality of internships), the PTC-P program has ramped up its efforts to support internship services, strengthen employment placement support, and improve guidance on continued education opportunities. As part of this effort, the PTC-P program has designated a staff member to oversee alumni engagement efforts and expansion of the network of professional contacts available to graduates—a role that this staff member has taken on in addition to regular job-related responsibilities.

- **Financial sustainability.** Year Up National recognized that maintaining the PTC-P program at its previous size of two LCs was not financially sustainable for the foreseeable future. Thus, it very recently scaled back the program to one LC. If the PTC-P program can meet performance goals of being financially self-sustaining at this smaller scale, Year Up National will have a stronger basis for judging whether, how, and at what rate to expand the program (e.g., growing the focal career track or expanding to include other high-demand career tracks).

Impact Study Findings

Through two cycles of testing in three programs that included Philadelphia, the study found the following benefits for participants in the Alternative Strategies Group as compared with their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group:

- **9.6 percentage point greater likelihood of completing L&D** (78.9% versus 69.3%; p -value = .052).
- **13.2 percentage point greater likelihood of being enrolled in college** during the month following the end of the program (67.2% versus 54.0%, p -value = .003).

Although the point estimates of impacts varied across the three programs that participated in the study, the differences among the sites were not statistically significant. Impacts were systematically larger for participants in the July 2018 cohort than for the January 2018 cohort across the three sites, suggesting substantial benefits from midcourse adjustments to the alternative strategies employed for the January 2018 cohort. A key adjustment was the development of an Academic Coaching Binder comprising tools and guidance for coaches working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group (Year Up, 2018). The Binder was created by program staff to help coaches to meet the expectations for better monitoring of participants' academic performance and to efficiently support those participants found to be encountering difficulties.

1.5 Overview of the Report

This report has four chapters. **Chapter 2** describes the implementation of the PTC-P program, focusing on program enrollment patterns and outcomes, operational experiences, and costs and revenue. **Chapter 3** provides a detailed description of the impact study design, the study sample and data, the methods of analysis, the estimated impacts of the alternative academic monitoring and support strategies tested, and insights from coaches and participants to help unpack the mechanisms through which impacts were generated. **Chapter 4** discusses the implications of the study findings for practice, for policy, and for future program evaluation efforts. Volume 2 of this report includes appendices containing supplemental data and background documents.

2. Implementing the Professional Training Corps Program in Philadelphia (PTC-P)

This chapter updates findings of an interim implementation evaluation of the Philadelphia PTC program (PTC-P). At the time that report was published, the PTC-P was one of five PTC pilot programs enrolling relatively small numbers of youth (20 to 50) each cycle (Fein & Maynard, 2015). Over the first 18 months of pilot operations, the PTC-P program established a close working relationship with Peirce College, enabling rapid start-up and sustained program development and refinement. It enrolled just under 150 young adults and successfully implemented all major program components.

The interim implementation evaluation study uncovered four growth areas or needs in order for the PTC-P program to become a viable, financially sustainable venture (Maynard & Fein, 2015). The first was for Year Up and Peirce College to work more closely together on efforts such as staff recruitment, participant enrollment, and the curriculum. The second need was to show that the program model could be financially viable with a private college partner with tuition well above the level of financial aid typically available to Year Up participants (\$550 per credit hour in 2014-15). The third need was to meet Year Up's retention targets for the Learning and Development (L&D) phase. The fourth was to generate enough fully sponsored internship seats to meet projected enrollment growth. The current report assesses PTC-P's overall implementation, with special attention to these four challenges and the extent to which they were addressed.

The chapter begins with a description of the data sources used for the evaluation. It then proceeds to present study findings related to various aspects of the program, beginning with its overall organization and management. It then discusses experiences with and lessons learned with regards to recruitment and admissions, developing and guiding participants through the L&D phase, developing and supporting participants through internships, and alumni tracking and support. Finally, it discusses the financial self-sufficiency and scalability of the PTC-P program.

2.1 Data for the Implementation Study

The implementation study relies heavily on Year Up's administrative data. However, it also draws upon data from the National Student Clearinghouse and multiple rounds of site visits, most with the Philadelphia program and its employment partners, but some extending to other PTC programs. On-site data collection included observations, semi-structured interviews with PTC program staff, college partner staff, employers, and participants.¹⁵ The first round of site visits was conducted in late 2014 and focused on implementation experiences in the first year and a half of program operations (see Fein & Maynard, 2015). The most recent round of site visits, conducted in mid-2018, focused on current program operations and major changes since 2014.

The study also draws on data gathered by the evaluation team in conjunction with three mini-studies funded by the Institute of Education Sciences that include the PTC-P program. One mini-study examined strategies for setting up successful internships in New York City, Northern Virginia, and Miami PTC programs and included staff interviews, focus groups with participants, interviews with employers, and reviews of program documents (Baelen et al., 2018). A second study on recruitment and retention through L&D included site interviews with staff and participants at the PTC programs in Baltimore (PTC-BAL) and Philadelphia (PTC-P) (Fein & Maynard, 2015). A third mini-study that focused on issues related to persistence in college after participants leave the PTC programs relied on Year Up and National Student

¹⁵ Interviews were transcribed and coded to identify emerging themes.

Clearinghouse data for all PTC programs and data from interviews with Year Up National staff (Fein & Shivji, 2017).

2.2 PTC-P Organization and Management

The organization and management of the PTC-P program mirrors that of other PTC programs. The day-to-day management and operation of the program is the responsibility of local program staff in four general categories: (1) recruitment and admissions; (2) direct-service program delivery, including student services, internship support, and post-program employment placement teams; (3) corporate engagement and community relations (i.e., management of external partnerships); and (4) operational and administrative support. In addition, some of the PTC programs have grown out of sites where Year Up had already been operating its core program model. All of the PTC programs have worked hard to build strong partnerships with local youth-serving organizations as a means of creating a pipeline for referrals and with local employers as a means of creating pipelines for internships and post-program job placements.

The PTC-P program differs from other PTC programs in three notable ways. First, along with six other PTC programs, it began and remains a single-channel Year Up program rather than one of two Year Up program models operating in a single market. Second, for much of the time, the PTC-P program operated out of its Philadelphia office, but relied heavily on employers in the Wilmington, Delaware, area (especially, JP Morgan Chase) for many of its internship placements. Third, its college partner is a private higher education institution that serves primarily older, working adults, whereas all but one other PTC program have partnered with public colleges or universities. Like all PTC programs, the PTC-P program receives substantial support from Year Up National.

Since the publication of the interim implementation study report, there have been significant changes in PTC-P program staffing and important changes in its organizational structure. The changes and turnover in staffing have negatively affected the morale of PTC-P staff and participants, contributed to inconsistencies in program execution, and periodically, strained the relationship with Peirce College. Most recently, the program management also underwent significant changes with the opening of a new PTC program site in Wilmington, disrupting operations in Philadelphia.

2.2.1 Changes in Program Staffing

The PTC-P program has experienced fluctuations in staffing over the course of its implementation. Many of the staffing changes resulted from turnover and role re-clarification efforts initiated by Year Up National. As of now, it appears that the rate of turnover may be slowing, but changes in staff organization and role clarification are ongoing.

Year Up National worked with PTC-P to address implementation challenges.

Up until early 2015, a separate National PTC Team was the primary resource for local PTC programs, calling upon other staff responsible for Year Up's core program as necessary. The National PTC Team was responsible for forging the college partnerships, designing the programs, hiring staff, and ensuring that essential elements were in place prior to program launch. After programs launched, Year Up National monitored progress and helped to solve problems. Year Up National oversaw internship sales and employer relationships for all PTC and core programs and managed local program staff with these responsibilities. The designated National Team member assigned to the PTC-P program provided specialized expertise and connections to help develop and sustain relationships with employers.

Starting in early 2016 and continuing into summer 2018, two staff members from Year Up National provided localized support to PTC-P. These embedded staff helped to train new staff, retrain tenured staff, and support program execution. Efforts to focus National Team resources on the PTC-P program came about because the site was short staffed and falling short of admissions and retention targets. One staff

member from Year Up National started out by conducting observations and creating a road map of initiatives for the site to improve its program execution, recruitment, and retention. In March 2018, a third staff member from Year Up National assumed formal management responsibilities of the admissions and recruitment function.

Support from Year Up National has included training and retraining in aspects of the program, such as L&D instruction, administering the Year Up participant contract, and evaluating applicants' readiness for program admissions and participants' readiness to enter internships. Important foci of the support from Year Up National were the "whys" underlying aspects of the PTC Standard Program Model, methods to create and monitor participant support plans, and alignment on Year Up participant contract criteria and enforcement policies. Some PTC-P staff interviewed described this retraining as prompting improved communication among staff at the local program, as well as improved practices for monitoring participants, particularly in terms of their academic performance and conditions that would support academic success (e.g., improved coordination with Peirce College on logistical issues related to textbooks, classes, and scheduling).

In May 2017, the Year Up National staff member who had focused most closely on program execution during both the L&D and Internship phases was hired as a full-time staff member at the PTC-P program. By early 2018, the second Year Up National staff member who started with PTC-P in 2016 shifted focus solely to the Wilmington site.

Staffing is now closely aligned with Year Up's vision of ideal staffing for the PTC programs with steady-state enrollment of 160 young adults.

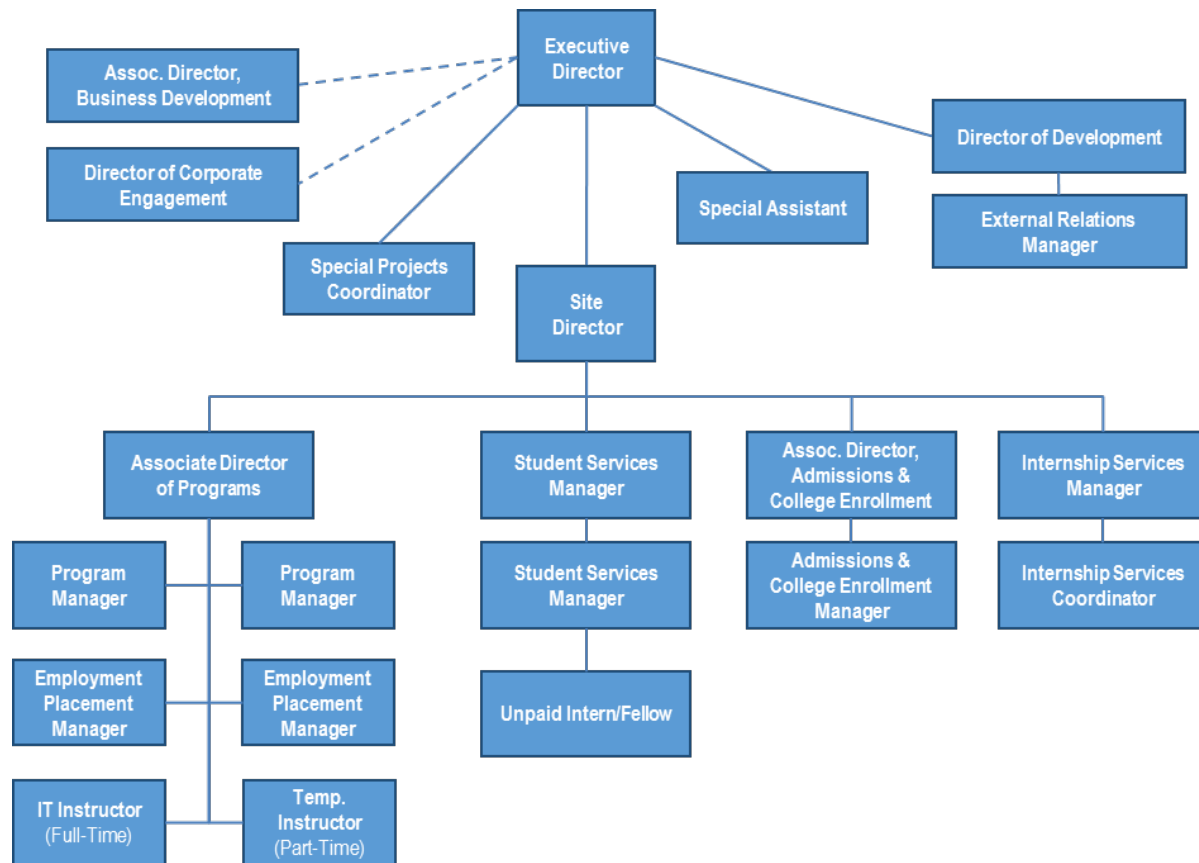
As of 2015, the PTC-P program operated with staffing levels below the now recommended Year Up National standard. The optimal participant-to-staff ratio recommended by Year Up National is 8.4 participants to one staff member. At this ratio, the 90 participants enrolled in PTC-P in 2015 should have been supported by approximately 10 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members (according to the current Year Up National standard). However, in 2015, PTC-P had only six full-time staff members: (1) an Executive Director, (2) an Associate Director of Employer Engagement responsible for sales and retention of internship seats; (3) an Admissions Manager responsible for recruitment; (4) two Program Managers; and (5) an Operations Manager responsible for general operations support, special events, and the mentoring program. While there were staff assigned to cover all major program operational responsibilities, the number of staff was less than 60 percent of the number Year Up now recommends for a program serving 90 participants.

Until recently, PTC-P underwent generally modest expansion in terms of program staff, while also experiencing continually high rates of staffing changes (role re-classification initiated by Year Up National) and churn (stemming from a lack of program fit and/or poor staff quality). However, by mid-2018, the number of staff had expanded to 21 permanent paid members with more nuanced job titles and descriptions than in the past (Figure 2).¹⁶ In addition to the Executive Director who oversees the Philadelphia and Wilmington PTC programs, PTC-P has its own Site Director to manage the relationship with Peirce College, oversee the Student Services Team (supported by two Student Services Managers), and orchestrate program execution with the support of two Associate Directors—one for Programming and one for Admissions and College Enrollment. The Site Director also oversees the Internship Services Team (comprising an Internship Services Manager and an Internship Services Coordinator). The Associate Director for Programs oversees and is supported by two Program Managers who are

¹⁶ The staff changes described here and outlined in Figure 3 are currently in flux, as PTC-P is transitioning from two to one learning communities (LCs). The staff of 21 members is only slightly larger than projected for the Year Up Standard Program Model of serving 160 participants annually (see further discussion of financial self-sufficiency and scalability in Sections 2.7 and 2.8 below).

responsible for executing the curriculum during L&D and internships; two Employment Placement Managers (a new role at PTC-P as of summer 2016); and two instructors (one full-time Information Technology Instructor and the other a temporary instructor). The Development Team who are responsible for fundraising (comprising a Director of Development and an External Relations Manager) and the Special Projects Coordinator report to the Executive Director. In addition, there is an Associate Director of Business Development and a Director of Corporate Engagement who report into a regionalized corporate engagement structure and have an informal reporting relationship with the Executive Director and are responsible for corporate partner relations in the Philadelphia market (see also Appendix F, Volume II).¹⁷

Figure 2. Philadelphia Professional Training Corps Organizational Chart, July 2018



Source: Year Up National staff.

Note: A dotted line denotes a staff member reporting to the Year Up Regional Director.

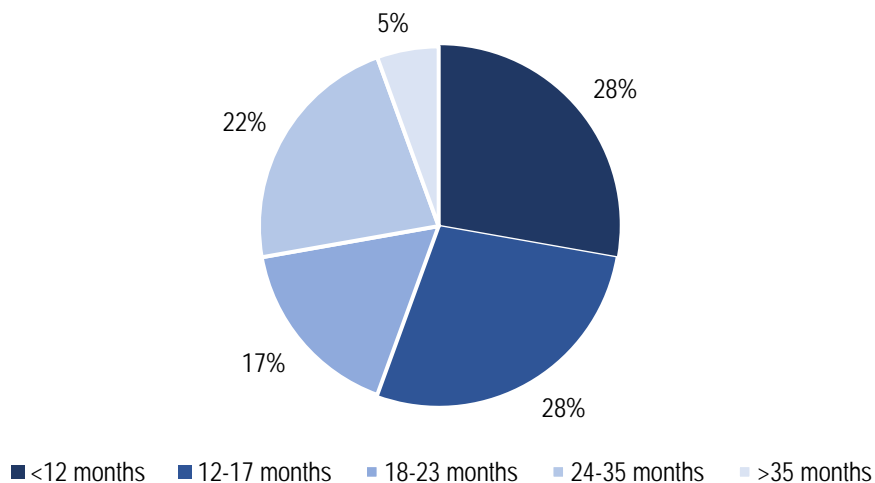
¹⁷ After our most recent site visit (August 2018), there was a substantial reorganization and restructuring of the staff in Philadelphia (see Appendix G, Volume II). For example, the site now has five staff who report to the Year Up Regional Director of Corporate Engagement. They are two Associate Directors of Business Development (one for Philadelphia and one for the Greater Philadelphia area), a Director of Corporate Engagement, an Associate Director of Partner Relations, and an Account Director. In part, this reorganization is intended to flatten the organizational structure and facilitate operational changes to improve outreach and recruitment, coordination with Peirce College, and engagement with the employer community. Year Up also has decided that the site will downsize from two LCs to one, which has affected the number of program staff (e.g., one Program Manager instead of two).

Sentiment is that staff turnover may be on the decline.

Judging by interviews with PTC-P staff and Year Up administrative data, staff turnover was more common in some roles than others and may be slowing down. For example, the current Site Director has been with PTC-P for two and a half years, the Operations and Events Manager has been with the site for five years, and one of the Program Managers has been with the site for three years. As of July 2018, however, 56 percent of staff have been with PTC-P for less than 18 months and only five percent (one staff member) had been with the program for three years or longer (Figure 3).

Stability in Staff: *"I think ... there's been stability now built into the program, ... Most of the staff here [are] very young [and haven't] been here a long time. But at least, we've been around the block once."* (PTC-P Staff)

Figure 3. Tenure of Staff at the Philadelphia Professional Training Corps Program in July 2018



Source: Year Up personnel data, January 2015–July 2018.

The slowdown in turnover means that there is beginning to be a more seasoned group of Year Up staff executing the program. A staff member from Year Up National who has supported the PTC-P site closely noted that there has been greater accountability for program execution and participant behavior recently, attributing this, in part, to the Program Managers' longer tenure. Although staff were hopeful about increases in tenure, more time is needed to see whether staffing will in fact stabilize.

2.2.2 Response to Staff Changes

Historically, both high levels of staff turnover and several rounds of role changes have negatively affected morale of PTC-P staff and participants, caused inconsistencies in program execution, and contributed to a strained relationship between PTC-P and Peirce College. However, at the time of the most recent round of site visits, staff morale seemed to be good and relations with the college still strong. Additionally, staff members also appear energized to revisit the program's approaches to recruiting, retaining and supporting participants through their internships, and strengthening corporate engagement.

Adverse effects of staff churn on morale and performance appear to be moderating.

In fall 2013, at the height of the recruitment season, the Director of Admissions left the program, which necessitated a rebuilding of referral networks. More recently, PTC-P lost its second Executive Director. Although Year Up National quickly designated a highly experienced PTC leadership staff member as Interim Executive Director, that individual was covering three Year Up sites and lacked familiarity with the Philadelphia market.

The environment. High turnover reportedly contributed to an environment of fear and anxiety among staff. Most terminations reportedly were for reasons related to program fit or performance. More recently, a number of staff transitioned to different or new roles within the PTC-P program in efforts to align staff responsibilities with a Year Up National initiative for restructuring some of its participant-facing roles (Year Up, 2017).¹⁸ Reflecting on these experiences, one PTC-P staff member noted: *“So, that was the trend for a while. You see a meeting pop up... someone else has been let go. So you can imagine...the fear and anxiety around what that looks like.”*

The Staff Turnover Affected Participant Morale: *“[Participants] took staff changes very personally. There were meetings about [participants] not wanting to attend graduation, [participants] wanting to quit, [participants] making comments—we’re supposed to be a family.”* (PTC-P Staff)

One staff member from Year Up National contended that many of the hiring decisions were coming from the top down, contributing to a *“vicious cycle of hiring people who were not the best fit.”*

The high staff turnover also affected participant morale and alumni engagement. For instance, staff

Made Alumni Engagement Difficult: *“So, you increase alumni engagement by familiar faces. When I come back to the campus I want to see someone who was yelling at me the first two weeks, and then that just wasn’t the case.”* (PTC-P Staff)

terminations often resulted in participants losing key sources of support, mentorship, and/or connection to the program. As a result, participants reported often feeling frustrated and discouraged. In addition, as more staff members left, alumni started to lose a sense of connection to the PTC-P program.

Program execution and relationships. High turnover has adversely affected program execution. The PTC-P program staff and Peirce College administrators identified numerous consequences of high staff turnover. For example, they reported that the high turnover in program leadership positions at the PTC-P program contributed to lack of follow-through on important initiatives and inconsistencies in strategy and program direction. The many changes at all levels meant that the program had to do multiple rounds of staff training, which was a drain on staff time and Year Up National resources.

Peirce College administrators reported that the high levels of staff turnover made it difficult to manage the relationship with PTC-P and, at times, weakened the sense of community between the organizations. One Peirce College administrator commented that *“there’s been so much change within the partnership...on the Year Up side.”* Another administrator mentioned that turnover had led to inconsistencies in program execution: *“Every person comes in with great new ideas on how to make it work.”*

These types of issues related to staff turnover and role clarity were not limited to the PTC-P program; they were common concerns across PTC programs. To address these issues, in 2017, Year Up National undertook an initiative—referred to as “Alphabet Soup”—to create job titles and descriptions that were compatible with a more resilient staffing model, especially in the face of staff turnover (Year Up, 2017). This initiative resulted in linking specified program activities with each job title and position and establishing expectations that staff members be sufficiently familiar with other roles so as to easily pitch in during busy times and/or emergencies.

In addition to changes prompted by Year Up National, the PTC-P program staff are trying to be more intentional with program execution. This has been challenging, though, in the absence of a permanent Executive Director.

¹⁸ The change in staffing structures was affectionately called Alphabet Soup by Year Up because of the acronyms labeling all the roles involved (e.g., PM, ISM, EPM); see further below.

2.2.3 Integrating PTC-P with Peirce College

From its inception, the partnership between PTC-P and Peirce College has had strong support from the President on down, most notably through senior administrative staff responsible for finance, admissions, academics, and support services. The college has provided ample office space to support the PTC-P program's needs, adequate instructional spaces, and even places where participants can study or socialize with peers. It has been somewhat more challenging to meet space needs for large group events. While physical space needs are being met, there is room to improve communication and collaboration on issues such as participant recruitment and tailoring course content and instructional strategies to meet the needs of the PTC-P program participants.

Communication and coordination with Peirce College has been generally good.

From early on, the PTC-P program has benefited from a strong relationship with senior administrators at Peirce College. For example, the two organizations have effectively coordinated admissions requirements and processes, aligned their curriculum requirements and options, and developed effective processes for supporting participants in navigating various avenues for financial support of their college coursework. Senior leadership, including the Peirce College President, was actively involved in developing and implementing the PTC-P program, and the college's Vice Presidents for Academics and Student Services were actively involved in the program's design and start-up—overseeing day-to-day management and troubleshooting issues (Fein & Maynard, 2015).

Key administrators at the college have continued to work cooperatively with PTC-P program staff on issues such as course scheduling and identification of new program tracks. They also worked closely with Year Up National to facilitate its decision to open a PTC program in Wilmington—offering Peirce instructors to teach college courses there.

Day-to-day operations of Peirce College's services for the PTC-P participants, such as the college courses, participant monitoring, and student support services, generally fall under the jurisdiction of mid-level administrators. Judging by reports from staff at both the college and PTC-P, building strong relationships between these mid-level line staff and PTC-P staff has been slower to evolve and more difficult to maintain. Despite this, there was agreement that these relationships, too, were generally good.

At the time of the most recent site visits, the current President at Peirce College had only been onboard a few months and there had been no noticeable impacts for the relationship with or operation of the PTC-P program. Staff at both the PTC-P program and the college were operating under the assumption that their strong partnership would persist—an assumption that was supported by the very recent signing of the first-ever multi-year memorandum of understanding between Year Up and Peirce College. On the PTC-P side, the hiring of an Associate Director of Programs reportedly has improved communication between PTC-P and the college, especially in terms of scheduling courses, ordering and securing participant textbooks, and troubleshooting issues related to resources and instructors.

PTC-P increased communication and collaboration with the Peirce College Academic Advisor.

Peirce College's Academic Advisor not only regularly attends weekly LC meetings (as was the case in 2015), but also meets bi-weekly with PTC-P's Associate Director of Programs and the Program Managers to discuss participant academic issues and share feedback from college instructors on participant performance concerns. In addition, the college has implemented a new learning management system (Canvas) and is proactively trying to improve access to and use of it by the PTC-P program staff (e.g., sending out academic reports and providing trainings on the use of the system). As a result, PTC-P program staff report that they are now more frequently using the college's learning management system to inform their coaching and support of PTC-P participants. However, the nature and usefulness of the information in the system remain highly variable across instructors. (As noted in Chapter 3, Canvas is not a reliable source of information for timely identification of participants experiencing academic challenges.)

The IT department has tried to better align coursework with employers' skills requirements.

As was the case in 2014, some members of Peirce College's IT department make periodic visits to employers to solicit input on curriculum development—a common practice at Peirce College. Most recently, the Business and Institutional Advancement departments at Peirce College solicited feedback from local employers to inform the development of a Customer Service Training Track, which potentially could open up training in another high-need area for PTC-P participants. Some PTC-P staff have suggested that it might be promising to encourage similar outreach of college instructors to PTC-P employer partners as a means of refining curricula to better meet the skill needs of employers—something some instructors interviewed for the interim implementation study report were doing on their own.

PTC-P participants feel supported both by the PTC program and by Peirce College instructors.

Both the earlier and recent site visits explored participants' sense of belonging as members of the PTC-P program and the Peirce College community. In both our 2014 and 2018 site visits, PTC-P program participants reported strong feelings of affiliation with both. They felt supported by Peirce College instructors, but also clarified that their interactions with the college were focused solely on academic coursework, whereas their affiliations with PTC-P program staff were much broader. One participant shared, *"With Year Up staff, it's a little more mentor-mentee...closer, just a little bit closer.... But with college, it's more like student-teacher.... So for the interaction, it was more so about homework and...this deadline has to be met."*

That said, participant access to and communication with instructors is a challenge across all of the PTC programs. This appears to be in large part because high proportions of instructors in the partner colleges are part-time employees who spend only a few hours a week on campus. Staff and participants in the PTC-P program have also reported the perception that communication with instructors is inhibited by the age gap between the PTC-P participants and the adult learners Peirce College traditionally serves; instructors at Peirce College typically work with older adults, who often are employed full-time and preparing to advance in their careers.

Opening a Wilmington program location was a source of strain for the PTC-P program and Peirce College.

The interim implementation study identified expansion to the Wilmington, Delaware, area as a possible way for the PTC-P program to meet growth targets (Fein & Maynard, 2015). Wilmington was an attractive site because many of the PTC-P program's corporate partners were headquartered there. Initially, the PTC dual locations in Philadelphia and Wilmington were conceived as "two sites, one market" that could share resources.

In 2017, Year Up decided to officially open a program office in Wilmington. However, it was not able to quickly find a college partner in that vicinity. When plans to partner with a local college fell through at the last minute, Year Up approached Peirce College, which agreed to step in and provide the needed academic instruction to Wilmington-based participants. Given the distance, Peirce College did so through a combination of on-site and online courses.

Setting up the Wilmington office required considerable involvement from the PTC-P staff headquartered in Philadelphia, as well as from some of the Peirce College staff. For example, several PTC-P program staff members began splitting their time between the Philadelphia and Wilmington sites, which increased commuting time, contributed to stress, and reduced their time available for attending to needs of the Philadelphia office. The Peirce College Academic Advisor and instructors also split their time between the two locations, adding commuting time and forcing staff to navigate the demands of two different locations.

Although, Year Up National had devoted considerable time and energy to planning the opening of the Wilmington office, Peirce College described the decision as one appearing to be made in haste. The resulting organizational shifts that occurred adversely disrupted work schedules of staff and also posed

communication and coordination challenges between the PTC-P program and Peirce College. Most notably, managing two sites complicated course scheduling and compromised the time and attention PTC-P senior staff could devote to working with Peirce staff on program planning and execution of the PTC-P program.

PTC-P staff turnover strained relationships between PTC-P and Peirce College.

Some senior Peirce College administrators with a history of working with the PTC-P program reported that, as compared with the early years of the program, Peirce College staff are less involved with the program and less engaged with PTC-P participants (e.g., less frequently attending Friday Forums or running into participants at the college). One senior Peirce College administrator noted, *"I told [the Site Director]...I used to go to the orientation...mentor a few students, and...help out..... [The Site Director] said, 'Really?...We gotta get back to that.' I think it was because of the turn-over."*

2.3 PTC-P Recruitment and Admissions

Through January 2018, when the January 2019 cohort was enrolled, the PTC-P program had enrolled 392 young adults. It accomplished this through a combination of proactive outreach to area youth-serving organizations, referrals from Peirce College, and word of mouth. Since the PTC-P program launched, participant enrollments have fluctuated in absolute numbers and relative to targets, which were temporarily lowered from 50 to 40 participants per cycle for the July 2016 and January 2017 cohorts before being raised to 60 per cohort more recently (Table 4).

Table 4. Admissions Pipeline, All Professional Training Corps Programs and Philadelphia Program

Enrollment Cohort (Projected Graduation)	Enrollment Target	Number of Applications Completed	Number of Conditionally Accepted Applicants	Number of Applicants Enrolled	Percent of Enrollment Target Achieved	Percent of Conditionally Accepted Applicants Enrolled
All PTC Programs						
July 2015	140	296	164	142	101.4	86.6
January 2016	220	337	209	194	88.2	92.8
July 2016	320	607	324	305	95.3	94.1
January 2017	372	57	356	332	89.2	93.3
July 2017	570	947	590	534	93.7	90.5
January 2018	772	968	789	665	86.1	84.3
July 2018	932	1,615	1,087	836	89.7	76.9
January 2019	994	1,775	1,142	823	82.8	72.1
Total	4,370	7,183	4,669	3,950	90.4	84.6
Philadelphia PTC Program						
July 2015	50	117	72	21	42.0	29.2
January 2016	50	83	50	23	46.0	46.0
July 2016	40	96	n.a.	52	130.0	n.a.
January 2017	40	83	n.a.	50	125.0	n.a.
July 2017	60	59	45	39	65.0	86.7
January 2018	60	81	80	38	63.3	47.5
July 2018	60	112	91	40	66.7	44.0
January 2019	60	127	77	55	91.7	71.4
Total	420	758	494	392	93.3	79.4

Source: Year Up Program staff.

Note: Administrative data on the admissions pipeline were not reported in a systematic fashion prior to enrollment of the July 2015 cohort.
n.a. mean not available.

There are multiple factors contributing to enrollment fluctuations, including variability in the number of applications completed (a range of 59 to 127 per enrollment cycle), the percentage of applicants accepted, and the enrollment rate among those accepted (a range of 29 percent to 86 percent). In turn, the size of the pipeline at various points is affected by the admissions team's approach to recruitment, how strictly they apply the admissions criteria, and how aggressively they pursue accepted applicants. One of the more recent policy changes has been to rely more heavily on pre-orientation (the first two days of orientation) as a final screening of applicants who have been conditionally accepted to the program. This was a deliberate move to improve screening on "readiness" for the program. A series of efforts, including information systems improvements, standardized new-hiring onboarding resources, a centralized contact center for prospective participants, an alumni referral incentive program, and regionalization of Admissions and Recruitment leadership for the most recent cohort, all appear to be supporting efforts to improve screening. In fact, nationwide, PTC programs moved from reaching 82.3 percent of the enrollment goal for the January 2019 cohort to 95.3 percent for the most recently enrolled July 2019 cohort.

Participants in the PTC-P program have characteristics that reflect Year Up's intent to focus on young adults who exhibit a strong interest in and readiness for the program. Moreover, their backgrounds are broadly similar, on average, to those typically served in PTC programs (Table 5). Their average age is 20.5 which is the same as that for all PTC programs, and roughly 40 percent are female in PTC-P and overall.

Table 5. Characteristics of Enrollees in All Professional Training Corps Programs and in Philadelphia Program (July 2014–January 2019 Cohorts)

Characteristic	All PTC Programs	Philadelphia PTC Program
Average Age	20.5	20.5
Gender-Female (%)	39.0	40.5
Have Child (%)		
Yes	7.1	11.8
No	82.2	72.0
No Data	10.7	16.2
Receives Government Assistance (%)		
Yes	15.1	21.2
No	70.1	56.7
No Data	14.8	22.1
Sum of Readiness Value (%)		
0-1	26.49	37.65
2-5	38.51	33.41
6+	27.81	16.94
No Data	7.20	12.0
Criminal Record (%)		
Yes	5.0	4.9
No	86.2	83.1
No Data	8.8	12.0
Has Taken College Classes (%)		
Yes	47.6	37.2
No	44.3	52.5
No Data	8.1	10.4
Number of Enrollees	4,028	425

Source: Program administrative data collected during the application process.

Note: See Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2, Volume II, for characteristics of enrollees by enrollment cohort for all PTC sites and for PTC-P only.

Although all the PTC programs screen for program readiness, sizeable proportions of participants face personal challenges (e.g., unstable housing, responsibilities for care of family members, mental health issues, criminal records) of some sort. Significant proportions of participants are known to have had a child at the time they enrolled (12 percent of the PTC-P participants, and 7 percent for all PTC participants) or reported living in a household that received government food, housing, or cash assistance (21 percent of the PTC-P participants, and 15 percent of all PTC participants). However, it is notable that 37 percent of the participants in the PTC-P program and 48 percent of participants in all PTC programs reported at application having previously taken one or more college courses.

One staff member from Year Up National who has worked closely with the PTC-P program's admissions team was especially concerned about the incidence of mental health issues among participants and the implications for program success. However, mental health concerns are not systematically noted in Year Up's administrative data and, according to that same staff member, are infrequently noted formally during the admissions process. The addition of the Student Services Team has been helpful in improving early identification of and follow-up with participants who exhibit mental health issues.

The following sub-sections discuss the PTC-P program's approach to recruitment, experiences coordinating recruitment and admissions with Peirce College, and challenges related to recruitment, respectively.

2.3.1 Recruitment Experience and Challenges

The PTC-P program, like others, has continually found recruitment challenging. Also, like other PTC programs, the Philadelphia program reportedly has varied its approach in how to prioritize efforts and strategies at various stages of the recruitment-to-enrollment process (e.g., generating inquiries, generating applications, being selective in admissions, and meeting enrollment targets). Both the PTC program as a whole and the PTC-P program typically have fallen short of their enrollment targets (by an average of 10 and 7 percent, respectively; see Table 4 above). As discussed above, PTC-P program has found this challenging, in part, due to the high levels of staff turnover, which adversely affect the program's ability to develop a robust referral pipeline. In this section, we discuss factors related to the PTC-P program's recruitment challenges.

PTC-P staff oversee the recruitment processes and receive few referrals from Peirce College.

Early in the program, Peirce staff facilitated introductions of PTC-P program staff to a number of potential "pipeline" institutions for participant referrals and Peirce staff themselves recruited some PTC-eligible youth for the program after enrolling them in the college. For all subsequent cohorts, PTC-P program staff have been responsible for outreach and initial identification of applicants. Recruitment for the PTC program is not a formal responsibility of Peirce College staff and they receive no added recognition for dually enrolled participants. Thus, not surprisingly, the Peirce recruiters mainly focused on their traditional target population of older nontraditional students.

Staff turnover and difficulty forging strong community-based partnerships contribute to PTC-P's recruitment challenges.

The PTC-P program has only met its enrollment targets in two enrollment cycles, when the enrollment targets had been scaled back to address expected shortfalls. There are varied views of why participant recruitment has been so challenging and what the most promising strategies for boosting enrollment are. Undoubtedly, staffing changes and shortfalls were likely important factors. Additional likely reasons for this continued challenge include features of the Philadelphia geography (i.e., a large, sprawling city) and its diffuse system of community-based organizations. For example, one PTC-P staff member we interviewed expressed

Philadelphia Works: "We're still struggling with admissions, but there's a big reason... Philadelphia Works is a major player ... giving money to all the work force development programs ... we [can't] accept funding from them, because of their funding structure. Because they're a federal type of funding...it would put us in that workforce development arena ... we would have a continual pipeline." (PTC-P Staff)

pessimism, citing persistent challenges breaking into the “*insular Philadelphia market*,” which has many “*shallow*” community partnerships, “*none of which is deep enough to be [a] strong source of recruits*.” Persistent struggles to meet enrollment targets may have been exacerbated recently by the new Associate Director of Admissions splitting time between the Wilmington and Philadelphia program locations. However, this split assignment recently ended. This change consequently coincided with the program coming much closer to meeting its enrollment target in the most recent recruitment cycle (91 percent).

Philadelphia city schools have been a major source of referrals. However, due to the timing of graduation, staff noted that the schools were generally most helpful in recruiting for the July cohorts. Staff turnover at the schools also hampered efforts to build strong, enduring pipelines for referrals.

We also heard from multiple staff that a Year Up National policy against accepting government funds limited their access to many area community-based organizations such as Philly Works as referral sources. However, our communications with members of Year Up National staff suggest that there may have been a miscommunication about this policy.

Finally, several staff pointed to the relatively weak alumni network as an impediment to recruitment success in the past. Staff highlighted recent successful efforts to grow the alumni network and strengthen alumni engagement on many fronts, from recruitment to job search and post-program support. Staff members attribute these improvements to the purposeful efforts supported by the Year Up National Alumni Team. A stronger alumni network could help to improve participant recruitment through word-of-mouth referrals from alumni.

2.3.2 Coordination between PTC-P and Peirce College

Over the course of PTC-P's implementation, PTC-P and Peirce College staff have been able to streamline recruitment and enrollment—a collaborative process is now in place to ensure that PTC-P participants are supported through their admissions into the PTC program and Peirce College. Likewise, PTC-P and Peirce College now have increased data sharing, and there is a growing interest from the new Peirce Director of Admissions to support PTC-P recruitment efforts. While coordination has improved on those fronts, orientation for new participants has yet to be fully integrated between PTC-P and Peirce College, which may influence outcomes for youth enrolled in the program.

Fostering Strong Relationships with Peirce College Staff: *“Right now, I have a great relationship with the two point persons—one in admissions and one in financial aid for Peirce. We're moving these things much better, more efficiently.”* (PTC-P Staff)

The PTC-P program and Peirce College coordinated application and admission processes.

Early on, there were major challenges sharing data on participants prior to and during the program. In contrast, in the most recent round of site visits, Peirce College admissions staff reported that, for two reasons, communication has improved significantly over the past two years. First, the new Associate Director of Admissions at the PTC-P program had worked with the Peirce College Dean of Admissions prior to joining PTC-P in early 2017. Building on this existing relationship, the two have set up quarterly team meetings and a collaborative spreadsheet for tracking admissions data. Second, beginning in mid-2017, the PTC-P and Peirce Admissions and Financial Aid staff were co-located, allowing for both formal and informal contact. This co-location made it easier for prospective participants to meet with admissions staff at PTC-P and Peirce College in a single visit.

In addition, in the recent round of interviews, staff at Peirce College reported that since hiring a new Director of Admissions, senior administrators at the college have expressed renewed interest in and willingness to play a more active role in the recruitment of youth who will dually enroll in Peirce College and the PTC-P program. Examples of joint marketing efforts include the production and use of co-branded recruitment materials and some increased participation by Peirce College staff and instructors at PTC-P recruitment events.

The process of screening and enrolling new participants at Peirce College is well coordinated.

As of mid-2018, a collaborative system was in place to ensure that PTC-P participants receive support throughout the admissions process. This begins with PTC-P staff inputting information about conditionally accepted PTC-P applicants into a spreadsheet that is shared with the Peirce College Admissions staff. Thereafter, PTC-P and Peirce College staff share responsibility for ensuring that applicants complete enrollment at the college, which mainly entails filling out paperwork, since Peirce College has “open admission.” PTC-P program staff shoulder responsibility for scheduling placement tests for accepted applicants and referring them to the Peirce College financial aid services. Peirce College staff assume primary responsibility for following up with PTC-P applicants to ensure they complete their financial aid application, enrollment form, and a survey to assess resource needs—this last, a recent addition.

The first three cohorts of youth enrolled in the PTC-P program were not required to take placement tests prior to the admission decision—a practice that was consistent with Peirce College’s open admission policy. However, because many early participants were not well prepared for the demands of college coursework, participants are now required to take the tests as a means of improving academic advising on course selection and planning of support services. That said, placement tests pose an additional hurdle for prospective PTC-P applicants and likely contributes to challenges meeting recruitment targets.

Another recent change is the requirement introduced by the new Dean of Admissions at Peirce College to have incoming PTC-P participants complete the survey to assess their need for and access to resources to help them thrive academically at Peirce College. The survey is administered by the Peirce College Academic Advisor, who, as needed, also works with participants to develop support and resource plans in advance of the start of courses. This process has the added benefit of ensuring that participants meet their Academic Advisor early on and learn about supports the Advisor can provide.

PTC-P and Peirce College have not yet found a way to coordinate their orientations.

Since the beginning, staff at the PTC-P program and at Peirce College have looked for opportunities to coordinate their orientations as a means of building a stronger sense of community and shared culture. However, the PTC-P program does not officially admit applicants to the program until they successfully complete the first two days of its orientation (commonly referred to as “pre-orientation”),¹⁹ which sometimes is after the Peirce College orientation. The rationale for the PTC-P program’s conditional acceptance policy is to signal to prospective participants the importance of the Year Up participant contract and allow program staff to see how participants react during orientation to complying with the program’s academic and behavioral expectations.

Some staff continue to view the separate orientations as a lost opportunity to help the PTC-P participants feel more a part of the college community; other staff have noted that more fundamental barriers to creating this sense of community are the age gap between the PTC-P participants and the traditional Peirce College student and that there is little to no overlap in the time when the two groups of students are at the college.

A more consequential concern is that the PTC-P program tends to run its recruitment right up to the start of orientation and then does not make final admissions decisions until the end of orientation. As a result, Peirce College does not have final class enrollment figures until very close to the first day of classes or, in some cases, after classes begin. This, in turn, affects planning for the number of instructors needed, classroom space, and textbook orders. Peirce College is left balancing concerns about optimal staffing of courses and space allocation with cost considerations.

¹⁹ In the last two years, the PTC-P program relied more heavily than it had in the past on pre-orientation as a way to identify conditionally accepted applicants who exhibit signs that they may not be well-prepared for the program.

2.3.3 Efforts to Improve Recruitment

Results from the mini-study conducted in 2015 to inform possible strategies for improving PTC-P's recruitment and retention offered two major recommendations (Maynard & Fein, 2015). One focused on expansion and diversification of the applicant pool to facilitate meeting enrollment targets and to improve fit. In particular, it noted the desirability of being able to accept more participants with the following characteristics: (1) their interests were well aligned with the vocational offerings of the PTC-P; (2) they had manageable need for social supports; (3) they were adequately prepared academically; and (4) they had the psycho-social skills and maturity required to succeed. The second recommendation was to consider strategies for remediation prior to enrollment; for example, through bootcamps or combinations of face-to-face, synchronous online, and non-interactive online classes.

In our recent site visit, PTC-P program staff reported pursuing three approaches to improving recruitment. First, they reported making more deliberate efforts to prioritize recruiting youth who are a “better fit” for the program, and thus are more likely to persist, over simply meeting enrollment targets. Second, staff reported working to expand the referral pipeline to other community organizations serving PTC-P's target population and to rely more on referrals through word-of-mouth approaches. Third, with the help of a new Regional Director of Recruitment and Admissions, the staff are working to tighten up the recruitment and admissions processes.

The PTC-P program participants are broadly like those served by other PTC programs.

Despite concerted efforts by program staff over several years, enrollment numbers are still hovering around 50 participants per cohort. Although the characteristics of participants in Philadelphia generally reflect the profile of youth the PTC programs target and the characteristics of participants across all PTC programs (see Table 5 above), they differ in important respects. For example, fewer than five percent of the Philadelphia sample, as compared with 15 percent of the participants in all PTC programs had a criminal record, and a smaller share of the Philadelphia participants than overall reported having attended college prior to enrolling in the PTC program (37 percent versus 48 percent, respectively). What is especially interesting is that the characteristics of participants in the Philadelphia program and of participants in PTC programs overall vary considerably across enrollment cohorts (Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2, respectively, Volume II). Moreover, there is no obvious pattern to the variability.

Efforts to diversify the referral network. At the time the interim implementation study report was released (Fein & Maynard, 2015), the PTC-P program outreach had focused most intensively on prospective or recent graduates from traditional city high schools serving predominantly disadvantaged youth (including alternative and vocational schools) and on some prominent community groups serving opportunity youth. However, one Year Up National staff member who examined a list of partnerships characterized it as small for a city as large as Philadelphia: “There were roughly two to three referral organizations, when there should have been close to 15.”

As of mid-2018, the PTC-P program has begun to broaden its outreach. More specifically, the admissions team is proactively connecting with an array of non-traditional high schools, including technical and trade schools that have multiple graduation dates per year, and is tapping interested opportunity youth served by community-based organizations (e.g., churches and community centers).

Increasing referrals via word of mouth. Word of mouth has always been an important source of referrals for PTC-P. However, a member of the Year Up National staff who is familiar with the Philadelphia market reported that unlike other PTC programs, the PTC-P program tends to receive many referrals through digital advertising and is much less reliant on referrals through community organizations and word of mouth than are other PTC programs in other markets. Only in the most recent site visits did we hear that the Philadelphia program was intentionally shifting its recruitment efforts to increase referrals from word of mouth (e.g., former participants, friends and families of former participants, current or former teachers). Staff also reported that they had begun more proactively following up with youth who

previously applied for the program and seemed like strong prospects but possibly were not ready at the time of their initial application.

Involvement of a Regional Director of Recruitment and Admissions and an expanded admissions team.

As of March 2018, Year Up reorganized recruitment and admissions responsibilities for all PTC programs under a regionalized staff structure. Under the new structure, a Regional Director of Recruitment and Admissions (often a veteran Year Up admissions and recruitment staff member) now manages the local admissions team and is co-accountable for recruitment and admissions performance metrics. A stated goal of this restructuring is to ensure that PTC programs across the country have the benefit of a seasoned and experienced leader while also providing relief to local Program Directors, who already have heavy responsibilities (e.g., significant managerial responsibilities of a highly specialized business function).

Since March 2018, the Regional Director of Recruitment and Admissions working with the Philadelphia program has been spending time in admissions decisions meetings and examining current processes to identify pain points and strategies for improvement. Among the changes that have been instituted are tightening up the admissions assessment process and establishing clearer criteria for academic and program readiness. To these ends, the PTC-P program recently added an additional Admissions Coordinator to support these efforts and renewed efforts to strengthen the participation of Peirce College administrators in outreach efforts. Notably, the admissions team recently dismissed the Admissions Manager (August 2018), which reduced the size of the team, but according to one staff member of Year Up National, it may also have helped “*flatten out the organizational hierarchy.*”

2.4 PTC-P Learning and Development Phase

PTC-P's six-month L&D phase focuses on academic and occupational skills development, professional behavior and other non-academic skills, and negotiating life challenges outside of the program. This next section provides insights from PTC-P program and Peirce College administrative staff on the extent to which services received by program participants align with plans and on how program execution has changed over time. It also highlights aspects of the program in need of improvement.

2.4.1 Curriculum Alignment and Customization

In the early cycles of the program, PTC-P and Peirce College staff hammered out the basic L&D curriculum. Since then, they have continued to collaborate effectively on refining and strengthening the academic program. A recent example was a joint effort of the PTC-P program's previous Executive Director and Peirce College administrators to monitor and harmonize learning objectives and assignments between Year Up's signature Career Development and Interpersonal Relationships (CDIR) course and Peirce College's orientation course (Student Success Seminar/PRC 100). They have now successfully integrated critical components of PRC 100 into the three-credit CDIR course developed by Year Up and taught primarily by PTC-P staff as a Peirce College course. CDIR now has units such as navigating college and effective use of library resources, which are taught by Peirce College instructors. PTC-P participants must pass CDIR in order to move on to an internship.

Some Peirce College staff have argued for better screening of participants in the IT track.

At the time of the interim implementation study, Peirce College instructors had expressed some uncertainty about how best to respond to poor academic performance of some participants (Fein & Maynard, 2015). Some instructors believed that the root of the problem was a lack of interest in information technology, which resulted in lack of effort in the courses. Their suggestion was to weight interest in IT more heavily when deciding whether to admit applicants. Other instructors offered different diagnoses and proposed solutions, including (1) reducing the rigor of courses; (2) altering instructional approaches; (3) increasing academic supports; and/or (4) raising skills requirements for enrolling in courses. Then and now, the PTC-P program staff reported being averse to reducing the rigor of courses, which they feared would undermine the value of credits earned. Rather they favored working to

strengthen instructional approaches and supports. However, judging from focus groups with participants and reports from staff at the program and the college, not much has changed to strengthen instructional approaches and supports.

There was general agreement that more careful assessment and screening for interest would be helpful.

Customer Service Track: *"We are currently...developing a Customer Service proposal for frontline employees.... We would introduce that curriculum to Year Up.... It's so easy that it would make sense, especially for the Business Ops folks."* (Peirce College Staff)

Peirce Tries to Respond to the Market: *"Anytime we have a concept, [we study] what the industry needs are, what competitors are doing.... [W]ill we be able to compete? How long is the ROI...[and the] outcome for the students?"* (Peirce College Staff)

Recognizing that the PTC-P admissions team is balancing concerns over meeting enrollment targets with closeness of match on vocational interests, the main response by the PTC-P program and Peirce College staff has been to adjust the IT curriculum in ways intended to make it a better springboard for training and jobs in other fields that may be of greater interest to otherwise well-qualified applicants. As an example, PTC-P curriculum has been adjusted to include a stronger focus on Excel training during L&D and in bootcamps offered between the L&D and Internship phases. The PTC-P program also now employs a full-time IT instructor who provides ongoing support to participants in this field of study.

Finally, staff reported that in response to market signals that many of the Help Desk positions for which participants currently are being prepared either no longer exist or are being outsourced, Peirce College is currently working on developing a new Customer Service career track that potentially could be added to the curriculum.

Communication on course scheduling, ordering textbooks, and troubleshooting has improved.

After filling the position of Associate Director of Program in 2017, PTC-P's communication with Peirce College on academic issues reportedly improved considerably. Notably, PTC-P and Peirce College staff began timely communications on important issues such as the optimal number and qualifications of instructors, course sections, and classrooms assignments. Mindful of the importance of minimizing costs, staff in the two organizations also worked together to create an inventory of used books for PTC-P participants to draw from, reducing the number that the Dean of Academic Operations and Faculty Support at Peirce College needs to purchase.

2.4.2 Promoting Academic Success through L&D

Both PTC-P and Year Up National staff raised concerns during our 2014 site visits about academic performance and failure of many participants to successfully complete L&D, which led to a companion mini-study focused on exploring causes and potential remedies of the high attrition from L&D (Maynard & Fein, 2015). According to Peirce College instructors interviewed for that mini-study, notable numbers of participants were struggling with both technical and academic classes and there were likely myriad factors in their struggles. Among the factors cited included the following: lack of critical foundational skills; failure to meet behavioral expectations of the PTC program (e.g., tardiness, improper dress) and/or of the instructor (e.g., failure to complete assignments, attend classes regularly, remain attentive in class); and personal challenges (e.g., social-emotional issues, childcare or eldercare responsibilities, homelessness, breakdown in transportation).

Both PTC-P and college staff reported that few participants were taking advantage of instructors' office hours and other academic supports offered by the college. Notably, the Peirce College instructors and staff, who are used to working with older adult learners, reported that they did not view it as their responsibility to proactively attempt to address performance concerns of individual PTC-P program participants.

Another major concern raised by the PTC-P staff early on was that substantial numbers of participants were approaching the end of L&D before their coaches became aware that they were at risk of “firing themselves” from the program due to poor performance. By that point in L&D, there was little the PTC-P program staff or the college instructors could do to help participants recover.

More recently, there has been a concerted effort to identify academic performance and other support issues early in the program. There remain challenges related to communication with instructors and ensuring that academic problems are flagged in a timely manner. However, as discussed further below, there have been some marked improvements in early identification of and response to academic challenges.

Routinely reviewing academic performance is key to timely response to challenges.

Building on the results of the mini-study (Maynard & Fein, 2015), by late 2016 the PTC-P program staff began working on finding ways to identify participants experiencing academic difficulty at the earliest possible point and to provide instrumental supports to help get them back on track. The earliest efforts were aimed at improving communication between college instructors and PTC-P program staff and coaches on issues related to participants' engagement with and performance in their college courses. For example, PTC-P program staff redoubled their efforts to make more and better use of Peirce College's learning management system (LMS) and to have more regular contact with the college's Academic Advisor.

However, finding that these types of efforts had serious limitations, the PTC-P staff agreed to engage in a more ambitious effort to work with other PTC programs and Year Up National to develop and rigorously test alternatives to its usual strategies for monitoring and supporting academics during L&D. The alternative strategies that ended up being tested and their effectiveness are discussed in Chapter 3.

The Student Services team helps with early identification of and response to issues.

In May 2016, the PTC-P program created a Student Services Team (comprising two Managers and one Intern) in line with a Year Up National standard change in policy for PTC staffing. The goal for the Student Services Managers—both with master's degrees in social work—is to identify participants' support needs as early as possible and connect those in need with appropriate services and resources. The Student Services Team (and more recently, their counterparts at Peirce College) begin by looking for and tracking participants identified during the initial application interviews, adding to their list of participants in need over time. They “red flag” issues in the PTC-P program management information system. Then, as circumstances change for participants, the team develops and/or revises their plans, as appropriate.

Develop Plans during Admissions Process:
“If childcare is not in place, [participants] are...unlikely to be successful.... We work with admissions [and the], Student Services Team... to create a plan.” (PTC-P Staff)

Positive Response to the Student Services Team: *“The one...working really well is our Student Services Team.... They've been able to do [a lot] in terms of career wardrobe, pop-up shop, resource fair.... We start supporting even before they come into orientation. So, if...they need childcare, we help ... get [it]; if they [need] a record...expunged....” (PTC-P Staff)*

The Student Services Team has compiled a compendium of resources and services that may be helpful for participants. One Student Services Manager claimed, *“I literally did a search in Center City...and then...all around Philly...and then I looked at other nonprofit organizations.... I gathered [a list of] about 15 different community resources.”* Not only does the compendium of resources help the Student Services Team, but it also is available for other staff to access as warranted. The Student Services Team also has set up some in-house services, such as a substance abuse counseling group, testing for sexually transmitted infections, and clothing donation drives, none of which was available on-site two years ago.

In the most recent round of site visits, several staff noted that the new Student Services Team has been crucial to running an effective program. They reported that this team has been able to connect participants with the right kinds of supports and troubleshoot a range of issues that, in prior L&D cycles, the program had been unable to deal with effectively. Staff described this team as critical for improving retention during L&D.

Enforcement of behavioral expectations in college courses remains a challenge.

Two basic aspects of the PTC program design make enforcement of the Year Up participant contract

Less Behavioral Accountability in Peirce College Classes: *"The behavior standard that Peirce upholds is way less than the YU [standard]. Students [Participants] are pretty much running crazy in Peirce classes. No one is saying no Students [Participants] are not being held accountable."* (PTC-P Staff)

more challenging than in Year Up's core program. First, PTC staff members spend much less time with participants than do core program staff, since most of the participants' classes are taught by college instructors. Second, PTC staff have limited ability to monitor attendance and behavior in college classes, as well as compliance with course requirements.

In principle, it would be possible to institute a practice whereby instructors proactively share information on participant attendance, behavior, and performance with PTC-P program staff. However, from the beginning, Peirce College administrators have held firm in their preference that PTC-P program staff should be responsible for enforcement of the Year Up participant contract, which requires gathering their own information about participant compliance with behavioral expectations. PTC-P program staff continue to be frustrated by their inability to access even class attendance information easily (e.g., by sitting in on or visiting classes while in session). However, they have come up with some promising workarounds, which are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Commonly used instructional strategies and course formats are suboptimal for some youth.

PTC-P program staff report having generally favorable views about the quality of the full-time instructors who teach courses for PTC-P participants. However, both staff and participants have suggested that participants would benefit from more frequent, timely, and better feedback on their work; shorter instructional time blocks (i.e., two hours or less); more engaging instructional methods; and more and better access to instructors outside of class time (Fein & Maynard, 2015). Staff and participants also have expressed concerns about lack of interest, attention, and instructional quality of some of the instructors—particularly some of the newer and/or adjunct instructors who lack experience working with the demographic population that Year Up targets. Adjuncts tend to come to campus only to teach their courses, making it difficult for participants to get to know them and to receive face-to-face help when needed.

More New Faculty: *"We have more new faculty teaching in Year Up programs than we do in other classes."* (Peirce College Staff)

Adjuncts Unfamiliar with the Target Demographic Group for the PTC Program: *"The full-timers [who have been with the program for a while] get it.... I sense the adjuncts get more frustrated cause they're not used to dealing with that."* (Peirce College Staff)

Uninspiring Teaching Styles: *"I observe some classes, and the teachers literally stand still, have one way of teaching. They tell the [participants], 'Hey, read this.'... There's no breaking the [participants] up in, like, projects."* (PTC-P Staff)

Peirce College administrators acknowledge this concern and attempt to assign full-time instructors to PTC-P classes when they can. However, the reality is that the majority of Peirce College instructors are adjuncts; as a result, PTC-P program staff are working to compensate by improving participant access to and use of on-campus study halls and tutoring resources.

Another important change being implemented in the 2018-19 academic year is the coordination of schedule planning for PTC-P and Peirce College courses. As a result, Peirce instructors will be informed about PTC-P courses at the same time they are informed about other course offerings. This will provide

greater flexibility for instructors to self-select into teaching the PTC-P courses; in the past, Year Up courses were often the last to be staffed.

The jury is out on the use of online courses.

Peirce College uses a model of instruction—Peirce “Fit”—that blends face-to-face and online instruction and coursework. The online instruction and coursework are offered as modules that students can work through to complete the course requirements and demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter through an on-line test. The online (out-of-class) component of these courses is a way for Peirce College to meet federal requirements for instructional time in courses, while also addressing schedule flexibility needs of working adult learners.

PTC-P program staff raised concerns that the online modules may not work well for many PTC-P participants for two reasons. First, many PTC-P participants are able to work on the modules, including the tests, in groups. As a result, some staff raised concerns that some participants may be exiting the course with a passing grade but without having mastered important content. Another more practical concern is that many PTC-P participants lack reliable access to the internet. One PTC-P staff member interviewed said: *“[Most of our participants] don’t have access to computers at home, or the willpower to sit down and do it.... You get a code, and you essentially move through the material on your own.... And that doesn’t work with our young adults.”*

Communication with instructors and joint programming efforts with the college are rare.

Early in the program, there were conscious efforts by both the PTC-P program and Peirce College staff to improve coordination of activities such as orientation and Friday Forums. Initially, efforts at coordination helped build familiarity with the Year Up participant contract among Peirce College faculty, with the hope that they would assume a role in monitoring participants’ behaviors. However, over time, coordination of activities with Peirce College staff and their participation in PTC-P events have waned. For example, one PTC-P staff member noted: *“I reached out to all the instructors to invite them to a meet-and-greet or chat-and-chill. I think we got like two people that responded.”*

Recommend More Joint Programming:

“I think it’s joint programming outside of the classroom. It’s us showing up at...Friday Forum.... And not showing up as a stranger.... That is something we did...a better job with many years ago.” (Peirce College Staff)

Recently, PTC-P made study hall and tutoring mandatory for participants three days a week, up from one day a week (previously noted in the interim implementation study report). This seemingly small change has increased participant access to Peirce College staff and use of college resources. Additionally, the PTC-P and Peirce College staff now have more opportunities to observe participants and, therefore, to reinforce their institution’s behavioral and performance expectations, as well as to encourage participants to take advantage of academic resources and supports at the college. Staff reportedly have been discussing ways to create even more touchpoints with participants; for example, they discussed dividing some courses into more, shorter class periods (most classes are two to four hours long).

Efforts to create a cohesive learning community have proved fruitful.

Early on, the PTC-P program staff struggled to find ways to create cohesive learning communities—a struggle they attributed to the limited time participants were spending in structured activities with other participants and with PTC-P program staff. Judging by feedback from participants interviewed in 2014 and those interviewed in 2018, it appears that the mid-course changes mandating thrice weekly participation in study hall and proactively encouraging participants to use on-site tutoring and on-campus study spaces have fostered a stronger sense of community among participants and stronger ties between participants and PTC-P program staff. For example, in the latest round of interviews, participants reported frequently studying together in the college library.

2.5 PTC-P Internship Phase

Every PTC-P participant who successfully completes the L&D phase is guaranteed a six-month internship with a weekly stipend of up to \$150. Thus, each PTC program is expected to secure enough employer-sponsored, quality internship seats to serve all program participants who successfully complete L&D. Additionally, Year Up expects that mature PTC programs will be able to fully support their costs through “internship sales” (see further discussion of the financial model for PTC programs in Section 2.6 below).

As of July 2018, the Philadelphia program was still struggling to obtain enough fully sponsored internships to meet its need. The reasons appear to be complex. Two factors commonly cited by staff are (1) recent trends towards the outsourcing of many IT jobs by some of Philadelphia’s large IT employers; and (2) the sprawling nature of the city and a mismatch between the location of target employers and homes of participants.

From early on, the PTC-P program began relying on multiple corporate partners in Wilmington, Delaware, for many of its sponsored internships. However, with the recent opening of the PTC program in Wilmington, reliance on Wilmington-based internship spots is even less practical for Philadelphia than it was when commuting time and costs were the primary disadvantages. Now there is the additional issue of a preference that internships with Wilmington employers be prioritized for participants in the Wilmington PTC program.

Despite continued challenges securing internships seats, the PTC-P program has implemented some promising changes in the past three years. The PTC-P Corporate Engagement Team was expanded increasing capacity to scour the local market for new employer partners and work on corporate partner retention. An orientation was implemented to train and support new internship managers and the PTC-P program team has strengthened its commitment to introducing participants to corporate partners prior to entering their internships. These and other initiatives help promote greater employer awareness about the PTC program and prepare those who sponsor internships for the arrival of new interns. Additionally, there have been improvements in participant tracking and communication during internships, with the goal of improving support for interns and internship managers/corporate partners and increasing retention of both interns and corporate sponsors.

The following subsections discuss experiences with internship development, placement, participant retention in internships, retention of corporate partners, managing the internship experience, and the challenges in and opportunities for expanding internship positions.

2.5.1 Internship Development, Placement, and Retention

To date, the PTC-P program has placed nearly 72 percent of participants (about 300) in internships; of those placed in internships, about 80 percent complete them (57 percent of all participants; see Table 2 above). National firms in the financial services and IT sectors (e.g., Comcast, Bank of New York Mellon, Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, and US Liability Insurance) sponsor most of the internship positions. A few local employer sponsors provide the balance of internship positions. Interns work in varied types of jobs, including, for example, helpdesk support for desktop and network issues, software quality assurance/testing, website support/development, information security, project coordination, and accounting.

As noted previously, securing enough internship seats has been a persistent challenge for PTC-P. Although Year Up National’s employer sponsors generated sufficient numbers of positions for the first two cohorts, it was necessary beginning with the third cycle of enrollees to expand the pool of employer partners. However, to achieve the number of internships guaranteed to participants who completed L&D, the PTC-P staff needed to rely on a sizeable number of “investment seats” (i.e., internships not paid for by employers), and a high fraction of the internships (sponsored and investment seats) were with firms that

were distant from participants' homes. For example, a disproportionate share of PTC-P program participants reside in the far northeast, west, and southwest areas of Philadelphia, but most of the internship positions to date have been in Center City, southern New Jersey, and Wilmington.

2.5.2 Managing the Internship Experience

Employers interviewed for this study uniformly praised the PTC-P program's emphasis on professional skills and behavior. That said, both employers and PTC-P program staff reported that interns often need more time than is typical for new hires to acclimate to work sites and proficiently apply the skills taught in their college courses. The additional time needed to acclimate suggests that a high retention rate and minimal recorded participant contract violations during internships may be useful but imperfect signals of participants' readiness for the workforce. Recognizing the imperfection of these metrics, program staff have drawn on employer recommendations for improving the internship experience and fostering more constructive feedback during the internship.

A new internship manager orientation helps prepare managers to better support interns.

Early on, the PTC-P program did not provide formal orientation for internship managers. Instead, there was a meeting at the corporate site where managers received a brief introduction to Year Up. Recently, PTC programs have instituted "new manager orientations," which has internship managers coming to the PTC program site to learn about the Year Up culture and to meet staff and participants. The orientations cover the logistics of the internship, but also engage the managers in interactive experiences to prepare them for common "situations" that might arise while hosting an intern. Results from the mini-study on setting up successful internships indicated that new manager orientations have been a useful means for engaging managers early on in the process and are now becoming common practice at many PTC sites (Baelen et al., 2018). In addition, the Associate Director of Partner Relations now works closely with the internship managers to make sure they are ready to onboard their interns and provides ongoing support to the managers throughout the internship experience.

PTC-P staff have increased their efforts to engage corporate partners beyond the internship.

During L&D, program participants and PTC-P program staff now take participants to visit facilities of corporate partners currently hosting interns and/or that have former interns on their staffs. Afterwards, participants make presentations about their experiences to PTC-P staff and peers. One PTC-P staff member shared, *"The idea is we don't want participants to feel like they are being dropped in a foreign planet when they arrive at internship."* The PTC-P program also has increased the frequency of corporate partner visits to the program. For example, employers are routinely invited to judge elevator pitch contests, spend time with participants on corporate partner days, and join Monday Morning Kickoffs or Friday Forums. Staff noted: *"[These things] help create a bond with the participants from the beginning."*

New PTC-P staff roles have increased focus on fostering relationships with corporate partners.

As early as the third year of the program, there was a plan to hire a Sales Manager and shift the Associate Program Director's focus to ongoing corporate relationship management. This was expected to facilitate early identification and troubleshooting of challenges for interns, as well as to strengthen preparation of and processes at work sites. As noted above, there is now a much larger team to support PTC-P internship sales and relationships with corporate partners, including a Director of Corporate Engagement who oversees corporate partnerships and helps to secure internship seats; an Internship Services Manager; an Internship Services Coordinator (one of three people in the position across the national network of PTC programs) who oversee the internship experience from the participant-facing side; and an Associate

Director of Partner Relations who manages the relationships with mid-level staff at the corporate partner sites.²⁰

The aim is to improve not only the quantity of paid internships, but also their quality. With a larger team focused on corporate partnerships, the internship services staff also have begun helping to teach the newly developed CDIR course. This allows this team to connect with participants while they are still in L&D. Reported one member of the Internship Services team: “When we actually had a chance to teach, the participants saw us in a different capacity versus just an LC member or a staff that leisurely walks the hallways.”

Lack of Selectivity in Internship Seats: “The internship seats ... sometimes ... we just take what we can get [but]” (PTC-P Staff)

Increased tracking of internship experiences benefits participants and corporate partners.

In an effort to improve internship experiences and outcomes, the Internship Services Team reported having recently begun tracking the experiences of interns through weekly status reports and check-in calls

Tracking & Collaboration Between Internship Services & Corporate Engagement Teams: “None of that tracking was in place when I got here [W]e came up with the tracking report. I have weekly meeting with internship services to review all check-ins and intern concerns.” (PTC-P Staff)

with managers. By collecting weekly time sheets from interns and recording notes from check-in calls with managers, the Internship Services Manager and Coordinator now have a better sense of interns’ experiences and can more readily identify issues warranting their attention.²¹

The Internship Services Team also works closely with other teams to promote effective use of information on prior internship experiences. For example, this team works closely with Employment Placement Managers (EPMs) to share information that will prepare intern supervisors to help program participants as they start their job search. Likewise, they can share information with coaches to inform conversations the coaches have with participants and, as warranted, guide support service referrals.

The Associate Director of Partner Relations also uses the information and insights collected from managers during weekly check-in calls to guide follow-up with higher-level executives at the corporate partner sites. For example, having learned that an intern was struggling with Excel projects, the Associate Director of Partner Relations might arrange Excel tutoring for the intern. Although Year Up National works with PTC-P staff to administer a manager survey twice during each Internship phase, PTC-P program staff did not mention this as a source of information they used to guide their work.

2.5.3 Challenges and Opportunities to Expand Internship Positions

The PTC-P program continues to struggle with securing enough sponsored internship seats for reasons noted previously. To address challenges associated with securing internship seats, PTC-P and Peirce College have begun discussing the prospect of developing new training tracks or broadening the L&D curriculum to prepare participants for other career opportunities that could potentially open doors to a new set of corporate partners.

Securing internship seats for this Central City–based program remains a challenge.

In the early years of the program, the PTC-P program staff significantly misjudged the lead-time required to build strong buy-in at multiple levels from target companies to become corporate partners sponsoring

²⁰ See Appendix G, Volume II, for the most recent organizational chart of the PTC-P program, which incorporates changes that have occurred since the data collection for this evaluation concluded.

²¹ The Internship Services Team keeps a record of all weekly calls with managers in a spreadsheet that is eventually shared with coaches and discussed each Friday by the Internship Services Team and the Associate Director of Partner Relations. This spreadsheet also includes an “interns of concern tracker”; the frequency of follow-up with the intern and/or manager is determined by the level of concern.

internships. Staff assumed that with additional time they would meet their targets, which proved overly optimistic. The program continues to rely on substantial numbers of unpaid, investment seats. In addition to the financial implications for Year Up, these investment seats reportedly lack the same quality of commitment by the employer that is typical for sponsored seats. Staff reported that they commonly place the less well prepared interns in these seats.

Finding workable transportation solutions continues to be a challenge.

For most of the program's life, a majority of the PTC-P participants have been placed in internships with firms located in the Wilmington area. However, now that Wilmington has its own PTC site, the intent is to shift internship positions for the PTC-P program to Philadelphia. The "solution" for Philadelphia youth placed at firms in Wilmington has been, reported one staff member, "[for them to] take a shuttle, cause they're really far out. And then...[we] give them a stipend [for] a \$205 trans pass." This is a financial burden for the program and a big time commitment for interns. Some of the most promising alternatives to the Wilmington corporate partners are located in the near suburban regions of Philadelphia, which also can be a long commute for many participants.

The PTC-P team is exploring the possibility of moving into other training tracks.

Complicating the work of the Internship Services Team in Philadelphia is the shifting local labor market. As noted before, staff are finding it increasingly difficult to place participants in IT-related positions—a situation they attribute, in part, to an increase in the outsourcing of helpdesk positions by area employers. This has raised questions about whether PTC-P should adopt an approach to the selection of career tracks

Refocus on New Internship Providers: *"IT is awesome, financial operations is awesome, but in Philadelphia we have major hospitals. We are a leader in that type of stuff and our college is."* (PTC-P Staff)

and curriculum planning that is more flexible and customer-solutions focused. In addition to simply making the case for more effective placement and oversight of interns, a focus on customer solutions potentially would allow for more timely adjustments in the emphasis the program places on particular training tracks.

Strategies for shifting emphasis to include additional or different career tracks could range from supplementing existing courses with short workshop series and bootcamps in specific software applications, to revising the L&D curriculum to include different courses and pathways to credentials currently offered by Peirce College. Another strategy that reportedly has been discussed is creating a new Customer Service track. However, there also have been discussions of working harder to secure IT placements in hospitals, which is Philadelphia's largest employer group.

The PTC-P program has undertaken a short-term step towards expanding its prospective employer sponsor network by supplementing its current IT training with an additional Excel course. While there was no mention in the most recent interviews about creating additional bootcamps or workshops focused on specific software applications, in previous site visits staff had expressed interest in teaching HTML and other coding techniques.

Staff are pondering the benefits of adding other career tracks or switching from IT altogether.

Both Peirce College administrators and the PTC-P staff have reported questioning whether, given that many participants are expressing interests in fields other than IT, they should adjust the nature of both the L&D curriculum and the target internship experiences to include earlier exposure to and opportunities for entering different occupational tracks. With respect to academic requirements, administrators also have expressed support for offering internships structured so that the college credits for the internship course could be counted towards requirements across a range of the college's IT and non-IT degree and certificate programs. At the same time, given the PTC-P program's current emphasis, both PTC-P and Peirce College staff have stressed the importance of continuing to prioritize recruiting youth who are genuinely interested in IT, while recognizing that skills in IT also may prepare them for careers in related fields. PTC-P program staff, like staff at other PTC programs, are consciously considering the benefits

and downsides of more rigorous selection criteria as they relate to alignment of career interests of prospective participants, program retention, and meeting recruitment targets.

2.6 After PTC-P Completion

Year Up monitors outcomes for its graduates through surveys and administrative data, using three metrics—full-time employment in a Year Up–related job, average hourly wage for those employed, and any placement in work or school. Based on those metrics, outcomes for participants in PTC-P are less favorable than for PTC program participants overall (Table 6). Most importantly, while 57 percent of all PTC program graduates are employed full-time four months after graduation, only 35 percent of the Philadelphia program's graduates are. The average wage for all PTC graduates, as well as for PTC-P graduates specifically, exceeded Year Up's target of \$16 an hour by roughly \$1.50. And 92 percent of all PTC graduates and 87 percent of PTC-P graduates were working (part- or full-time), going to school (part- or full-time), or both four months after graduation.

Table 6. Outcomes Four Months after Program Completion, All PTC Programs and Philadelphia Program

Cohort	Number of Graduates	Percentage Employed in a Full-Time, YU-Related Job	Average Hourly Wage	Any Placement (Work or School)
Year Up Target	--	70%	\$16.00	85%
All PTC Programs				
July 2014	70	24	\$13.31	94
January 2015	61	44	\$14.85	90
July 2015	100	46	\$15.70	90
January 2016	116	60	\$16.57	93
July 2016	194	64	\$17.71	94
January 2017	225	61	\$18.10	93
July 2017	352	59	\$18.35	94
January 2018	411	60	\$18.33	90
Total	1,529	57	\$17.55	92
Philadelphia PTC Program				
July 2014	13	39	\$16.58	100
January 2015	13	39	\$16.45	100
July 2015	29	17	\$19.26	76
January 2016	23	30	\$18.45	87
July 2016	24	38	\$18.72	96
January 2017	26	54	\$18.21	77
July 2017	20	45	\$16.27	95
January 2018	33	30	\$15.99	85
Total	181	35	\$17.61	87

Source: Program administrative reports.

Note: Data on employment and schooling pertain to only those participants who completed the program.

In interviews, employers emphasized offering internships more out of interest in helping young adults and meeting short-term labor needs than from interest in hiring PTC completers after the program. They did see interns as potential hires in the longer term, but believed it was important for them to acquire further skills and school credentials first.

2.6.1 Employment vs. Continuing Post-secondary Education Goals

A central question raised by this study is whether and how potential tensions between employment and college enrollment can be reconciled, inasmuch as Year Up and its partners see both goals as desirable. Early findings for PTC-P, as well as indications from other PTC sites, hint at a variety of possible resolutions.

As noted previously, an important motive for Peirce College of hosting Year Up was to expand the

Lack of College Persistence at Peirce: *"So many...just don't come back after the Year Up year.... That was part of the reason we got into this...to get more students."* (Peirce College Staff)

Partnership Falling Short: *"I think it's just we want students to complete their degrees, and that's a place...the partnership has fallen short."* (Peirce College Staff)

population of students the college serves. Peirce College has traditionally served older, working adults. It expected its partnership with the PTC-P program to bring in younger students. However, while the PTC-P program has brought in more young adults, Peirce College staff are concerned that PTC-P participants are not continuing their education at Peirce College after leaving the program. To further explore this, there may be a need for PTC-P and Peirce College staff to develop systems for tracking who continues at Peirce College, who does not, and the reasons why.

Staff at both the college and the PTC-P program suggested three main reasons participants (graduates or not) might not be continuing their education at Peirce College at a resounding rate. PTC-P program staff pointed to both the price differential with Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) and "fit" with the typical Peirce college student demographic. One PTC-P staff member explained: *"[Peirce is] all adults; [PTC-P participants would] rather go somewhere like CCP or a four-year university where they can be around young people and take classes that are hands-on and not just test-out."*

Another rationale for not continuing suggested by a Peirce College staff member was that participants lose important supports when they graduate the PTC program: *"It can't be just the price point, as data show that these participants are not enrolling in other low-cost schools"* (e.g., community colleges).²² The staff member's view was that these participants are job focused and not interested in continuing their education anywhere.

Peirce and PTC-P staff reported that both Year Up National and the employers hosting internships had exhibited increasing support for college persistence over time. If these efforts continue in the future, they might well raise retention rates.

2.6.2 Transition Supports for Program Completers

Over time, efforts to support participants during their transition to post-program employment and education have strengthened. Early on, PTC-P program staff did not maintain a strong connection with participants after graduation from the program. However, as the number of alumni has increased, the program has improved the types of supports available to them. There has been a recent push for greater alumni support that appears to be connected to some of the changes in staff roles and priorities (e.g., the designation of an Alumni Engagement Steward on the PTC-P program staff).

PTC-P created a new staff position to help support and improve alumni outcomes post-program.

With the creation of the EPM role in 2016, the PTC-P program has been able to significantly strengthen the post-program supports it provides.²³ Early on, the EPM was part of the Corporate Engagement team and focused solely on participant placement. In the past year, the EPMs have become a part of the program team. They work with participants during L&D, internship, and most intentionally, during the transition into post-program education, employment, or both. Also, as of this past year, the EPMs (instead

²² A future Institute of Education Sciences–funded impact study will provide evidence based on National Student Clearinghouse data of the extent to which PTC-P participants continue to enroll in college after leaving the program and what schools they attend.

²³ As noted above in the discussion of program organization and staffing, there are now two Employment Placement Managers (EPMs) at the PTC-P program. These functions existed prior to the creation of this position. However, they were dispersed among multiple staff. For example, some of the functions were formerly the responsibility of the Executive Director and others were the responsibility of the Employment Placement Manager (or equivalent).

of the Program Managers) teach both the CDIR course and the Internship Seminar, providing them with more and earlier opportunities to get to know participants prior to helping to place them in jobs. One PTC-P program staff member described this new involvement: *“Because you work with the participants from the very beginning,...that level of trust and commitment...you really know who you’re working with,...who’s gonna need additional support, who was just looking for school and [so I’m] not even going to work on getting em a job.”*

The EPMs at the PTC-P program also have been actively engaged in an initiative to build relationships with new employers and staffing organizations in Philadelphia to complement the existing relationships with internship providers. Although the EPMs have had some success in securing placements through these new relationships, those secured to date reportedly pay less than placements that come from converting internship seats to full-time positions.

Partnership Development Process: *“[We] are...working on [partnership development] pretty much from scratch [T]here were no relationships with organizations or companies or staffing agencies I live on LinkedIn now.” (PTC-P Staff)*

PTC-P and Peirce College are collaborating to help participants develop transition plans.

The Peirce College Academic Advisor now comes in near the end of the program and talks with participants about the benefits of and options for continuing their education at the college. The Advisor talks about the number of credits participants have earned already and the number needed to earn an associate or bachelor’s degree. Then the EPMs work with participants to brainstorm options for work and school and come up with viable plans for their post-program priorities.

During site visits for the interim implementation study, staff from both the PTC-P program and Peirce College raised the idea of extending the PTC-P program to include a “second-year program” to help participants continue their education while working (Fein & Maynard, 2015). One suggestion was to offer supplemental supports and to identify sources of funding to defray some of the tuition costs. These ideas do not appear to have gained traction. The exception is a small foundation-supported scholarship program available to support the cost of up to one course per semester for PTC-P program graduates at Peirce College. Both PTC-P program staff and Peirce College administrators expressed hope that this will encourage more participants to continue their education at Peirce.

PTC-P has become more active and deliberate in engaging with program alumni.

PTC programs are expected to maintain ties with and among alumni; for example, through social and career development events. Early on, PTC-P program staff shared responsibilities for this function. However, now a designated staff member serves as the Alumni Engagement Steward. Staff reported that since this position was established, they have been seeing more concerted efforts to host events for alumni and to keep them engaged by means such as sharing job opportunities and developing an Ambassadors program that, among other things, gives alumni awards and invites alumni to serve on the Alumni Board. Additionally, Year Up’s National PTC Team has developed an Alumni Relations department that coordinates alumni outreach and engagement efforts across the country. Alumni now have access to a suite of employment and education supports, including access to earn an associate degree for free online through Eastern Gateway Community College, as well as financial literacy and financial aid trainings to budget for ongoing education.

2.7 Financing PTC-P

As discussed in Chapter 1, Year Up designed the PTC program as a financially self-sustaining version of its stand-alone core program. As such, Year Up intends for PTC to operate at per-participant costs equal to or below the per-participant revenues generated from employer-sponsored internship. For this to happen, based on Year Up’s financial model, the program needs to grow to 160 FTE participants a year, maintain a staff of 19 FTEs, retain 83 percent to the Internship phase, secure average employer payments of \$20,233 per participant, and retain 90 percent of interns to program graduation.

PTC-P has not yet achieved financial break-even. With 51 participants enrolled during the 2014 calendar year, the average cost per FTE participant was \$18,214, whereas internship revenues averaged \$11,051 per participant, or 60.7 percent of costs.²⁴ By 2017, with 112 participants, Year Up's total expenses for the PTC-P program were \$31,097 per participant, whereas internship revenues averaged \$10,560 per participant, or only 33.9 percent of costs—a large gap that has been covered primarily by philanthropic funding.

Table 7. Average Cost and Revenue per Philadelphia Professional Training Corps Participant, 2014-2017

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Revenue: Expenses (%)	60.7	73.3	43.7	33.4
Cost per Participant	\$18,214	\$16,961	\$33,013	\$31,097
Internship Revenue per Participant	\$11,051	\$12,439	\$14,443	\$10,560
College Tuition and Fees per Participant	n.a.	\$522	\$1,908	\$824
Number of Participants Served (FTE)	51	89	78	112

Source: Year Up National cost data.

n.a. means not available.

The following sections discuss the PTC-P program's operating costs and internship revenue.

2.7.1 PTC-P Program Operating Costs

In 2017, PTC-P's operating cost per participant was the highest among the eight PTC sites for which PTC costs can be clearly ascertained (see Table 8).²⁵ The average operating cost per participant in 2017 across all stand-alone PTC programs was \$22,792 per participant. Average costs by site ranged from \$18,747 in Wilmington to \$31,097 in Philadelphia. It should be noted that some of the costs of starting up the Wilmington program have been allocated to the Philadelphia program as a result of some sharing of staff time. However, the average cost per participant over the two programs in 2017 is \$26,562, which is higher than for any other stand-alone program.

Table 8. Operating Costs per Participant for Year Up Stand-Alone PTC Programs, by Program (2017)

	Operating Cost per Participant	Number of Participants
Philadelphia	\$31,097	112
Dallas	\$25,388	114
Los Angeles	\$24,976	96
Miami	\$21,811	112
Baltimore	\$21,065	157
Arizona	\$20,438	196
Jacksonville	\$20,230	129
Wilmington	\$18,747	65
All Stand-Alone PTC Programs	\$22,792	981

Source: Year Up National cost data.

²⁴ This cost per FTE participant was roughly the same as the average for all PTC programs at that time. The operating expenses are dictated by base program structures (e.g., staff salaries, stipends, etc.) established by Year Up National. The 2014 cost estimate is based on an estimate of 51 FTE participants—23 participants in L&D and 13 in internships in the spring term of 2014 and 52 participants in L&D and 13 in internships in the fall term of 2014. Each participant was assigned a weight of 0.5 FTEs per term in either L&D or internship. The current estimated cost for all PTC programs is based on calculations by Year Up National (Warfield, 2018).

²⁵ We do not include PTC programs located in the same market as or co-located with a Year Up core program, because it is not possible to identify the portion of the costs attributed to the PTC program.

In general, average per-participant costs are higher at smaller than at larger sites, due to some of the fixed operating costs. For example, while the PTC program in Arizona had the most participants (196), its operating cost per participant was among the lowest at \$20,438. The low estimated average cost per participant in Wilmington likely is attributable, in part, to some misallocation of staff costs to the Philadelphia program (see above).

These differences in average per-participant costs are driven largely by differences in the per-participant cost for staffing, due to under-enrollment and low retention rates, and to a lesser extent differences in tuition costs at the partner colleges, student support costs, and transportation costs.

Table 9. PTC Standard Program Model Cost per Participant and Average PTC-P Cost per Participant, by Component (2017)

	PTC Standard Program Model	PTC-P Program	Percent Difference
Average Total Cost per Participant	\$19,944	\$31,097	56
Number of Participants Served	160	112	-30
Staffing (FTE)	19	21	11
Components of Total Cost (per participant)			
Staffing	\$10,091	\$17,512	74
Shared Services ²⁶	\$3,944	\$4,877	24
Participant Stipends	\$3,627	\$2,823	-22
General Operating Expense	\$1,432	\$2,639	84
Participant Transportation	\$250	\$2,410	864
College Tuition and Fees	\$500	\$824	65
Other Participant Direct Costs	\$100	\$11	-89

Source: Year Up National financial model estimates and cost data for the PTC-P program.

The high per-participant cost for the PTC-P program is due to the program not being able to meet target enrollment numbers that were aligned with its staff size for 2017. At \$17,512 per participant, the staff costs for PTC-P (including employee benefits) are about 75 percent higher than the PTC Standard Program Model target of \$10,091 (Table 9). Indeed, the 2017 participant-to-staff ratio in Philadelphia was 6.6, compared with the Standard Program Model assumption of about 8. The Model staff size for a program with 112 participants a year would be about 13, rather than the 21 staff members the PTC-P program had in 2017—a discrepancy that is partially accounted for by anticipated growth in enrollment and, in part, to provide assistance in setting up the Wilmington program. However, the PTC-P program failed to meet its enrollment targets for 2018 and 2019, even though Year Up National held its enrollment targets to 120 through the January 2019 cohort.

In addition to the staffing costs, the cost per participant is also dependent on the tuition costs at the partner colleges, participant support costs, and transportation costs. While participant support costs were in line with the Model estimates, per-participant transportation costs and college fees are both well above average and the Model estimates (see Table 9).

At \$2,410 per participant, PTC-P spending on transportation also was the highest of all of the stand-alone PTC programs and nearly 10 times the per-participant cost assumed in the PTC Standard Program Model of \$250 per participant. The high transportation costs are due mainly to long distances between participants' homes and both Peirce College and the internship sites (many of which are in Wilmington).

At an average of \$824 per participant, PTC-P college tuition and fees were 65 percent above the \$500 per-participant cost assumed under the PTC Standard Program Model. However, they are lower than average for three of the eight stand-alone PTC programs (Table 10). Peirce College has tuition rates that

²⁶ Shared services consist of expenses incurred from services and support provided by Year Up National.

are substantially higher than the public institutions partnering with other PTC programs. Yet, to date, federal and state participant financial aid has covered roughly 66 percent of tuition and fees, and the college has provided tuition discounts that largely cover the remainder of the price difference. Peirce College administrators reported that this tuition discounting has “worked” for them due to the college’s excess capacity for daytime programs and the “promise” of the partnership with Year Up to help the college diversify its student population to include younger adults.

Table 10. College Tuition and Fees Paid per Participant for Stand-Alone PTC Programs, by Program (2017)

	College Tuition/Fees per Participant	Number of Participants Served
Philadelphia	\$824	112
Baltimore	\$1,894	157
Dallas	\$1,144	114
Jacksonville	\$921	129
Wilmington	\$824	65
Arizona	\$610	196
Miami	\$331	112
Los Angeles	\$115	96
All Stand-Alone PTC Programs	\$877	981

Source: Year Up National data.

2.7.2 PTC-P Internship Revenue

PTC-P’s internship revenue consistently has fallen below target levels. As noted earlier, the PTC Standard Program Model target is \$20,233 in internship revenue per participant. As was shown in Table 7 above, PTC-P’s average internship revenues grew from \$11,051 in 2014 to \$14,443 per participant in 2016 and then fell to \$10,560 per participant in 2017. Of the eight stand-alone PTC programs, average per-participant internship revenue has been lowest in Philadelphia and Wilmington; the Dallas program came closest to meeting the target at \$14,771 per participant, which is only 73 percent of target (Table 11).

Table 11. Internship Revenue per Participant for Stand-Alone PTC Programs, by Program (2017)

	Internship Revenue per Participant	Number of Participants Served
Philadelphia	\$10,560	112
Dallas	\$14,771	96
Los Angeles	\$13,888	157
Miami	\$12,711	114
Baltimore	\$12,276	112
Arizona	\$11,771	129
Jacksonville	\$11,395	196
Wilmington	\$6,215	65
All Stand-Alone PTC Programs	\$11,989	981

Source: Year Up National cost data.

Two factors contribute to the revenue shortfalls. One is lower-than-projected retention through L&D, which reduces the total number of interns needing placements; the other is failure to secure full fees from employers to support the internships. For example, PTC-P fell 17 percent below its target for placements into internships (68 percent placement versus a target of 83 percent), and it fell 27 percent below target (57 of 77 internships) in the proportion of internships that were employer sponsored. Moreover, not all employers paid the “full fee.”

The following illustrates how missing retention or internship sponsorships targets affects overall per-participant revenues. The PTC Standard Program Model’s target average revenue is calculated over all youth who participate in the program at any time during the calendar year in question. It reflects targets for both retention to the Internship phase and average sponsored payments for interns. Table 12 illustrates

the sensitivity of average per-participant internship revenues to a program's success meeting its retention and internship sponsorship targets, holding program enrollment and FTE staff levels constant. Meeting all targets generates estimated revenue of \$20,233 per participant under the Standard Program Model assumptions. This revenue figure falls to \$18,451 if retention through L&D falls to 75 percent from the target 83 percent (Alternative A) and to \$16,401 if the percentage of full internship fees received falls to 80 percent from the target 98 percent (Alternative B).

Table 12. Simulated Changes in Revenue under Different Assumptions about Retention through L&D and Actual Internship Revenue as a Percentage of Revenue If All Internships Were Fully Sponsored

	PTC Standard Program Model	Alternative A: 75% Retention Through L&D	Alternative B: 80% of Full Internship Fees
Assumptions			
Enrollment Target	160	160	160
% of Enrollment Target Achieved	100	100	100
% of Participants Retained through L&D	83	75	83
% of Full Internship Fees Received	98	98	80
Revenue per Fully Sponsored Internship	\$24,700	\$24,700	\$24,700
Operating Costs			
Total Number of Participants Served	160	160	160
Number of Staff (Enrollment Target × 0.11875)	19	19	19
Total Operating Costs per Participant Served	\$19,944	\$19,944	\$19,944
Revenue			
Number of Participants Retained through L&D	133	120	133
Total Internship Fees Received	\$3,237,202	\$2,925,183	\$2,952,144
Average Internship Revenue per Participant Served	\$20,233	\$18,451	\$16,401
Revenue as a Percentage of Operating Costs	106	92	82

Source: Year Up National cost data.

2.7.3 Reaching Break-Even Revenue

It is extremely challenging to assess the feasibility of achieving break-even revenue for the PTC-P program due to two factors: (1) that the program is currently overstaffed for its size; and (2) the challenges of properly allocating program staff costs between the Wilmington and Philadelphia programs. Under the Year Up Standard Program Model, virtually all program revenues derive from employer fees of \$24,700 per six-month internship. The Model also implicitly assumes that the college partners shoulder a share of the costs, including facilities costs and instructional and staff labor, that never make it to the budget line.

In order to convince major area employers of the value proposition of investing in many more internship seats, the Corporate Engagement team is going to need to find ways to align its outreach along three dimensions: (1) employers experiencing a shortage of skilled entry-level workers; (2) employers with capacity to fund skill training on the front end; and (3) employers located within reasonable commuting patterns relative to where typical PTC-P participants reside. At \$48,400 per full-time equivalent intern (\$24,700/six months × 2), it potentially would be more viable to expand sales if the program had greater flexibility to tailor aspects of the curriculum to align more closely with employers' needs.

Below are two examples of the implications of meeting (or not) various program performance targets that are central to the PTC Standard Program Model. The first simulation illustrates that, under the assumptions of the Model, raising enrollments alone would not go a long way towards closing the revenue-costs gap. For example, if the PTC-P program was able to scale its per-participant costs to the Model's per-participant average cost targets, but was not able to improve internship sales, its revenue would cover only a slightly higher fraction of costs (41 percent versus 34 percent) (Table 13, Alternative

A). In contrast, if it maintained its current staff and was able to increase enrollments to 160 FTEs at the same time it met retention and internship sponsorship targets, the estimated revenues would cover 71 percent of costs (Table 13, Alternative B).

Table 13. Simulated Changes in Revenue and Costs for the PTC-P Program under Different Assumptions about Retention through L&D and Internship Revenue

	PTC Standard Program Model Assumptions	PTC-P 2017 Actuals for Enrollment, Cost, & Revenue	Alternative A: Scales Program Costs to Enrollment	Alternative B: Maintains Staff & Unit Costs; Meets Enrollment, Retention, & Internship Targets
Operating Cost Per Participant				
Number of Participants Served	160	112	112	160
Number of Staff	19	21	21	21
Operating Cost per Participant Served	\$19,944	\$31,097	\$25,786	\$25,844
College Tuition and Fees	\$500	\$824	\$500	\$824
Participant Stipends	\$3,627	\$2,823	\$3,627	\$2,823
Other Direct Costs	\$100	\$11	\$100	\$11
Participant Transportation	\$250	\$2,410	\$250	\$2,410
Staffing	\$10,091	\$17,512	\$15,933	\$12,258
General Operating Expenses	\$1,432	\$2,639	\$1,432	\$2,639
Shared Services	\$3,944	\$4,877	\$3,944	\$4,877
Revenue				
Number of Participants in Internship	133	77	77	133
Total Internship Fees Received	\$3,237,202	\$1,182,702	\$1,187,003	\$3,237,202
Average Internship Revenue:				
Per Internship Participant	\$24,376	\$15,360	\$15,360	\$24,376
Per Participant Served	\$20,233	\$10,560	\$10,599	\$20,233
% of Costs Covered by Internship Revenue	101	34	41	78

Source: Year Up National cost data.

2.8 PTC-P Scalability

Year Up and the GreenLight Fund conceived PTC-P as an explicit test of the PTC Standard Program Model's scalability. Their joint vision—expressed in the SIF grant application and agreement—was to demonstrate that Year Up's adaptation of its stand-alone program for college settings was both feasible and scalable. The original agreement identified three potential growth scenarios for the program over the five years spanned by the grant. The most conservative scenario projected enrollment of 320 participants by the fifth year, and the most optimistic scenario projected enrollment of 520 participants.

In light of ongoing challenges for the Philadelphia site to date, Year Up has postponed this planned growth. Since the 2015 interim report, difficulties in meeting two especially critical targets—targets for L&D retention and internship revenue—have continued.

The two targets are inter-related in several ways. Higher retention translates into higher numbers entering internships, which contributes to higher program revenues per FTE participant and to greater potential for positive outcomes for more participants. Higher retention also requires developing more and more paid internship seats. PTC-P has struggled to meet both these benchmarks. In its first year, the program met the lower end of its SIF targets. However, Year Up National revised the program's growth targets for the next two years downwards (below actual enrollments for year one); yet the program has persistently failed to meet any of them over the last seven enrollment cycles by an average of about seven percent. The shortfalls have ranged from 33 to two percent (see Chapter 1, Table 1).

It remains to be determined whether the PTC model can reach financial break-even in Philadelphia.

As of mid-2018, the PTC-P program had increased L&D retention (see Chapter 3), but was continuing to struggle to meet enrollment targets and to secure enough fully sponsored internship seats. Both the data and the judgments of PTC-P program staff suggest that it will be difficult to scale the program in the near term and it may or may not be possible to achieve financial break-even. The Philadelphia program continues to struggle with enrollment and securing paid internship seats. New staffing changes have been implemented to address some of these challenges, but outcomes of these efforts remain to be seen.

In 2015, Year Up National and local PTC-P staff expressed confidence that with expected staffing additions and adoption of best practices being used in other PTC programs, the PTC-P program would increase enrollment, increase retention through refining its admissions screening and strengthening other aspects of its services, and in the process, bring costs into alignment with revenues. The program has recently improved its retention rate during L&D (see further in Chapter 3) and appears to have strengthened the internship experience. However, it has not been able to achieve significant, sustained increases in enrollments nor has it been able to expand significantly the number of paid internships.

Although the recent round of staffing changes, expansions, and role redefinitions are all geared towards addressing these performance shortfalls, they also exacerbated the revenue gap. Moreover, there has been no opportunity to judge their effectiveness in expanding program size and the base of employer partners willing to sponsor internships. Efforts to secure enough sponsored internship seats have also yet to bear fruit.

Peirce College administrators see scaling PTC as feasible and desirable.

Our 2015 report found Peirce administrators were optimistic that college facilities could support a considerable expansion, and that serving a few thousand PTC-P participants per year was “doable.” The College had underutilized daytime capacity, little trouble expanding instructional staff, and an underutilized tutoring center; and much of the tuition costs for participants could be covered through state and federal financial aid grants. Expanding its outreach to include more students meeting the demographic profile Year Up targets also was consistent with the college’s plans for expanding and diversifying its student population. The issues at that time seemed relatively modest and solvable (e.g., meeting space needs to accommodate large events, secure spaces for PTC-P participants to store their belongings while at the college to facilitate easy switching between school and work settings, and its distance from many of the internship sites). In our July 2018 interviews, college administrators’ assessment had remained largely the same. The college remains committed to the partnership and to growing the participant population. It is not clear, however, how large the prospective pool is of participants for the PTC-P program at Peirce, given the Center City location.

Improved academic monitoring and supports are needed to support future expansion.

It will be critical for the PTC-P program to meet or come close to the L&D retention targets if it is to achieve financial break-even. The reason is that only participants completing L&D progress to internships, which are the main source of program revenue. Internships also are where participants are expected to learn critical skills required for entry-level professional positions with career advancement potential. Importantly, the impact study tested and identified promising low-cost strategies for doing improving retention through L&D (see Chapter 3).

Expanding to another college partner could help in increasing enrollment.

Roughly tripling enrollment at Peirce (to the 300-500 participants originally envisioned in the SIF grant) is not feasible in the near term. PTC-P staff have struggled with recruitment, and Peirce does not have a natural pipeline of the demographic group Year Up targets. The college’s commuting distance is also not convenient for young adults in the communities from which PTC typically draws. In addition, it is unclear whether the college could find enough space to operate the program.

For these reasons, expansion in the Central City area is likely to require an additional college partner. In the 2015 report, we recommended exploring options for expanding to other area colleges, and this topic was raised by PTC-P staff again during the most recent round of interviews. Some staff noted that having partner like Community College of Philadelphia could help with recruitment efforts, because it has a reputation for serving recent high school graduates from the neighborhoods where the PTC-P program participants live. Given the financial challenges discussed above and the strains placed on both the PTC-P and Peirce College staff as they supported the opening of the Wilmington program, it seems prudent to defer serious consideration of a new college partner until there is a path for achieving financial self-sufficiency at a modest scale (e.g., 120 participants) at the current location.

2.9 Summary

Participants, staff, and community partners are highly praising of the PTC-P program itself (i.e., the services it provides to participants). However, the program has made no measured progress in closing its revenue gap. While it has identified effective strategies to improve retention through L&D, it is not close to meeting critical internship sales goals and has not made much, if any, progress in lowering transportation costs. Based on Year Up's follow-up data, the program is coming close to meeting employment goals and exceeding the wage goal for graduates, but these outcomes are no substitute for closing the revenue gap.

Organization and structure. Both Year Up National and PTC-P staff are reasonably optimistic that the recent staff additions and role changes will facilitate making needed improvements, especially with regards to recruitment and admissions and securing fully sponsored securing internship seats—the areas of greatest need. Currently, the program has a staff that, under Year Up's PTC Standard Program Model, should be adequate to serve about 175 participants, rather than the 112 it serves now. The changes in staff roles also are intended to facilitate improvements in recruitment and internship development and support. However, it is too early to know whether resulting improvements will substantially address gaps in enrollments and internship sales needed to achieve financial sustainability.

Relationships between PTC-P and Peirce College. Since the interim report, there has been improved communication between PTC-P and Peirce College regarding admissions and recruitment, as well as academic support. There has been objective evidence of improvements, such as smoother pacing through the application and enrollment process, more and more regular use of the college's tutoring center, and greater levels of information sharing on academic issues participants encounter. The opening of the Wilmington program strained both the relationship and the resources available to support the instructional needs of the PTC-P program. However, by mid-July 2018, it appeared that most of those challenges had been resolved as the Wilmington program transitioned to working with a local college partner.

There remains opportunity to improve communication between PTC-P and Peirce College instructors, as well as room to modify instructional approaches used by many Peirce instructors to better serve young adult learners and corporate partner needs. However, overall, relationships appear to be quite good and both parties appear invested in continuing and strengthening them.

Meeting enrollment targets and securing internship seats. PTC-P program staff continue to struggle to build a strong referral pipeline—a challenge that has been exacerbated by the high level of staff turnover. Stepped up support from a Year Up National staff member over the last year, coupled with new support from the Regional Director of Admissions and Recruitment, has been helpful in instituting outreach to new community organizations, tightening the admissions processes, improving readiness screening, and strengthening community and employer partnerships. Site staff expressed hope that the redoubling of efforts with the renewed attention on the Philadelphia market (as opposed to staff continuing to split time with the Wilmington market) under the guidance of a new Executive Director may help to improve these

outcomes, as well. There was also talk about expanding into other career tracks (e.g., hospital IT or customer service), which could open doors into other internship opportunities.

Program execution during L&D and internship. Year Up National efforts to retrain staff from 2016-17 laid the foundation for improved program execution. Site staff were trained on best practices during the L&D and Internship phases; and in 2018, a Year Up National staff member was transitioned to a full-time role at PTC-P, working to foster stronger communication with Peirce College, especially related to academic monitoring and supports. There now is an improved system for tracking and monitoring participant issues, as well as more and better communication with Peirce College administrators and the Academic Advisor. In addition, there are now improved practices for tracking participant experiences during internship and enhanced supports for both managers and interns prior to and during the internships. Lastly, the hiring of a Student Services Team (two licensed social workers) about two years ago has improved capacity for early identification of participant issues during the admissions process and enhanced efforts to address those issues during L&D and internship. The Student Services Team also has compiled a compendium of support resources related to issues such as childcare, substance abuse, and homelessness. Several PTC-P staff whom we interviewed in mid-2018 noted that the Student Services Team has been integral to improving participant success and retention during both L&D and internship.

Post-program. The addition of two EPMs has led to more deliberate efforts to place and support participants in jobs after they complete internships. Focused primarily on placing participants in jobs and/or educational opportunities post-program, EPMs aim to build a network of employment partners and work closely with PTC-P participants to develop their post-program education and/or job-based plans. Additionally, in the past year, the program has increased efforts to support alumni post-program. There is now a designated PTC-P staff member, known as the Alumni Engagement Steward, who supports and connects regularly with program alumni. Also, Peirce College has received a generous donation to provide scholarships to PTC-P graduates to defray some of the costs of continuing their education at Peirce after the program.

Financial self-sufficiency and scalability. Currently, the biggest challenge for the PTC-P program is achieving financial sustainability. The program has struggled to recruit and retain target levels of participants and secure enough fully sponsored internship seats to reach financial break-even. It also has been operating with more staff than is financially viable at the current scale of operations. As of July 2018, staff interviewed for this study reported that efforts to scale-up the program should be put on hold until the program achieves enrollment levels, retention rates, and internship sponsorship levels commensurate with financial self-sufficiency at the current or near-current staffing level. They seem poised to achieve these goals but are also mindful that these are not new challenges. If the program is successful in achieving these high-order goals, it will still need to address more mundane (but more achievable) needs that accompany success on these fronts, such as larger spaces for group events, expanded office space, and reliable access to quality tutoring services.

3. Impacts of Alternative Strategies for Monitoring and Supporting Academics

A necessary condition for the success of Year Up's Professional Training Corps (PTC) is that participants successfully complete the Learning and Development (L&D) phase of the program with the skills required to succeed in internships. Important markers of a participants' success during L&D are persistence and performance in their college courses (during L&D and beyond). It also is important for the financial self-sufficiency of the PTC program. Sponsored internship payments from employers are intended to be the sole source of revenue to support the program. However, if participants do not first successfully complete L&D, they cannot advance to internships. This, in turn, limits the program's ability to receive revenue (as was discussed in Chapter 2).

The earlier interim report flagged low (65 percent) rates of PTC-P L&D completion at a time when Year Up National estimated that a retention rate of 75 percent was needed for the program to achieve financial self-sufficiency (Fein & Maynard, 2015, p. 20). The challenges PTC-P participants faced during L&D resembled those encountered by other participants in programs serving predominantly college participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. These challenges include economic needs, housing issues, and care requirements of other family members; deficits in foundational academic skills; and gaps in skills needed for social and emotional functioning in school and work settings (Rosenbaum et al., 2015; Bailey et al., 2015; Frazier et al., 2015; Wibrowski et al., 2016; Fein, 2016).

An important theme in the literature is that this population needs close monitoring and support (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Frazier et al., 2015; Wibrowski, Matthews, & Kitsantas, 2016; Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016; Weiss, Visher, Weissman, & Wathington, 2015; Weissman, Cullinan, Cerna, Safran, & Richman, 2012; Casazza & Silverman, 2013).

Given clear indications in 2014 that the PTC program in Philadelphia (PTC-P) was not yet meeting its L&D completion targets, Year Up and GreenLight recommended to SIF a shift in the focus of the impact study component of the SIF/GreenLight evaluation. This proposed shift was a movement away from estimating impacts of the PTC-P program on post-program earnings and academic achievement, and instead towards focusing on **improving participants' academic success and retention during the program**. SIF agreed with GreenLight that this was a better use of resources, in light of the higher-than-expected attrition during the L&D phase. Rather than continue with the planned randomized controlled trial to estimate the overall effectiveness of this PTC program model, Year Up and Abt proposed that the impact study test **strategies for improving academic success during and after completion of L&D**. Since other PTC programs were also experiencing similar challenges during L&D, Year Up agreed to expand the PTC-P impact study to include two additional sites—New York City and Jacksonville, Florida.²⁷

The design of the refocused impact study entailed randomly assigning one group of participants to **receive alternative academic monitoring and support strategies** (the Alternative Strategies Group) during L&D and another group to receive the “usual” strategies (the Usual Strategies Group). The study design called for testing a set of improvement strategies over two cycles of L&D—the January 2018 and July 2018 cohorts, which entered the PTC programs in January 2017 and July 2017, respectively.

²⁷ Impacts of the PTC-P program on post-program earnings and academic achievement will still be estimated, by Year Up and the Abt evaluation team under a Development and Innovation grant from the Institute of Education Sciences.

Working together, the PTC program staff and evaluation team identified three modifications to practices for the Alternative Strategies Group:

1. Staff would develop a prescriptive protocol for monitoring participant attendance at all L&D-related activities (including college classes) and completion of course assignments (e.g., homework), as well as for how information on interim performance indicators (e.g., quiz and test grades, check-ins with instructors) would be shared with coaches and other staff working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group;
2. Coaches working with the participants in the Alternative Strategies Group would develop and follow practices that enabled quick response to both academic and non-academic sources of difficulties those participants encountered (e.g., tutoring, emergency housing, childcare); and
3. Coaches and Program Managers working with members of the Alternative Strategies Group would conduct ongoing case reviews for all participants who required corrective actions and/or were receiving remedial supports aimed at improving class attendance, assignment completion, and/or academic performance.

The specific enhancements were developed by program staff at each of the three study sites in consultation with their college partners, Year Up National, and the evaluation team. As a result, within the broad parameters outlined above, the alternative strategies adopted could and did vary across the three programs, in large part due to differences in perceived needs and opportunities for improvement.

An important part of the development process was to set broad parameters for the improvements, as described above, and then to work with local offices to develop strategies tailored to their needs and circumstances.

The modified evaluation was designed to address the following primary research questions:

1. What is the difference in the proportion of participants completing the PTC program's six-month L&D phase for those randomly assigned to the Alternative Strategies Group as compared with those assigned to the Usual Strategies Group?
2. What is the difference in the likelihood participants will continue enrollment in college in the first month following completion of L&D?²⁸

The remainder of this chapter discusses our motivation for and approach to the impact study, the study design, the study sample, the methods for estimating impacts, the implementation of the tested strategies, and the study findings.

3.1 Motivation for and Approach to the Impact Study

The primary goal of the impact study was to develop and rigorously test, over a relatively short time period, promising strategies for addressing the retention challenges in PTC programs. Recognizing that concerns about academic performance and persistence during L&D are issues for most, if not all, PTC programs, Year Up National and the evaluation team decided early on to include two additional PTC programs in this portion of the evaluation—one at the Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York City (PTC-BMCC) and another at Florida State College at Jacksonville in Jacksonville, Florida (PTC-JAX).²⁹ The evaluation team established a working group across the sites to coordinate planning of

²⁸ The modified Subgrantee Evaluation Plan also included plans to measure impacts on grades, but the team was unable to obtain data on grades.

²⁹ Adding the additional sites to the evaluation was possible as the result of blending work on this project with ongoing, related work on an Institute of Education Sciences Development and Innovation grant (#R305A150214).

the improvement strategies to be tested. Having three PTC programs participate provided both a larger sample and more diversity in contexts for testing the strategies.

At the outset, we knew through conversations with program staff that much of the attrition was occurring near the end of the L&D phase and that often it was directly tied to participants' failing their college courses. For Year Up to stay on track with its overall plan for scaling up the PTC program, it was important to identify and implement modest-to-no-cost strategies to increase academic success and program persistence in relatively short order. Thus, the evaluation team sought improvement strategies with five qualities:

1. Were minimally burdensome for sites to implement;
2. Required little additional cost to implement;
3. Required limited time to implement and test (one or two cycles of operation);
4. Held high promise for improving academic performance and persistence through L&D; and
5. Lent themselves to rigorous evaluation of their effectiveness.

The evaluation team worked with Year Up National staff and staff at the three PTC programs to develop and test staff-driven strategies for early identification of participants facing academic challenges and for quick responses to those challenges. We drew on principles and practices of improvement science for identifying and implementing the strategies to be tested (Bryk et al., 2011; 2015; Means & Penuel, 2005; Proger et al., 2017) and on principles and practices of rigorous intervention research methods for testing the effectiveness of those strategies (Orr, 1999).

In keeping with the principle of conducting an impact study of relatively low-burden, quick-to-implement improvement strategies, Year Up National and the evaluation team adopted the following three-phase timeline: (1) roughly six months for planning the improvement strategies to be tested; (2) a year to implement and test the strategies over two cycles of L&D, with opportunities for modification based on early implementation experiences; and (3) roughly six months for rigorously assessing the effectiveness of the strategies for improving L&D retention (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Impact Study Timeline

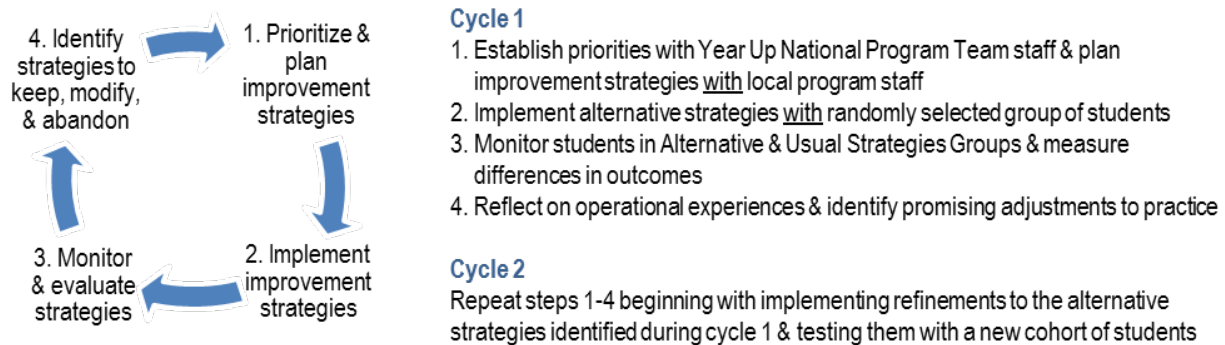
Stage 1: Plan	Stage 2: Roll Out Strategies in Testable Ways		Stage 3: Evaluate & Communicate
Identify Sites & Strategies (Jul–Dec 2016)	Improvement Cycle 1 (Jan–Jun 2017)	Improvement Cycle 2 (Jul–Dec 2017)	Conduct the Evaluation (Jan–Jun 2018)
1. Brainstorm strategies 2. Plan roll-out 3. Train staff in design of strategies 4. Prepare for intake & random assignment	1. Enroll Jan 2018 cohort 2. Randomly assign participants to treatment condition 3. Deliver L&D based on assigned group 4. Conduct regular check-ins 5. Review & refine alternative strategies	1. Enroll Jul 2018 cohort 2. Randomly assign participants to (refined) treatment condition 3. Deliver L&D based on assigned group 4. Conduct regular check-ins	1. Estimate impacts 2. Document strategies used 3. Interview site staff & participants 4. Collect artifacts used for alternative strategies 5. Share findings

This study followed a “Plan-Do-Study-Act” (PDSA) model over two participant cohorts (Bryk et al., 2015; Tichnor-Wagner, Wachen, Cannata, & Cohen-Vogel, 2017). The approach involved taking stock of experiences in step four of Cycle 1 and then adjusting the alternative strategies to be implemented and tested in Cycle 2 (Figure 5). After completing two cycles of testing, the evaluation team reported the findings back to the three participating PTC programs and Year Up National (stage three in Figure 4).

With these findings from stage three, Year Up National, in consultation with leadership at its PTC programs, is now in a fourth stage on the timeline (not shown in Figure 4). This corresponds to the fourth

step in the PDSA model for Cycle 2, which requires a higher level of decision-making than what occurred after Cycle 1.

Figure 5. The Improvement Cycles



Developing the Improvement Strategies

In developing the enhanced academic monitoring and support strategies, we aimed to address four weaknesses in the programs' usual approaches to monitoring and supporting participants in college coursework:

1. Gaps and lags in communication with college partners and instructors;
2. Lack of focused attention on academics during coaching time;
3. Absence of systems and routines for managing academic information on participants throughout their time in PTC; and
4. Lack of systems to support participants in addressing their academic challenges and holding them accountable for using supports.

Development Process

The first six months of the study effort focused on identifying promising strategies to test, through collaborative reflection and brainstorming with site staff. PTC programs offered a variety of “business as usual” supports, including weekly stipends, advising/coaching by college and PTC program staff, and general support services provided by the PTC program and/or through referrals, as well as usual student support services provided by partner colleges. However, these three PTC programs had neither strong nor uniform approaches to monitoring and supporting participants facing academic difficulties. As noted earlier, all Year Up programs impose a code of conduct—in the form of the Year Up participant contract—as a means of communicating and monitoring participants' behavior. However, under the PTC program's usual practices, there is no clear protocol for monitoring academic engagement and academic performance of participants to ensure timely identification of and response to lapses in these areas. As a result, the PTC program staff and college partners' responses to participant needs vary in timeliness, substance, and quality.

Staff at the three study sites worked closely with Year Up National and the evaluation team over several months to identify and prepare to implement specific alternatives to usual strategies for monitoring and supporting participants during L&D that would be tested. The process entailed three steps:

1. Reflecting on current practices in and outcomes of L&D, with a focus on academic challenges and current responses to them.
2. Brainstorming strategies for addressing shortfalls and building on untapped resources (e.g., including a more deliberate focus on academics during coaching by providing a one-page academic coaching guide designed to normalize the focus on academics).
3. Selecting concrete, modest-to-no-cost alternatives to current practices that seemed most promising for improving outcomes.

The strategies tested aimed to improve academic success and through three means: (1) improve access to participant performance data (e.g., through reaching out to instructors and obtaining access to grades and attendance information); (2) surface and make better use of information on academic performance during coaching; and (3) improve access to resources and supports to assist participants experiencing academic challenges.

Some strategies tested in Cycle 1 were common across the three programs and others were tailored to local circumstances and priorities (Figure 6). All three programs sought to tailor outreach to instructors during orientation, identify a mechanism for accessing participants' grades, develop a spreadsheet for collecting feedback from instructors, deliberately focus on academics during coaching using a one-page academic coaching guide, and more actively refer students to existing college resources and tutoring.

Figure 6. Strategies Prioritized for Testing and Tactics Used

Cycle 1: Alternative Strategies to Be Tested	Cycle 2: Modifications to Alternative Strategies
<p>Improved access to & tracking of performance data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailored outreach to instructors during orientation, including an instructor luncheon (1 program) Established mechanism for accessing participants' grades (designated person to gather & distribute info) Shared spreadsheet containing feedback from instructors & information from coaching sessions <p>Systematic use of information on academic performance to inform coaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused more deliberately on academics during coaching Created one-page coaching guide to flag academic issues (2 programs) <p>Additional resources & supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded portfolio assignment to include academic focus (1 program) Hired Academic Coordinator (1 program) Created a textbook library (1 program) Ordered and distributed Wi-Fi hotspots (1 program) Increased referrals to existing college tutoring & support services 	<p>Additions and enhancements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased coach access to information on participants' academic histories and grades Updated one-page coaching guide to a Weekly Academic Coaching Notes Sheet Created Academic Coaching Binder (Year Up, 2018) Conducted formal coach training on the Academic Coaching Binder Routinely focused on academic issues in LC meetings Increased centralization of information on support resources <p>Strategies abandoned or de-emphasized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned efforts to provide shared access to Wi-Fi hotspots (abandoned scheduled roll-out in Cycle 1) Lowered expectations that instructors would serve as primary source of information on participants' academic performance

Programs could use modest discretionary funds to support their academic monitoring and support efforts, but in different ways. One program leveraged these funds to create a textbook library for participants in the Alternative Strategies Group, as some participants lacked funds to purchase textbooks at the start of the semester. Another program tapped the discretionary funds for mobile Wi-Fi hotspots to improve participants' internet access at home. The third program hired an Academic Coordinator to monitor academic performance of participants in their college courses and share the information collected from instructors with coaches working with the Alternative Strategies Group.

Once strategies for testing were agreed upon, staff at each of the study sites planned their implementation to accommodate the evaluation—the implementation plan needed to allow for roughly half of the PTC program participants to continue receiving the usual strategies while the other participants would receive the alternative strategies for academic monitoring and supports. In most cases, this was accomplished by reframing the role of the coaches who served the Alternative Strategies Group members while maintaining the usual role of the coaches who served the Usual Strategies Group members.

3.2 Study Design

It was important to design a study that allowed for the observation of participants with similar backgrounds, but whose experiences during L&D differed only in the academic monitoring and support strategies the PTC program used with them. Hence, the study randomly assigned accepted applicants who attended orientation either to a “control group” or to a “treatment group.”

- **Control group.** The Usual Strategies Group of participants received the “business as usual” approach to academic monitoring and support.
- **Treatment group.** The Alternative Strategies Group of participants received the academic monitoring and support strategies that were being tested.

As noted above, the primary research questions relate to the impacts of the alternative strategies on: (1) the probability of completing the L&D phase of the program and (2) continued enrollment in college during the month following completion of L&D. Secondary questions pertain to impacts of the alternative strategies on the total months of college enrollment over the seven months following entrance into the PTC program and behavioral outcomes measured by the number of contract infractions received by participants during L&D and their contract point balances at the end of L&D.

In addition, the study descriptively examined survey responses from participants in the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups on their experiences in their college courses and the supports they received from college instructors, their coaches and others. In the second cycle of testing the alternative strategies, the evaluation team surveyed coaches to learn about the nature and extent of differences in the coaching (individual and group) practices used with participants in the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups.

3.2.1 Planned Sample Size and Allocation

In addition to having comparable groups of participants channeled into the two treatment conditions, it was important to have a study sample large enough to support the detection of impacts of the alternative strategies that would be of practical importance for Year Up. In this case, we targeted enrolling a sample of 300 participants across the three PTC programs that were selected to test the alternative strategies over two enrollment cycles each. With half of the participants randomly assigned to the treatment group, a sample of 300 participants has estimated minimum detectable effect sizes of .21 standard deviations or larger (Table 14). For binary outcomes with a control group mean of .7, this corresponds to a 12.6 percentage point difference and for outcomes with a control group mean of .9, a minimum detectable impact of 7.2 percentage points. For the PTC-P program alone, which had a target sample size of 100 participants, the estimated minimum detectable effect size estimates were considerably larger—19.2 and 11.0 percentage points for binary outcomes with control group means of .7 and .9, respectively.

Data for the study came from multiple sources including program data, the National Student Clearinghouse, participant surveys, coach surveys, interviews with staff and group interviews with participants, observations of coaching sessions, and bi-weekly monitoring calls with site staff. Information on the backgrounds of participants in the study sample and interim performance indicators were obtained from Year Up's administrative data system.

Table 14. Planned Sample Size and Minimum Detectable Impacts

Comparison	Sample Size	Minimum Detectable Impact (90% Confidence Interval; 80% Power)		
		Standard Deviations	%-point Change-.7 Base	%-point Change-.9 Base
3 PTC Programs	300	0.241	12.6	7.2
Philadelphia PTC Program	100	0.420	19.2	11.0

Note: Power calculations were estimated using *PowerUp!* (Dong & Maynard, 2013). They assume blocking at the site level; equal size treatment and control groups; and 30 percent of the variance in the outcome measure explained by covariates in the analytic models.

The primary outcome measures of L&D retention and completion, and college enrollment—during and following L&D—are based on Year Up's administrative data and data from the National Student Clearinghouse, respectively. Notably, the outcome data from both sources are available for the full study sample and are considered quite reliable. Similarly, data on basic demographic and background characteristics of the sample from Year Up's administrative data are generally complete and reliable.

The evaluation team gathered participant data from a modified version of the Pre-Internship Survey routinely administered by Year Up to participants as they complete L&D and prepare for internships. The evaluation team worked with Year Up to modify its usual survey in two ways: (1) administering it to all participants leaving the program before completing L&D as well as to those completing L&D; and (2) adding questions about academic preparedness, academic challenges during L&D, and academic supports received during L&D (see Appendix H, Volume II).

Overall, 78 percent of participants in the sample completed the survey. The response rate was higher for the Alternative Strategies Group than for the Usual Strategies Group (82 and 74 percent, respectively). Much of this difference is related to the lower response rate among those not completing L&D and the fact that the non-completion rate was higher among the Usual Strategies Group than the Alternative Strategies Group. To reduce associated non-response bias, we calculated and applied survey non-response weights to adjust for the under-representation of non-completers in the Usual Strategies Group.

As part of the study, the evaluation team conducted bi-weekly monitoring calls with Program Managers and Site Directors at each program to gather information on the experiences of participants and coaches in the two groups, as well as to document notable events that were affecting participants, and/or the program related to the academic performance of participants and the academic monitoring and support strategies being offered by the programs (see Appendix I, Volume II).

Near the end of the study, coaches in Cycle 2 were asked to complete a survey about their approaches to and experiences coaching participants (see Appendix J, Volume II). This survey was completed by at least one coach from 27 of the 32 coaching groups (some coaching groups had one coach, others had two). The evaluation team also periodically visited sites to observe coaching sessions and team meetings, to conduct group interviews with participants, and to interview staff (See Appendices K, L and M, respectively, Volume II).

3.3 Study Sample

A total of 317 participants were enrolled in the study sample over two enrollment cycles across the three programs. Of the 317 participants, 35 percent enrolled in the Philadelphia program at Peirce College (PTC-P); 25 percent enrolled in the Borough of Manhattan Community College program (PTC-BMCC) and 40 percent enrolled in the Florida State College at Jacksonville program (PTC-JAX) (Table 15).

Table 15. Sample Size, by Treatment Condition, Program, and Enrollment Cycle

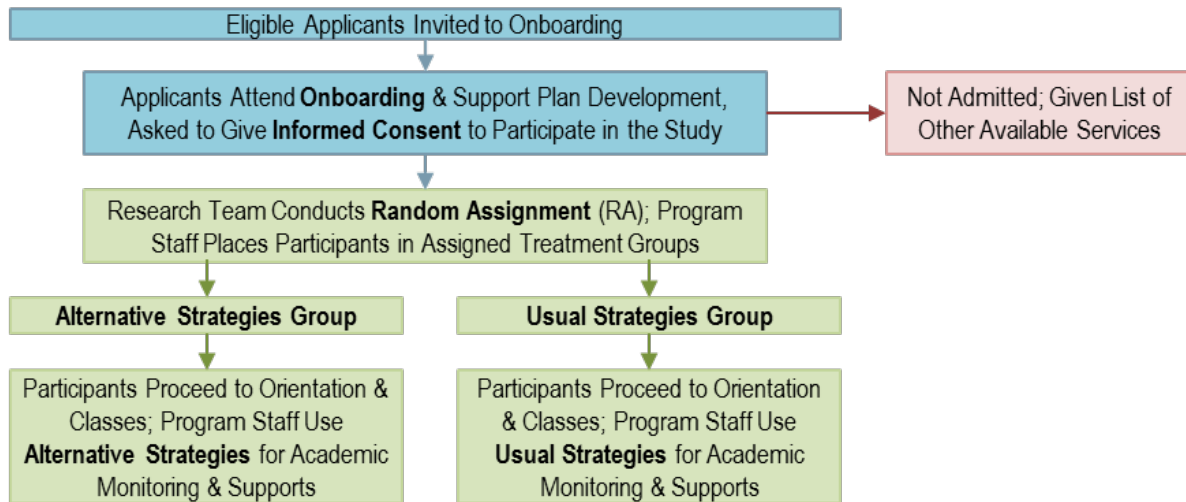
Program	Cycle 1			Cycle 2			Total Enrolled		
	Usual Strategies Group	Alternative Strategies Group	Total	Usual Strategies Group	Alternative Strategies Group	Total	Usual Strategies Group	Alternative Strategies Group	Total
PTC-P	27	27	54	30	26	56	57	53	110
PTC-BMCC	20	19	39	22	18	40	42	37	79
PTC-JAX	28	30	58	36	34	70	64	64	128
Total	75	76	151	88	78	166	163	154	317

Source: Year Up Salesforce data.

NOTE: Accepted applicants who attended orientation were randomized to the Alternative Strategies Group or to the Usual Strategies Group. No participants switched condition during the study.

Participants were recruited following Year Up's usual procedures, with the exception that all applicants were informed about the study and required to agree to participate should they enroll in Year Up. Within each program, those who consented to participate in the study were randomized to receive either the usual or alternative strategies for academic monitoring and supports (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Enrollment and Randomization of Participants



3.3.1 Characteristics of the Study Sample

Participants in the study sample were broadly like those served across all PTC programs. There was some program-level variation on a few characteristics, attributable in part to socio-demographic differences across the sites (Table 16). Roughly half of the participants in the sample were female. About 70 percent self-identified as black or African American; about 15 percent self-identified as Hispanic or Latino; and about 13 percent self-identified as White or other race/ethnic groups. At enrollment, about 45 percent of participants in the sample were under age 20; 40 percent were aged 20-22, and about 15 percent were aged 23 or older.

Participants in the sample exhibited a range of readiness for the program. Year Up measures readiness by the number of “risk factors,” such as having unstable housing, primary responsibility for a child, and exposure to violence and/or trauma (see Appendix C, Volume II, for a description of Year Up’s admissions readiness rubric). About 25 percent exhibited no risk/readiness concerns, whereas about 20 percent had 6 or more. About 40 percent of the participants in the sample had no prior college experience, while more than 30 percent had a year or more of college.

3.3.2 Comparability of the Usual and Alternative Strategies Groups and Those Enrolled in Cycles 1 and 2

Because of the random assignment of participants to the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups, there were only small-to-modest differences in the profiles of those assigned to the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups (see Appendix Table A.3, Volume II). None of the differences was sufficiently large to be statistically significant at the .10 level on a two-tailed test.

In contrast, there were statistically significant differences in the characteristics of participants who enrolled in the first and second intake cycle of the study (see Appendix Table A.4, Volume II). A higher proportion of the participants enrolled in the second cycle were under age 20 (57 versus 31 percent) and significantly fewer had prior college experience (34 versus 41 percent). These differences are likely due to the timing of recruitment for the two groups of participants. The former group was enrolled at the end

of 2016, whereas the latter group was recruited over the summer of 2017, close to the time when many eligible individuals had just completed high school.

Table 16. Characteristics of the Study Sample at Enrollment, Total and by Program

	Total	Program			p-Value
		PTC-P	PTC-BMCC	PTC-JAX	
Gender = Female (%)	49.5	41.8	55.7	52.3	0.1210
Race-ethnicity (%)					<.0001***
Black or African American	71.6	85.5	48.1	74.2	
Hispanic or Latino	14.8	10.0	36.7	5.5	
White or Another Race	13.5	4.5	15.2	20.3	
Age (%)					0.0429**
Under 20	44.1	34.5	46.8	50.8	
20-22	40.4	45.5	44.3	33.6	
23 or older	15.5	20.0	8.9	15.6	
Number of Risk/Readiness Concerns (%)					<.0001***
0-1	26.5	28.0	13.9	33.1	
2-3	35.7	32.9	50.6	28.8	
4-5	16.6	15.9	26.6	11.0	
6+	21.2	23.2	8.9	27.1	
Prior College (Any) (%)					0.0013***
0 years	41.4	55.5	26.6	38.3	
<1 year	26.8	17.3	36.7	28.9	
1+ years	31.9	27.3	36.7	32.8	
Prior College (FTE) (%)					0.0018***
0 years	41.4	55.5	26.6	38.3	
<1 year	37.2	28.2	44.3	40.6	
1+ years	21.5	16.4	29.1	21.1	
Sample Size	317	110	79	128	

Source: Year Up program data.

Notes: The study sample consists of youth who were first enrolled in Year Up with the January 2018 or July 2018 cohort at the three programs participating in the study. Data on the number of risk factors is missing for 12 percent of the study sample.

* = statistically significant at the .10 level, ** = .05 level, and *** = .001 level on two-tailed tests.

3.4 Methods for Estimating Impacts of the Alternative Strategies

All estimates were generated using STATA 15.0. Because individuals in the study sample were randomly assigned to the Alternative or Usual Strategies Groups, we can obtain unbiased estimates of the impacts of the alternative strategies for academic monitoring and supports using simple difference in means tests. However, most analyses were conducted using multivariate regression models to improve the precision of estimates and to control for random differences between the two treatment groups (Orr, 1999; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002; Bloom, 2005). In addition, the models included indicators of blocking factors used in the randomization (e.g., program, learning community, and sibling status).

3.4.1 Missing Data

There is essentially no missing data for the analyses of the primary research questions. However, there was a moderate level of non-response on the supplemental survey (Modified Pre-Internship Survey) and, more concerning, a sizeable difference in the response rate for the Usual and Alternative Strategies Groups (see above).

3.4.2 Nonresponse Weights for Analysis of Participant Survey Data

All outcomes measured with program data were complete. However, there was both a 21 percent non-response rate on the participant survey and a differential response rate between those in the Alternative

and Usual Strategies Group (see Appendix Table A.5, Volume II). Moreover, survey response was highly correlated with completion of L&D. To mitigate response bias in the descriptive analysis of those data, we created and applied non-response weights when analyzing these data. This was a multi-step process that began with estimating a multivariate linear regression for the full study sample, using baseline characteristics as well as an indicator for L&D completion. Then, predictors with statistically significant regression coefficients (in this case, only L&D completion) were included in a logistic regression predicting survey response in a model that controlled for treatment group assignment and L&D completion. The resulting coefficients were then used to generate response weights, which are the inverse of the model-predicted propensity scores, multiplied by the overall survey response rate for the individual sample member's assigned treatment condition (i.e., the Alternative or Usual Strategies Group).

3.5 Implementation of Tested Strategies

Throughout the study period, the evaluation team carried out low-stakes, low burden routine monitoring of the usual and alternative strategies being implemented. This allowed for documentation of the treatment contrast, ensured the integrity of the evaluation, and supported program decisions on mid-course corrections between the first and second testing cycles (see column 2 of Figure 6 above). This information, along with feedback from focus groups conducted with coaches in the Alternative Strategies Group and structured conversations with site leadership led to decisions about modifications in the alternative strategies to be implemented for Cycle 2. It also led to Year Up National working with the local program staff to pull together and organize an "Academic Coaching Binder" that included a variety of materials. Some of the materials were newly developed by coaches using the alternative strategies and others already existed but were used in new ways (Year Up, 2018).

3.5.1 Strategies Tested in Cycle 1

The increased focus on academics in coaching sessions with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group meant that PTC program staff increased monitoring of participant grades. The original plans for the experiment called for implementing centralized processes for routinely collecting information from instructors on participants' academic engagement and performance (i.e., class attendance, homework completion, quiz grades, and test grades) using procedures tailored to the local environment. Strategies included gaining direct access to college learning management systems (LMS), having a staff person responsible for liaising with college faculty and the registrar to capture information on a regular basis, and blended strategies. Mid-way through Cycle 1, the three programs converged on a common strategy that prioritized having participants routinely pull up their course information on the college LMS and share assignments and progress documents with their coaches during weekly one-on-one coaching sessions.

3.5.2 Adjustments to Strategies Tested in Cycle 2

Prior to Cycle 2, coaches working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group at the Philadelphia PTC program participated in a focus group, where they provided feedback on their experience using the one-page coaching guide to flag academic issues. Coaches shared that their ability to take actionable steps based on the guide was limited by the lack of awareness coaches felt they had about resources and/or tools for supporting participants once challenges were identified. In addition, coaches noted that aspects of the guide felt formulaic and that it did not provide the space for tracking key information (e.g., whether or not the participant accessed tutoring).

This focus group, along with feedback from coaches at the other two programs, sparked the creation of the Academic Coaching Binder (henceforth referred to as the Binder) by the evaluation team. All coaches in the Alternative Strategies Group were trained on this compendium of resources and had access to the Binder during Cycle 2. Examples of the resources in the binder are tips for engaging with instructors, tips

for troubleshooting academic challenges, and academically-focused warm-up questions for coaching sessions (See Appendices N, O, and P, respectively, Volume II).³⁰

In Cycle 2, a key tool for collecting participant academic information was the Weekly Academic Coaching Notes Sheet (henceforth referred to as the Notes Sheet), which was an updated version of the one-page coaching guide used in Cycle 1. The Notes Sheet provided a tool for coaches to record critical academic performance and related information during their weekly one-on-one sessions (see Appendix Q, Volume II), most often, as a result of coaches asking their coachees to pull up their grades in the college LMS during one-on-one coaching sessions.

In Cycle 2, coaches working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group also routinely shared their completed Notes Sheets for each coachee with their Program Manager and their peer coaches (also working with other participants in the Alternative Strategies Group) during weekly learning community (LC) meetings. This information collection and sharing led to more frequent discussion of grades during one-on-one and group coaching sessions, as well as enhanced communication among PTC-P program staff during LC meetings about participants' academic performance and support needs. The Program Manager in the Alternative Strategies Group informally recorded participants' academic issues, taking notes during LC meetings. There also was informal tracking through a shared spreadsheet, Chatter (an online communication platform), and case notes.

Specific to the PTC-P program, staff reported more consistent communication and information sharing with the Peirce College Academic Advisor (i.e., during bi-weekly meetings). This information was then shared with coaches working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group. While this process helped to increase overall awareness of academic issues, there were still moments when PTC-P program staff were made aware of academic issues too late into L&D to respond effectively.

Communication between the PTC-P program staff and instructors remained infrequent and for the most part was non-existent, regardless of whether staff were coaching participants in the Alternative or Usual Strategies Group. As a result, PTC-P staff and coaches often were unaware of participants' behavioral issues in Peirce classes, making it difficult to anticipate academic challenges.

Lastly, coaches working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group more often referred participants to academic supports at Peirce College than did their counterparts working with participants in the Usual Strategies Group (see further discussion below). However, participant feedback on these resources were mixed.

3.6 Study Findings

The impact study tested the impacts of three purposeful change strategies used for monitoring academics and supporting participants identified as experiencing difficulties in their college courses: (1) site-tailored strategies for ensuring that coaches have access (at least weekly) to information on how participants are doing in their college courses; (2) systematic and planful use of academic performance data by coaches to inform their coaching; and (3) coach access to and use of knowledge about participants' academic difficulties, thus allowing more and better use of available resources to assist participants to overcome those challenges.

Below, we present impact estimates for the primary outcomes (i.e., completion of L&D and continued enrollment in college beyond L&D) and secondary outcomes of interest (i.e., months of college

³⁰ Year Up National reported that they are in the process of developing resources and protocols to support rolling out key tools and practices demonstrated to be efficacious through this impact study.

enrollment during the 7-month period beginning with entrance into the program, contract infractions and contract points remaining at the end of the L&D phase).

3.6.1 Primary Outcomes

The key goals of the tested interventions were to create conditions leading to more participants completing L&D, so that they could transition to internships and continue to pursue college coursework. The findings from the study indicate that the alternative strategies achieved these goals.

Completion of Learning and Development Phase

Participants in the Alternative Strategies Group were 9.6 percentage points more likely than their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group to complete L&D (79 versus 69 percent)—a difference that is both large and statistically significant (significant at the .10 level). Moreover, the estimated differences are positive, though not statistically significant, for each of the three programs. Estimates range from a 6.7 percentage point gain for the Jacksonville program over the two cycles of testing to over 11 percentage point gains for both the Philadelphia (PTC-P) and the New York City (PTC-BMCC) programs.

Table 17. Estimated Impacts of the Alternative Strategies for Academic Monitoring and Supports on L&D Completion Rates

	Sample Group Means (%)		Difference in Means		5% Confidence Interval (%)	
	Alternative Strategies	Usual Strategies	%-Point	p-Value ^a	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Total Sample Cohort/Cycle	78.9	69.3	9.6 *	0.052	1.5	17.6
1 January 2018	77.6	73.3	4.3	0.540	-7.2	15.7
2 July 2018	80.2	65.9	14.3 **	0.036	3.2	25.4
Site				0.894		
PTC-P	77.9	66.7	11.2	0.182	-2.6	25.1
PTC-BMCC	83.1	71.4	11.7	0.204	-3.4	26.8
PTC-JAX	77.0	70.3	6.7	0.397	-6.3	19.8
Office & Cycle				0.760		
Cycle 1						
PTC-P	87.1	77.8	9.4	0.361	-7.5	26.2
PTC-BMCC	78.2	65.0	13.2	0.356	-10.3	36.6
PTC-JAX	68.1	75.0	-6.9	0.577	-27.3	13.5
Cycle 2						
PTC-P	68.6	56.7	11.9	0.369	-9.9	33.7
PTC-BMCC	87.8	77.3	10.5	0.356	-8.2	29.2
PTC-JAX	84.5	66.7	17.8 *	0.081	1.1	34.5
Sample Size	154	163	317			

Source: Data are from the Year Up program data system.

Notes: These data were weighted to account for the blocking of participants prior to randomization. The estimates of the mean difference between the treatment groups are based on regression models that included covariates for participant characteristics at the time of program enrollment. Means for the Usual Strategies Group are unadjusted means. Full regression estimates are available from the first author upon request.

^ap-values for tests of differences in impacts by enrollment cohort/cycle and by office are listed above those for the individual impact estimates.

* = statistically significant at the .10 level, ** = .05 level, and *** = .001 level on two-tailed tests.

The estimated impact for Cycle 2 is considerably larger than that for Cycle 1 (14.3 versus 4.3 percentage points, respectively) and highly statistically significant for Cycle 2, but not Cycle 1 (p-values = .036 and .540 for Cycles 2 and 1, respectively). Notably, the estimated impact for the Jacksonville program (PTC-JAX) is especially large and statistically significant in Cycle 2, whereas, the Alternative Strategies Group in Cycle 1 had a 6.9 percentage point lower completion rate than its Usual Strategies Group counterpart.

The estimated impacts in Cycle 2 for both the Philadelphia (PTC-P) and the New York City (PTC-BMCC) programs are large (11.2 and 11.7 percentage points, respectively), though neither difference is statistically significant at the .10 level.

Continued Enrollment in College beyond Learning and Development Phase

Overall, participants in the Alternative Strategies Group were more likely than their Usual Strategies Group counterparts to continue with college coursework after exiting L&D. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse indicate that, across the three programs, 67 percent of those in the Alternative Strategies Group compared with 54 percent of their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group were enrolled in college during the first month following the end of their L&D cycle (Table 18). The 13-percentage point difference is statistically significant at the .003 level, with a lower bound on the 95 percent confidence interval of 6 percentage points and an upper bound of 20 percentage points.

Table 18. Estimated Impacts of the Alternative Strategies for Academic Monitoring and Supports on College Enrollment in the Month following the Scheduled Completion of L&D

	Group Means (%)		Difference in Means		95% Confidence Interval (%)	
	Alternative Strategies	Usual Strategies	%-Point	p-Value ^a	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Total Sample	67.24	53.99	13.25 **	0.003	6.00	20.50
Cohort/Cycle				0.089		
1 January 2018	47.20	41.33	5.87	0.334	-4.10	15.84
2 July 2018	84.76	64.77	19.99 **	0.002	9.51	30.47
Site				0.515		
PTC-P	42.02	26.32	15.70 **	0.031	3.77	27.63
PTC-BMCC	99.61	92.86	6.75	0.196	-1.82	15.32
PTC-JAX	68.40	53.13	15.27 *	0.076	1.17	29.37
Sample Size	154	163	317			

Source: Data on college enrollment are from the National Student Clearinghouse.

Notes: These data were weighted to account for the blocking of participants prior to randomization. The estimates of the mean difference between the treatment groups are based on regression models that included covariates for participant characteristics at the time of program enrollment. Means for the Usual Strategies Group are unadjusted means. Full regression estimates are available from the first author upon request.

^ap-values for tests of differences in impacts by enrollment cohort/cycle and by office are listed above those for the individual impact estimates.

* = statistically significant at the .10 level, ** = .05 level, and *** = .001 level on two-tailed tests.

Secondary Outcomes

As with impacts on L&D retention rates, the estimated impacts on college enrollment in the month following the scheduled end of L&D were especially large (20 percentage points) and statistically significant at the .005 level for participants in the Alternative Strategies Group who enrolled in Cycle 2. There was a non-statistically significant difference of just under 6 percentage points for those enrolled in Cycle 1.

The estimated impacts of having been in the Alternative Strategies Group are much larger for participants in the Philadelphia (PTC-P) and Jacksonville (PTC-JAX) programs (in both cases, a differential of more than 15 percentage points) than they are for participants in the New York City (PTC-BMCC) program, where the point estimate of the difference is just under 7 percentage points and not statistically significant (p-value = .20). Potentially, this is due, in part, to the fact that college enrollment rates were unusually high among participants in the PTC-BMCC program (e.g., 92 percent for the Usual Strategies Group compared with rates of only 26 and 53 percent among those in the Usual Strategies Groups in the PTC-P and PTC-JAX programs, respectively).

The study examined three secondary outcomes. One is the number of months participants were enrolled in college during the seven months following enrollment in the program—a time period that takes them into their first month of internship. The other two measures relate to participants' behaviors, specifically the

number of contract infractions during L&D and the number of contracts points they have remaining at the end of L&D.

Months of College Enrollment

Over the seven-month period following enrollment in one of the three PTC programs participating in the study, participants in the Alternative Strategies Group at all three study sites were enrolled in college an average of 5.6 months compared with only 5.1 months for their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group—a half-month difference that is statistically significant at the .004 level (Table 19). Notably, this difference is attributable almost entirely to the quite sizeable .77 month gain for the Alternative Strategies Group enrolled in the PTC program during Cycle 2. The size of the estimated impact on months of enrollment is roughly similar across all three sites (ranging from .43 to .53 months), with the estimates for PTC-BMCC and PTC-JAX programs being statistically significant at the .072 and .028 levels, respectively.

Table 19. Estimated Impacts of the Alternative Strategies for Academic Monitoring and Supports on the Months of College Enrollment during the Seven Months following Enrollment in the PTC Program

	Group Means (%)		Difference in Means		95% Confidence Interval (%)	
	Alternative Strategies	Usual Strategies	Months	p-Value ^a	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Overall	5.59	5.10	0.49 ***	0.004	0.21	0.77
Cohort/Cycle				0.089		
1 January 2018	5.00	4.80	0.20	0.439	-0.21	0.61
2 July 2018	6.12	5.35	0.77 **	0.001	0.39	1.15
Office				0.953		
PTC-P	4.74	4.24	0.50	0.177	-0.11	1.11
PTC-BMCC	6.95	6.52	0.43 *	0.072	0.04	0.82
PTC-JAX	5.46	4.93	0.53 **	0.028	0.14	0.92
Sample Size	154	163	317			

Source: Data on college enrollment are from the National Student Clearinghouse.

Notes: These data were weighted to account for the blocking of participants prior to randomization. The estimates of the mean difference between the treatment groups are based on regression models that included covariates for participant characteristics at the time of enrollment. Means for the Usual Strategies group are unadjusted means.

^ap-values for tests of differences in impacts by enrollment cohort/cycle and by office are listed above those for the individual impact estimates.

* = statistically significant at the .10 level, ** = .05 level, and *** = .001 level on two-tailed tests.

Contract Infractions and Points Remaining

Year Up's participant contract, which sets expectations for behavior and provides a code of conduct, is an important strategy for reinforcing Year Up's high expectations. Closer monitoring of academic performance by coaches potentially could result in higher rates of recorded contract infractions, but also could lead to greater conformance with expectations and, thus, lower rates of participant firings.

The alternative strategies tested did not alter significantly the number of recorded infractions for participants during L&D (Table 20). Those in the Alternative Strategies Group had an average of 7.0 infractions and those in the Usual Strategies Group had an average of 6.6 infractions. The only notable subgroup difference was for the PTC-JAX program, where those in the Alternative Strategies Group had an average of 1.5 more recorded contract infractions than did their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group—a difference that is statistically significant at the .09 level.

In contrast to findings for contract infractions, participants in the Alternative Strategies Group had an average of 29 more contract points at the end of L&D than did their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group—a difference that is statistically significant at the .07 level. However, this difference is entirely concentrated among participants who enrolled in Cycle 2, where those in the Alternative Strategies Group had an average of 63 more points than their counterparts in the Usual Strategies group at the end of

L&D—a difference that is statistically significant at the .003 level. Moreover, the impacts are generated from positive impacts on contract point balances for the Alternative Strategies Groups in the Philadelphia (PTC-P) and New York City (PTC-BMCC) programs. Participants in both the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups in the PTC-JAX program had similar, relatively high contract point balances at the end of L&D (about 209 out of 360 possible points—150 initial points, plus up to 10 points per week over 21 weeks of L&D with no infractions).

Table 20. Estimated Impacts of the Alternative Strategies for Academic Monitoring and Supports on Behavioral Outcomes

	Group Means		Difference in Means		95% Confidence Interval	
	Alternative Strategies	Usual Strategies	Difference	p-Value ^a	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Number of Contract Infractions During L&D						
Overall	7.03	6.56	0.47	0.414	-0.47	1.41
Cohort/Cycle				0.256		
1 January 2018	7.42	6.27	1.15	0.204	-0.35	2.65
2 July 2018	6.64	6.81	-0.17	0.816	-1.37	1.03
Office				0.203		
PTC-P	4.78	5.37	-0.59	0.450	-1.87	0.69
PTC-BMCC	8.52	8.26	0.26	0.834	-1.80	2.32
PTC-JAX	8.05	6.50	1.55 *	0.087	0.07	3.03
Number of Contract Points Remaining at the end of L&D						
Overall	195.64	166.9	28.74 *	0.070	2.80	54.68
Cohort/Cycle				0.023		
1 January 2018	178.24	187.47	-9.23	0.696	-48.00	29.54
2 July 2018	212.76	149.38	63.38 ***	0.003	28.51	98.25
Office				0.355		
PTC-P	179.55	137.37	42.18 *	0.085	1.99	82.37
PTC-BMCC	198.39	143.45	54.94 *	0.051	8.83	101.05
PTC-JAX	209.51	208.59	0.92	0.974	-45.22	47.06
Sample Size	154	163	317			

Source: Data are from the Year Up program data system.

Notes: These data were weighted to account for the blocking of participants prior to randomization. The estimates of the mean difference between the treatment groups are based on regression models that included covariates for participant characteristics at the time of program enrollment. Means for the Usual Strategies Group are unadjusted means. Full regression estimates are available from the first author upon request. The maximum contract points participants could have at the end of L&D is 360 (150 initial points, plus up to 10 points per week over 21 weeks of L&D with no infractions).

^ap-values for tests of differences in impacts by enrollment cohort/cycle and by office are listed above those for the individual impact estimates.

* = statistically significant at the .10 level, ** = .05 level, and *** = .001 level on two-tailed tests.

3.6.2 Exploring Mechanisms through which Impacts Occurred

The study included two sub-analyses designed to help understand factors that may explain the observed impacts. One is an examination of how participants report having experienced the program, particularly as it relates to their engagement in their courses and experiences with their instructors, their coaches, and their peers. The other is an examination of similarities and differences in the actions of coaches during group and one-on-one coaching with an eye towards identifying possible patterns that may shed light on the alternative strategies that may have contributed to the observed impacts.

Participants' in both treatment groups reported generally similar program experiences.

Based on data from the supplement to the web-based Pre-Internship survey (see Appendix H, Volume II) administered to participants by Year Up near the end of L&D (or, for participants who terminated early,

administered within days of their departure), there were no notable differences in how participants in the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups viewed their program experiences.

Participants the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups reported generally similar levels of school and work-related activities (Table 21). Participants in the two groups reported taking similar numbers of courses (an average of about 4.5), and experiencing similar levels of course difficulty (on average, moderate). Those in the Alternative Strategies Group reported spending slightly more time, on average, on homework (11 versus 9.7 hours a week) and completing an average of .34 more courses (4.2 versus 3.9). However, none of these differences is statistically significant at conventional levels. Both groups reported working about 12 hours a week, on average, and had similar views on the extent to which work adversely affected their academics (on average, moderate).

Table 21. Participants' Reported Views of Their Learning Experiences during L&D

Measure	Group Means		Difference in Means		Confidence Interval	
	Alternative Strategies	Usual Strategies	Difference	p-Value	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Academics						
Courses during L&D	4.61	4.51	0.10	0.6790	-0.37	0.57
Difficulty of courses (1 = very difficult - 3 = not difficult)	2.23	2.16	0.07	0.3657	-0.08	0.22
Hours per week on homework	11.05	9.71	1.34	0.3033	-1.22	3.90
Number of courses completed	4.24	3.90	0.34	0.2587	-0.26	0.95
Employment						
Hours per week worked for pay	12.10	12.86	-0.76	0.7391	-5.25	3.73
Degree work adversely affected academics (1 = not at all - 3 = a great deal)	2.20	2.16	0.04	0.7523	-0.21	0.30
Sample Size	134	114	248			

Source: These data are from an online survey administered to participants. Participants who completed the Learning and Development (L&D) phase of the program received the survey very near the completion of L&D. Those who left the program before completing L&D were asked to complete the survey shortly after they left the program. It was an augmented version of the Pre-Internship Survey Year Up has participants complete prior to entering their internship positions.

Notes: Overall, 78% of participant in the study sample completed the survey—84% of those in the Alternative Strategies group and 72% of those in the Usual Strategies Group.

* = statistically significant at the .10 level, ** = .05 level, and *** = .001 level on two-tailed tests.

When asked whether they had encountered various challenges in their most difficult course (i.e., attending class regularly, keeping up with assignments, doing well on tests and assignments, understanding the course), the responses for the two groups were generally quite similar. Both groups reported having had moderate success getting timely feedback and having received moderate levels of support when they did encounter difficulties. This support most often came from PTC program staff, other participants in the class, or college instructors. Neither group reported using tutors frequently.

Despite quite distinct differences in the tactics used by coaches working with participants in the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups (see further discussion below), participants in both groups reported having high levels of communication with their coaches. This suggests that a high level of communication with one's coach does not necessarily translate into meaningful coaching.

Overall, participants in both the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups reported having had good experiences in the program and reported being very likely to recommend the program to others (average scores of 8.38 and 8.52 on a scale of 0 to 10 for the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups, respectively) (see Appendix Table A.6, Volume II). Even though the academic coaching differed substantially between the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups, participants in the two groups generally reported similar assessments of the feedback and support they received on their coursework from college staff and peers.

However, participants in the Alternative Strategies Group rated the quality of the support from Year Up staff significantly higher than did those in the Usual Strategies Group.

With a few exceptions, participants in both groups reported having received similar types, intensities, and qualities of supports to address challenges and similar overall levels of satisfaction with the program. This suggests that participants were not aware that there was something quite different going on during coaching (both one-on-one and individual) for those in the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups.

Coaches in the two treatment groups reported different approaches to working with participants.

Coaches were envisioned as the primary agents for fostering improvements in participant outcomes and, based on their responses to the Coach Survey, it appears that they modified their behavior in the intended ways. For example, higher percentages of those working with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group, as compared with their counterparts who worked with participants in the Usual Strategies Group, reported using coaching time to address academic, social, personal, and work issues, while only slightly lower percentages reported using coaching time to address Year Up-related issues (see Table 22).

Alternative Strategies Participant: *"With me, she [coach] would get with my professors or I would tell her myself. And sometimes I would pull up my grades to her And she would give me the support if I needed it"* (PTC-JAX).

Usual Strategies Participant: *"As far as my (college) classes, [my coach] would ask me about them but it was up to me to disclose, so I guess if somebody said they were doing fine, and they weren't, the coach wouldn't find out"* (PTC-P).

Coaches implementing the alternative strategies for monitoring and supporting participants in Cycle 2 reported having substantially greater awareness of the academic challenges that participants were facing during L&D compared to coaches working with participants in the Usual Strategies Group. For example, even though participants were randomly assigned to the Alternative or Usual Strategies Groups and, thus, statistically identical in their readiness for the program, coaches using the alternative strategies were more likely than those using the usual strategies to report academics as a major challenge for their coachees based on recent coaching sessions (15 versus 3 percent). Conversely, coaches using usual strategies were more likely to report that academics were "not at all" an issue for their coachees (37 versus 23 percent).

The most notable difference in reported behavior by coaches was the amount of time coaches spent discussing academic activities, performance and support needs of participants. In approximately 43 percent of coaching sessions with participants in the Alternative Strategies Group, coaches reported discussing academics for "most of the time," compared to coaching sessions with participants in the Usual Strategies Group (only 11 percent). As mentioned above, this focus on academic issues during coaching did not appear to come at the expense of discussing other issues (e.g., personal, social, work).

Alternative Strategies Student: *" My coach recommended [that I] go to the lab . . . and ask [T]here's people that work there . . . and to ask my professor, and I did and got my grades up"* (Site 2)

Usual Strategies Student: *"The staff will tell you to access the [college tutoring center] if you needed it. One of the things here is [to] use the resources"* (PTC-P)

Specifically, coaches in the Alternative Strategies Group were more likely to discuss personal issues (41 percent of coaching sessions) compared to coaches in the Usual Strategies Group (22 percent of coaching sessions). The same was true for discussing social issues in coaching (41 percent versus 22 percent of coaching sessions with the Alternative and Usual Strategies Groups, respectively) and work-related issues (35 percent versus 25 percent of coaching sessions with Alternative Strategies and Usual Strategies Group, respectively).

Notably, coaches in the Alternative Strategies Group also were three times more likely than their counterparts in the Usual Strategies Group to report having referred participants to tutoring (43 versus 14 percent). However, both coaches and participants reported that tutoring was not always well aligned with participants' needs and not always easily accessible.

Interestingly, participants in both treatment groups reported regular communication with their coaches (an average of 3.7 – 3.8 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = never and 5 = daily). Furthermore, participants in both treatment groups reported frequently receiving feedback and support from college instructors, PTC program staff, and others in the class (average score of 2.2 to 2.6 on a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 = never and 3 = frequently). Moreover, they generally rated the quality of feedback from college instructors, PTC program staff, and other participants in their classes to be good to excellent and timely. Participants in both groups reported relatively low frequencies of receiving feedback and support from tutors at the college or online (average score of 1.3 to 1.6).

Table 22. Perceptions and Actions of Coaches Working with Participants in the Alternative and Usual Strategies Treatment Groups (Percentage of Coaching Sessions Where Coach Reported Indicated Response)

Coaching Behaviors	Group Means	
	Alternative Strategies	Usual Strategies
Perceptions		
Coach reported that academics are:		
Not at all an issue	23.3	36.9
Not much of an issue	13.3	27.7
Somewhat of an issue	25.0	20.3
Small issue	23.3	12.3
Major issue	15.0	3.1
Use of Coaching Time		
Coach reported discussing the following topics during coaching:		
Academics	50.8	23.9
Personal	41.3	22.5
Social	41.3	23.9
Work	34.9	25.4
Year Up topics	38.1	42.3
Other topics	20.6	16.9
Coach reported spending indicated amounts of time on academics:		
None	2.0	25.0
Small amount	9.8	23.2
Moderate amount	13.7	19.6
Quite a bit	31.4	21.4
Most of the time	43.1	10.7
Referrals		
Coach reported referring participants to tutoring		
Yes	46.0	14.1
No	54.0	85.9
Sample Size (Coaching Groups)		
Total Study Sample	15	17
Survey Respondents	12	15
Survey Response Rate (%)	80	88

Source: Survey administered to coaches near the end of Cycle 2.

Note: The study sample consists of coaches who were employed in Year Up with the July 2018 cohort at the three study sites. These are unadjusted sample means.

3.7 Discussion

Local and National Program staff uniformly judged the impact study to be a success. Year Up National and the evaluation team guided the local program staff to come up with and test promising ways of increasing their awareness of academic challenges participants were facing and intervening to address them. Some of the initial approaches considered by program staff proved impractical or infeasible and others were modified and improved over the course of the study. However, the bundle changes that

programs implemented for the Alternative Strategies Group over the two cycles of testing resulted in sizeable improvements in the academic persistence of participants, especially in the second cycle of testing. Moreover, these changes are ones that would be relatively easy for other programs to adopt at low-to-no cost. The improved outcomes appear to be anchored in finding ways to routinize access to information about participant engagement and performance in their college courses, using that information to engage with participants who are experiencing difficulties, and eventually identifying contributing factors and promising remedial strategies.

3.7.1 Increased Access to Participants' Grades and Other Performance Indicators

At the beginning of the study period, PTC program and college staff used different LMSs without shared access. In the interest of more timely identification and response to academic issues and other difficulties, Philadelphia PTC program staff (but not staff in the other programs in the study) obtained access during coaching sessions to the college's LMS. This system tracked completion of assignments, as well as interim and final course grades and credit accumulation. Initial experience suggested that information captured in the college LMS was less timely and detailed than needed for reliable early identification of problems.

Following the impact study, PTC-P program staff appear to be logging onto the system more regularly than previously. There are two potential explanations for the increased usage. First, PTC-P staff learned about the utility of the LMS through the findings of the impact study. Second, all PTC-P staff have access to the new LMS, Canvas, adopted by Peirce College in 2017, and they are finding it easier to navigate than the previous LMS. However, the utility of Canvas is limited by the information instructors choose to upload to their course site, and how often they do so.

Following completion of the study, coaches at the PTC-P program (and possibly other study sites) have begun to have participants routinely pull up grades during coaching sessions as a means of staying on top of their progress, as well as routinizing and facilitating conversations about academic progress. Accessing the college LMS during coaching sessions seems to change the coaching conversation and bring academics to the foreground. There is greater accountability and follow-through by participants and coaches on what takes place during coaching, as coaches are filling out weekly logs of participants' grades and assignments.

In addition to PTC staff accessing the college LMS, further efforts on the part of colleges may also help to improve PTC staff's access and awareness of participants' academic performance. For instance, Peirce College administrators noted that academic reports are now sent out to PTC-P staff with information about participant academic performance; however, they also shared that more could be done to walk PTC-P staff through these reports. One Peirce College Administrator noted:

"I think on the Peirce side, we have to do a better job with, when reports come out, not just sending them and ... sitting down and walking Year Up through the reports is important. It's a lot better. It's a lot better, but I think we can still strengthen the communication between those reports."

3.7.2 Organizing for Quicker, Better Response to Signs of Academic Challenges

In Cycle 2 of the impact study, coaches in the Alternative Strategies Group were trained on the use of an Academic Coaching Binder (Year Up, 2018), which provides resources and suggestions for coaches when they find a coachee encountering issues related to academics. The Binder and the Notes Sheet (see Appendix Q, Volume II) helped Alternative Strategies Coaches establish routines in coaching around academics and equipped them with tools for asking questions related to academics and providing supports to participants who were facing academic difficulties (see, for example, Appendices N, O, and P, Volume II).

Academic Coaching Binder: *"The coaching binder [....] was so awesome ... because [instead of asking] 'Okay so how was your weekend' [we focus on] how can we [help you] academically?" (PTC-P Staff)*

There has also been improved information tracking and increased communication about participant issues within and across learning communities (LCs). More often now, when issues are surfaced in coaching sessions, coaches share the information with other LC staff during LC meetings. This allows for group troubleshooting of academic issues. Additionally, there is increased communication across LCs using “Chatter”—an online component of Salesforce. Chatter also provides spaces for staff to log notes after talking with a participant and to track red flags in a collaborative manner.

Improved Tracking of Issues: *“I’ve seen [tracking] grow in the last cohort. Nothing was recorded before I came here so now we’re recording conversations, I don’t even think they were using EPIC [support] plans. I don’t think they were using anything.” (PTC-P Staff)*

3.7.3 Improving Academic Supports from Peirce College

Troubleshooting participant academic issues has reportedly become a more collaborative effort between Peirce College’s Academic Advisor and PTC-P program staff. There now are multiple avenues through which participant academic challenges are shared. First, bi-weekly meetings have been established with the Peirce College Academic Advisor and the Associate Director of Programs and Program Managers at PTC-P. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss various participants’ academic challenges. Second, the Academic Advisor now contacts Program Managers (generally by e-mail), as needed, to share information obtained through college instructors. Often times, this is followed up with a conversation between the Academic Advisor and Program Managers, and it may lead to meetings with particular program participants.

Although there now are more systems for communication and collaboration in place than prior to the study, several PTC-P program staff mentioned that, still, too often academic issues are not communicated to PTC-P staff until it is too late for intervention. In addition, PTC-P program staff noted that the academic resources available at Peirce College are limited and participants frequently say they have difficulty accessing them. For example, Peirce College staff described its tutoring center (the Walker Center) as open throughout the day and evening and highly accessible to participants. However, the center generally has only one or a handful of tutors available at any time. Moreover, in focus groups, students have reported that the tutoring services provided were not particularly helpful. However, it is not clear whether the tutors are ineffective or PTC-P participants lack the initiative and/or requisite skills to engage with them productively.

In addition to tutoring, Peirce College has recently undertaken efforts to provide low-cost internet and to subsidize computer purchases by participants. Initially, few PTC-P participants reportedly availed themselves of these supports. However, both PTC-P program and Peirce College staff indicated in the most recent round of interviews that use of them has begun to increase following efforts to promote awareness of their availability.

PTC-P program staff and Peirce College administrators continue to work to create convenient spaces that encourage participants to spend time studying at the college where they can also access these academic support services. For example, PTC-P participants who fail to participate in mandatory study halls or tutoring may lose contract points. Furthermore, with the increased focus on academics during coaching and in LC meetings, participants are more frequently receiving encouragement to take advantage of tutoring services at Peirce College.

3.8 Study Limitations

This was a relatively short-term, low-budget evaluation that had a narrow focus; it focused exclusively on the impacts of the tested improvement strategies, not on overall impacts of the program. In addition to its narrow focus on the specific improvement strategies, the study has several other notable limitations. First, it does not provide evidence on the value-added of providing guaranteed textbook access as, in the end, this was not included in the test. Second, it does not provide any evidence on the value of the Wi-Fi

hotspots, which were viewed by the PTC-P program staff as an important resource for many participants. In the end, the program encountered legal and procedural issues in procuring the hotspots for sharing among participants. Third, the study does not provide good information on the consistency and reliability with which coaches in the Alternative Strategies Group used the Weekly Academic Coaching Notes Sheet and the Academic Coaching Binder. This was deliberate in so far as the evaluation team judged that it was more important to invest time and resources in shared learning and mid-course corrections driven by professional judgments of Year Up staff than to do close monitoring of daily operations. Finally, the study did not collect detailed data on the incidences and nature of the academic challenges faced by participants. This too was a deliberate choice by the evaluation team to not disrupt normal operations by burdening staff with additional tracking requirements.

4. Summary and Recommendations

This report provides the first in-depth assessment of the implementation of Year Up's next-generation Professional Training Corps (PTC) program. The study fulfills a requirement of a SIF grant for the PTC site in Philadelphia (PTC-P). Although primarily focused on PTC-P, the report also provides information on a number of other PTC sites as context. In addition to analytic methods typical in implementation studies, the evaluation also included an impact study (a small randomized controlled trial) to test strategies for improving academic success and program retention.

The implementation study documented many challenges encountered by Year Up National and the local program staff at the Philadelphia PTC program during their efforts to establish, strengthen, and grow the program. For example, PTC-P program staff struggled to secure an adequate number of internship seats within a reasonable commuting distance for participants. Philadelphia is among the most economically and racially segregated cities in the nation. It spans 134 square miles and has a diverse population of about 1.5 million (44 percent black, 36 percent white, 14 percent Latino, and seven percent Asian). These characteristics, along with its transportation infrastructure, complicate the process of finding accessible employer worksites for internships and post-program employment placements.

Notable, but lesser challenges stem from the decision by Year Up to partner with a private college rather than the Community College of Philadelphia (e.g., higher college tuition costs than at public colleges, differences between the Year Up target population and the older working adult population traditionally served by Peirce College). The evaluation revealed the potential for Year Up to build productive partnerships with private colleges to ensure the delivery of essential academic coursework and credentials. Originally, higher tuition was thought to be a serious limitation of partnering with a private college. However, this has been at most a minor drawback for two reasons: (1) Peirce College discounted its tuition and provided the PTC-P program with office space and a host of other in-kind supports; and (2) college costs are less than five percent of total per-participant costs of Year Up's PTC program.

As it enters its fifth year of operations, the Philadelphia PTC program has its basic services, such as its academic courses, occupational skills training courses, support services, and internships, in place and operating reasonably well. However, the program has lower enrollments, a larger staff, and less buy-in from employers than is required for financial self-sufficiency. Currently, the program's revenue from employer-sponsored internships, which is envisioned as the principal source of revenue, covers just over one third of the program's operating costs.

In order to achieve its goal of financial self-sufficiency, Year Up needs to increase enrollment, the number of internships, and the fraction of internships that are fully sponsored quite substantially. Based on Year Up's Standard Program Model, at its current staffing level, the PTC-P program would need to recruit and serve approximately one third more participants and more than triple its number of fully sponsored internships seats. The implementation evaluation provides some insights regarding opportunities and challenges to achieving these targets.

The impact study focused more narrowly on developing and testing ways the PTC program could improve its services to and outcomes for youth it recruited. Specifically, the evaluation team worked with program staff in Philadelphia and two other PTC offices to develop and test a set of alternative strategies to improve participants' success in their college coursework and their retention in the program. The evaluation team devised a relatively low-burden, low-cost, and quick-turnaround study for this purpose. The findings help to illuminate both causes and productive responses to academic difficulties. For example, compared with the existing, business-as-usual approach, a more routinized process and standardized tools for monitoring participants' academic progress enabled staff to identify and quickly address problems earlier on in the Learning and Development (L&D) phase. These and other

improvements led to a nearly 10-percentage-point improvement in completing that initial six-month training phase.

The study strengthened understanding of the breadth and depth of challenges these youth face and the ways these challenges affect their readiness for pursuing serious career preparation that entails both college coursework and workplace training. For example, seemingly simple issues such as the inability to access the college's learning management system from home can make it difficult for participants to complete homework assignments on time. The same was true for textbook access.

In general, the PTC-P's L&D and internship services appear to conform with goals and expectations for a well-functioning PTC program. Staff, participants, college partners, and employers all have reported generally favorable reactions to the program structure and services, from orientation through graduation. There appear to be strong systems in place for continuous performance monitoring and a practice of strategic intervention when weaknesses or trouble spots are identified. At this point, the priority concerns pertain to the recruitment pipeline and internship sponsorship. The following are three suggestions that could be helpful in addressing them:

1. Engage in more aggressive and broad-based strategies to strengthen the participant recruitment pipeline.

Recruitment has been a persistent challenge for the program. In a city that is estimated to have more than 100,000 opportunity youth, it seems both important and feasible to identify ways to attract youth who are ready and eager to take advantage of the opportunities the program offers. It would seem prudent to more aggressively engage with high school counselors, heads of the myriad youth-serving organizations in the city, religious organizations, and employment training providers (particularly those operating state and federally sponsored employment programs). The success of such efforts hinges on achieving stability of the admissions staff to allow for the creation and sustainability of lasting partnerships. Year Up National and the local PTC program team also might want to consider convening and actively engaging an advisory board comprising leaders from five to 10 prominent youth-serving organizations to aid in the construction and maintenance of a robust referral pipeline.

2. Expand the employer network to include more firms that are located on accessible public transit routes within the city limits and firms that are willing to sponsor internships.

This would be helpful in addressing the shortfall in sponsored internships and reducing transportation costs, which are many times higher than at other PTC programs. The recent restructuring of the Corporate Engagement team creates a promising opportunity to knock on new doors and revisit existing employers in efforts to strengthen and expand existing partnerships. It also may be helpful to engage a handful of leading corporate partners in an intensive program improvement initiative aimed at creating a sustainable pipeline of sponsored internship opportunities in high-demand occupations throughout the city. A more committed and enduring pipeline could be very helpful in informing the selection of future career tracks offered. As a means of identifying promising new target employers, it could be useful to conduct a mapping exercise to identify employers in neighborhoods easily accessible for the participants.

3. Consider initiating a partnership with an area public college.

There are many reasons to continue working with Peirce College. However, having this as the only college partner may constrain the recruitment pipeline as it is less well known by and less accessible among Year Up's target population. Community College of Philadelphia, for example, is more familiar to area residents and has stronger ties to area high schools than does Peirce College. Community colleges, in particular, also tend to have an array of support services commonly needed by young adult students available on campus (e.g., tutoring, health care, and counseling).

In addition to the three recommendations for improving the PTC-P program, we also encourage the continued use of mini-studies and embedded experiments to accelerate improvement throughout its many programs. The impact study component of this evaluation is one of four mini-studies of Year Up's PTC programs (including PTC-P) we conducted during the period of the Social Innovation Fund/GreenLight grant.³¹ These highly focused, quick-turnaround, low-cost studies provided Year Up National and the individual programs evaluated with valued feedback on issues relevant to achieving the program goals. For example, one of the studies dug into issues that surfaced in the interim implementation study about academic challenges and low retention during L&D—issues that, if not solved, would prevent programs from meeting overall performance goals (Maynard & Fein, 2015). This mini-study laid the groundwork for a second study, which was the impact study highlighted in this report—testing strategies for improving academic monitoring and supports, and thereby, raising retention through L&D.

Year Up National and the PTC-P program staff reported valuing the findings from these mini-studies. For example, the Philadelphia program has distributed to all staff the Academic Coaching Binder (Year Up, 2018) developed by staff who coached participants in the Alternative Strategies Group for the impact study. Staff also reported that they are continuing efforts to build on coaching routines tested as improvement strategies in the impact study. In addition, they are using communication channels established between the Student Support Services staff and the college partners during the study period.

All in all, the mini-studies appear to have been a highly efficient and effective way for Year Up National as well as the local PTC programs to improve their understanding of the challenges they encounter, and to identify and share information about promising approaches to addressing those challenges across sites. In the case of the impact study, Year Up had the opportunity to design and formally test new practices on a small scale before investing in wholesale adoption—an approach that may facilitate enhanced program improvement efforts in the future.

³¹ As noted above, these studies were funded by Social Innovation Fund/GreenLight, the Institute of Education Sciences, or both.

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