

# Preparing People of Color for Leadership: An Evaluation of Management Leadership for Tomorrow's Career Prep Program

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) is dedicated to equipping People of Color for leadership positions in business organizations and communities throughout the world. MLT achieves its mission through skilled coaching programs offered to underrepresented minorities at critical educational and career transition points in their lives. These programs are supported by an MLT alumni network of more than 7,000 members and committed partnerships with over 80 leading businesses and organizations.

Through a competitive process, MLT selected Brandeis University’s Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP) to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its Career Prep program, an intervention for students of color transitioning from college to the workforce. The evaluation employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses, including original data collection (survey data, interviews) and secondary data analyses of nationally representative data of college graduates and MLT institutional records. In particular, original data collection included 50 interviews with a range of stakeholders, and an online survey administered within the MLT community and with a key comparison group of students from low-income backgrounds attending a public university. Additional data sources involved analyses of matched samples derived from the nationally representative Baccalaureate & Beyond panel data set, collected through the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S Department of Education, and MLT institutional data.

## **The MLT Career Prep Approach**

Launched in 2002, MLT’s goal is to equip African American, Latino, and Native American college students with the “know-how, navigation, and network” to realize their full potential. Aiming at meeting a need not met by traditional university career services, MLT sees Career Prep as a “bridge between what it takes to be smart and high performing in the academic world and what it takes to be high performing in the business world.” The six pillars of the Career Prep program, identified in MLT’s 2017 Request for Proposals, are: 1) personal clarity; 2) understanding the high-performance bar; 3) knowing where you stand in relation to the bar; 4) personalized action plan to become a high performer; 5) coaching; and 6) network.

The 18-month-long Career Prep Program begins in the summer between the sophomore and junior years of college. Career Prep participants, called Fellows, engage activities on reaching personal clarity on professional goals, and receive guidance and support through professional training, internships, and job searches. Through one-on-one coaching, in-person seminars and workshops, a personalized playbook, and an extensive network, these Fellows gain access to top employers and a high-leverage professional network.

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***“There really is safety in numbers and that’s a part of why this sense of community becomes so important, because [otherwise] it is so isolating. Being the only person [of color] in a room gets lonely.”***

—MLT Leadership

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## Impact of Career Prep

The interview data provided in-depth information on the perceived impact of the Career Prep approach on its Fellows (student participants). A range of different program stakeholders were interviewed about their perspectives on this matter, including current Career Prep Fellows and alumni, Coaches, and MLT Business Partners. Five major themes concerning Career Prep’s impact on Fellows emerged from this analysis:

- 1) Acquisition of top-tier internships and jobs
- 2) Clarification of career goals
- 3) Heightened self-confidence and aspirations
- 4) Enhanced professional skills
- 5) Expanded professional and social networks.

When compared with a matched cohort drawn from the nationally representative Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B) data set following college students over time, MLT Career Prep alumni did better with respect to their first post-college position. These outcomes include entering jobs requiring a college degree, earning a higher starting salary (over \$50,000), and expecting bonuses. These results are true for comparisons of Career Prep alumni with Students of Color and White students drawn from a national sample of college attendees. Sub-analysis for women and first-generation students show similar findings, except for starting salary.

**Table 1: Career Prep (CP) Alumni Have Superior First Jobs Post-Graduation than Matched Comparisons**

Matched National Comparison Groups	First Job Required College Degree	Starting Salary Greater Than \$50,000	Expecting Bonuses
<b>Graduates of Color</b>	■	■	■
↳ Women	■	■	■
↳ First-Generation	■	■	■
<b>White Comparisons</b>	■	■	■
↳ Women	■	■	■
↳ First-Generation	■	■	■

■ CP alumni showed significantly better outcomes than their counterparts  
■ CP alumni showed no significant difference in outcomes relative to their counterparts

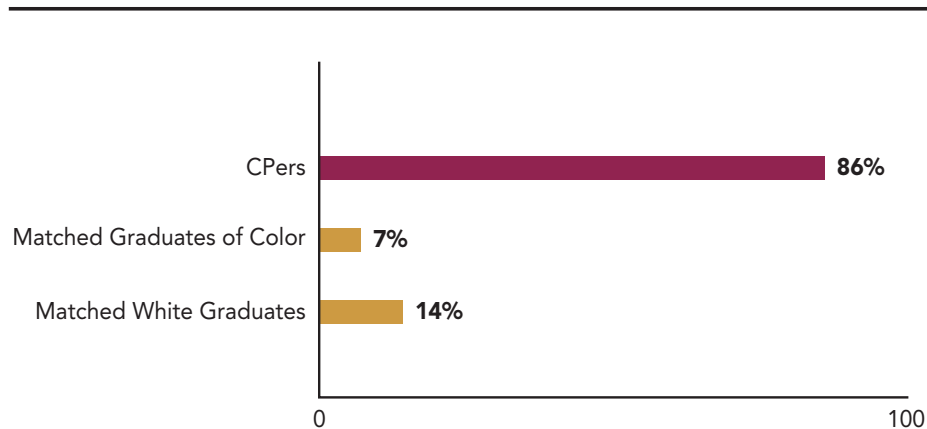
The online survey conducted by IASP provided more detailed data beyond the MLT institutional and existing national data. When comparing these survey responses from MLT Career Prep alumni who were Pell Grant recipients with responses to the same survey from a similar cohort of Pell Grant recipients<sup>1</sup> at a public flagship university, no significant differences were found regarding career aspirations, networks, and professional skills. However, there were significant differences with respect to tangible college-to-career outcomes. Specifically, Pell Career Prep alumni were more likely than Pell recipients in the comparison group to:

- Have a college internship with one of their top three employers of choice (82% versus 32%);
- Have a professional internship related to their post-college career path (87% versus 50%); and
- Receive an employment offer before college graduation for a job that required a college degree (87% versus 45%).

<sup>1</sup>The Pell Grant is from the U.S. Department of Education to help subsidize the cost of post-secondary education for low-income students. The terms “low-income” and “Pell” are used interchangeably in this report.



**Chart 1: Career Prep Alumni are More Likely to Earn Starting Salaries Above \$50,000\***



In addition, there were differences in higher quality first jobs, post college. Specifically, Career Prep alumni who had received a Pell Grant were more likely than the comparison group to:

- Receive a signing bonus (58% versus 24%);
- Receive a year-end bonus (52% versus 26%);
- Receive employer-sponsored health care benefits (95% versus 72%); and
- Have their employer contribute to a retirement account (85% versus 57%).

Thus, while these groups were similar with respect to their household family income while in college and have similar perceptions of their career aspirations, networks and professional skills, students enrolled with MLT gain significant advantages in the job market.

Civic engagement is another area in which MLT has a positive impact on its alumni. MLT's community-building approach inspires participants to give back. Alumni were more likely to mentor younger people, vote, and volunteer. Specifically, 84 percent of Pell Career Prep alumni surveyed have "paid it forward" through mentoring compared to 56 percent of the Pell recipients in the comparison group.

Finally, MLT partners with businesses in financial, consulting, consumer products, technology, and other sectors to achieve its goals. Business Partners interviewed cited MLT's ability to deliver high-performing minority talent consistently as the top reason for their investment in the program. Business Partners also noted that MLT helped them advance their diversity and inclusion goals.

## Summary

This Career Prep evaluation is a first step in assessing outcomes important to MLT and its stakeholders and holds promise for advancing diverse leadership in society. This evaluation highlights the promise of MLT's Career Prep program in supporting the college and early career advancement of students of color. While there is much to celebrate with these positive impacts, there is also room for growth and improvement. The recommendations for Career Prep focus on curriculum development, managing program growth, and data quality to inform operations and future evaluations. Our hope is that this evaluation provides a foundation for building the base of research in this socially consequential area.

\*Non-program effects for this difference include, in part, college major and first post-college position obtained during recessionary years of 2008-2009. (E.g., in the comparison group, a statistically significant higher number enrolled in non-STEM, were non-business majors, and earned under \$50,000; and a statistically higher number obtained first post-college job during these recessionary years.) Part-time employment status is another possible correlate, but this variable was not available for inclusion in the analysis.

## II. BACKGROUND

### Purpose of the Evaluation Study

With support from the Citi Foundation, MLT contracted with Brandeis University's Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP) to conduct an evaluation of the Career Prep (CP) program. The primary purpose of the Career Prep evaluation was to “measure the impact and effectiveness in helping high-potential college students translate academic achievement into career success.”<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the evaluation question focused on whether outcomes related to college-to-career transitions, early career experience and progression, and civic engagement are due to the Career Prep intervention. Comparing Career Prep participant outcomes to those of college-educated non-participants from similar social and economic backgrounds (including both People of Color and Whites) were the two main goals. The Methods section identifies the approaches employed to meet these evaluation goals.

Impacts are relevant for multiple stakeholders. For Career Prep participants (current and alumni), does their engagement in the program lead to better career outcomes? For Business Partners who invest in Career Prep and hire minority talent, does this partnership help meet the company's business objectives? For MLT and their other sponsors, who are committed to transforming minority talent into leaders in their communities and workplaces, is there evidence this is happening? With a limited number of programs such as Career Prep and no known impact evaluations of similar interventions, this assessment of the impact of the Career Prep program begins to add to the knowledge gap on impacts of coaching students of color during early adulthood. This Career Prep evaluation is a first step in assessing outcomes important to MLT and its stakeholders and holds promise for advancing diverse leadership in society.

In conducting the evaluation, a number of opportunities for improvement were identified. Some are suggested program adjustments that surfaced in interviews and survey responses. Others are potential improvements in institutional data collection and other operational matters that will enable continued evaluation and future adjustment.

### Methods

Qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in assessing the impacts of MLT's Career Prep Program. A mix of participant and comparison group survey data, nationally representative data, MLT institutional records, interview data, and comparison group data from a public flagship university were used. Absent a randomized control trial,<sup>3</sup> this study employed the most feasible and strongest possible design to support causal claims about the effects of MLT's Career Prep program on participants' career progress.

For the original data collection, the MLT team — led by Damian Saccocio (MLT VP, Technology and Analytics), Kevin Donahue (MLT, VP Strategy and Growth) and Lance Potter (New Profit, Director of Evaluation) — provided weekly input and guidance as interview questions were framed, surveys were designed, and criteria for selecting stakeholders for interviews were determined.

For the evaluation of MLT Career Prep program, this study:

- Created matched samples of Career Prep alumni survey respondents based on parents' educational levels, with a nationally representative sample of college students and their employment post college from the Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B) dataset, third cohort.

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<sup>2</sup>MLT Request for Proposals, May 2017.

<sup>3</sup>A randomized control trial was not possible due to time and cost constraints.

This dataset, collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, was chosen over other datasets because the data include some, but not all, of the before-and-after college graduation measures of interest to MLT. Propensity Score Matching (PSM) was based on parent educational levels as the best available proxy for family socio-economic status. Two datasets of 1:1 matches were created: (1) a dataset comparing MLT Career Prep alumni with college graduates of color in the B&B dataset, specifically African American, Latino, and Native Americans; and (2) a dataset comparing MLT Career Prep alumni and White college graduates in the B&B dataset. The separate dataset for People of Color (PoC) was created to guarantee representation that might not otherwise occur in matching from a national dataset with low proportions of People of Color (16 percent). Sub-analyses were conducted for Women of Color and White women, and People of Color and White first-generation college graduates to explore early career outcomes. (See Figure 2, page 17, for more details including sample sizes.)

- Conducted an online survey with Career Prep Fellows and alumni, and with a comparison group of alumni from a public flagship university who received the Pell Grant and other targeted supports through a scholarship program for low-income students. The online survey captured data on outcomes of interest to MLT not captured in the other data sources. Matched samples of Career Prep alumni with alumni from a public flagship university were based on year of college graduation. These alumni were chosen as a comparison group because most are high-achieving People of Color accessible to researchers because of past professional academic relationships. Year of college graduation was chosen for matching to control for the “Great Recession” of the late 2000s to early 2010s.<sup>4</sup> To compare students of similar backgrounds, a final dataset of 1:1 matches was further reduced for primary analysis based on Pell Grant recipient status (as a proxy for low income). (See Figure 1, page 14, for more details, including sample size.)
- Interviewed four types of stakeholders: current Career Prep Fellows; Career Prep alumni referred to as “Rising Leaders;” MLT coaches; and MLT Business Partners.<sup>5</sup> A profile of interviewees is as follows:

**Table 2: Number of Invited and Completed Interviews, by Stakeholder Group**

Stakeholder Group	# Invited	# of Respondents
CP Fellows	13	3
CP Alumni or “Rising Leaders”	38	25
Business Partners	13	8
CP Coaches	7	7
<b>Total # Key Stakeholder Interviews</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>43</b>

Outcomes measures for MLT’s Career Prep program included:

- Early career and community engagement measures (in comparison with national data)
- College degree requirement for first post-college position

<sup>4</sup>As employment shifted with the “Great Recession,” it would have been inappropriate to compare groups during that period with groups before or after.

<sup>5</sup>MLT uses the term “Rising Leaders” to refer to its formal program for alumni in order to reflect the ongoing nature of leadership development.

- Starting salary
- Employer-sponsored benefits
- Expected employer bonus
- Volunteering
- Voting
- College-to-career, early career, career progression, and civic engagement measures were based on survey data with low-income Pell Grant recipients. (See Figure 1, page 14, for examples of outcome measures and Appendix A for a full list of these outcome measures.)

Bivariate and multivariate analyses were conducted. Controls in logistic, multinomial, and linear regression models included select demographic and academic variables. Demographic variables included gender, race, U.S. birthplace, first-generation college status, and family household income while in college. Academic variables included college type, major type, final GPA, and amount of loan debt. Figures 1 and 2 depict these control variables. For career progression outcome measures, additional control variables included industry type and graduate/professional school. All reported findings are of statistical significance. (See Appendix B for additional information on study design methods, handling of missing data, and interview and survey instruments.)

Of note, this research design was modified from the original IASP proposal due to two key data quality challenges: missing, disparate, and/or MLT institutional data not centralized in one dataset; and low online survey response rates. For example, starting salary, a key proposed outcome measure, is not captured in the MLT Salesforce database. Further, students who were on a waitlist were the strongest comparison group for the Career Prep program, but only 12 of 675 (or less than 2 percent) responded to the survey.<sup>6</sup> (See Appendix C for a summary comparing the proposed original evaluation design to the actual design and the reasons for the differences.)

Despite these modifications, what is provided in this report is a solid beginning to documenting MLT's impact. Recommendations for future data collection and research designs are included in the Recommendations section.

## Career Prep Program Overview

MLT's vision for the future is a world "where inequality is no more — where People of Color realize their full potential and diverse leadership is no longer underrepresented." To move the needle in making this vision a reality, MLT focuses its coaching and other support interventions on what can be termed "choke points" or critical transitional periods in the educational and career trajectories of People of Color. The idea is that by providing coaching and other supports during these critical periods, People of Color can substantially improve their opportunities for advancement, and overcome the implicit bias and institutional patterns that put them at a disadvantage. For instance, the transition from college to career is a choke point at which People of Color fill only 5-7 percent of entry-level, fast-track business positions.<sup>7</sup>

Career Prep was launched in 2002 to equip African American, Latino, and Native American college students with the "know-how, navigation, and network" to realize their full potential. MLT sees Career Prep as a "bridge between what it takes to be smart and high performing in the academic world and what it takes to be high performing in the business world." In many ways, Career Prep aims at meeting a need not met by traditional university career service departments, while complementing other organizations working within the same ecosystem.

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<sup>6</sup>As a small incentive, all respondents were entered into a drawing to receive one of twenty \$25 Amazon gift cards.

<sup>7</sup>Interview with John Rice, MLT CEO, October 10, 2017.

We know there are stark racial disparities in who is able to get and stay “ahead” in society; hence, it is essential to understanding the transition from college to work. Chetty et al. (2017) have reinforced that the selectivity of the college one attends matters for upward mobility. In terms of race, research by Conley (2009) and The Pew Charitable Trust (2012) found that relative to Whites, Blacks were not only much more likely to occupy the bottom of the family income and wealth ladders but also had a more difficult time exceeding their parents’ family income and wealth. By contrast, Whites from the bottom quartile had an almost fifty-fifty chance of ending up in the top half of the wealth distribution. The transition out of college and into the workforce may be key, since first conditions matter in most long-term dynamics.

Understanding the effects of coaching college students prior to embarking on a career matters, but it is largely unexplored territory. Few programs are in the MLT Career Prep value stream and, to our knowledge, no programs are similarly holistic in their developmental, coaching approach. There is growing literature on the impact of coaching to facilitate the success of underrepresented students making it to and through college, showing promise with enrollment (Arnold et al., 2009; Castleman, Arnold and Wartman, 2012) and persistence (Castleman, Page, and Schooley, 2014). However, impact evaluations on coaching interventions to support students of color in transitioning from college to career are lacking.

Research shows consistently that diversity in staffing and leadership is good for business (Hunt, Layton & Prince, 2015),<sup>8</sup> but there remains a significant gap in diversity among corporate leaders. MLT addresses this consequential gap by partnering with businesses to develop and deliver high-quality minority talent who embody the potential to become top corporate leaders.

## **Business Partners**

MLT partners with businesses in financial, consulting, consumer products, technology, and other sectors to achieve its goals.<sup>9</sup> Through its programs, MLT develops and delivers highly qualified minority talent at multiple stages in the professional pipeline; these interventions include its college-to-career program, (Career Prep), its early career programs (MBA Prep and MBA Professional Development) and its professional and mid-career programs (Experienced Hire and Career Advancement). In turn, MLT Business Partners financially support MLT (historically, 80 percent of MLT’s budget has been through these partnerships<sup>10</sup>) and specifically assists with Career Prep in various capacities, including curriculum development and delivery. For many partners, MLT is their best source for diverse talent, as is described later in this report. MLT also provides consultative services for companies on strategy and tactics for building a more stable and diverse talent pipeline; these consultations are based on MLT’s years of experience in this space. (Appendix D illustrates the growth of MLT’s Business Partners by sectors.)

## **How Career Prep Works**

Over an 18-month period that begins in the summer between the sophomore and junior years of college, students of color who apply and are admitted to the Career Prep program are called Fellows. These Fellows engage in a journey of personal clarity and professional training, receiving guidance and support through internships and job searches. Through one-on-one coaching, in-person seminars and workshops, a personalized playbook, and an extensive network, these Fellows gain access to top employers and a high-leverage professional network.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Research by Hunt, Layton & Prince from McKinsey & Company finds companies in the top quartile of race or ethnic diversity were 30 percent more likely to have financial returns above the national industry mean.

<sup>9</sup>In 2007, 83 businesses partnered with MLT; most of them (54) also partnered with Career Prep.

<sup>10</sup>Conversation with Cristal Baron, MLT vice president of finance and operations, December 15, 2017.

<sup>11</sup>The six pillars of the Career Prep program, identified in MLT’s 2017 Request for Proposals, are: 1) personal clarity; 2) understanding the high-performance bar; 3) knowing where you stand in relation to the bar; 4) personalized action plan to become a high performer; 5) coaching; and 6) network.



Coaching is delivered through seven MLT paid staff members who work remotely and are supported through onboarding with a senior coach and weekly or biweekly calls with the MLT coaching team. All coaches have worked in fields Fellows hope to pursue and are selected based on their success in those fields. They bring an appreciation for MLT's talent development approach, work well with a team, and are proficient at delivering coaching in a virtual setting. For each cohort, coaches have 50-55 Fellows they are responsible for advising, guiding, motivating, providing perspective, and holding accountable. They structure their own calls with Fellows (sometimes with groups of two or three students), which occur once per month.

Coaches take steps early on to establish trust with their Fellows and work through challenges beyond career, such as personal hardships. In the beginning, the nature of the relationship is highly structured, but as Fellows move toward their senior years the coaches pull back and the Fellows become more self-directed. Coaches also work through the elements of the curriculum while providing feedback on assignments. More informally, Coaches may address challenges Fellows face assimilating into a corporate career path as underrepresented minorities. As one MLT leader commented, "The Coaches and leadership in the Career Prep program do a remarkable job of transforming these young people, and they believe so much in their potential."

Four seminars are held for Fellows in different parts of the country over the course of the 18-month Career Prep program. Fellows are required to attend all seminars; travel expenses are covered through the program. Business partners sponsor seminars and are engaged in developing and delivering curriculum. During these seminars, Fellows continue to gain skills and understanding; are exposed to business partners, internship, and employment opportunities; and can further build their peer networks.

The Career Prep playbook consists of a curriculum that focuses on personal clarity, understanding the high-performance bar in corporate fast-track fields, and knowing where each Fellow stands in relation to the bar. Personal clarity is achieved by aligning passions, strengths, and interests with career goals. Unpacking the bar provides Fellows with an opportunity to understand the "hurdle rate" for "success in a chosen career path" and "demystifying it in such a way so Fellows understand what it takes to get over the hurdle."<sup>12</sup> Specifically, Fellows receive inside knowledge about high performance from the standpoint of decision makers in their chosen careers and from people who have been down the same path. MLT coaches then work with Fellows to help them understand where they stand relative to this high-performance bar. Coaches and students work together to create a personalized plan for the Fellow to become a high performer as he or she transitions from college to career.

Fellows are exposed to a supportive network of high-performing peers — through their Coach cohort and as they engage in the seminars — that can immediately provide camaraderie, motivation, and advice, and later can provide career-advancing connections and endorsements. With high-performing peers, however, it could easily become more competitive than supportive. To combat this, MLT selects for and works on building a supportive culture; in turn, this also supports MLT's leadership development objective. One of MLT's messages is "if you're not bolstering diverse candidates in the environment, then you're cutting them down."<sup>13</sup> Teamwork is an MLT core value that is expressed and reinforced through the program. For example, it is underscored that every class that has gone before is expected to help the class that follows.

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<sup>12</sup>Interview with MLT program staff, October 12, 2017

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

As one MLT leader noted:

*There really is safety in numbers and that's a part of why this sense of community becomes so important, because [otherwise] it is so isolating. Being the only person [of color] in a room gets lonely ... Those are the intangible aspects of what MLT does for our Fellows. It transcends the hard skills. It is confidence. It is security. It is knowing you can't get there alone. You'll have a better chance of success if you pull together on that rope than if you just try to outshine one another.*

Since 2014, elements of the program have been assessed within MLT, and have demonstrated strong results in satisfaction, job placements, and more.<sup>14</sup> Still, the program continues to evolve to best meet the needs of business partners and student participants. One recent program change, for example, is further individualizing the curriculum, moving away from a universal curriculum to support student skill development in a sector of interest — a change supported by these evaluation findings.

### Career Prep Fellows

During the sophomore year in college, underrepresented students (African Americans, Latinos/as, Native Americans) with a career interest in business or technology apply for the Career Prep program. The only cost is a \$199 non-refundable program fee upon acceptance. MLT seeks candidates who demonstrate leadership experience, show a strong academic record (average GPA is 3.5/4.0), are coachable (willingness to improve and be accountable for performance), demonstrate readiness for a high level of program commitment, and show “scrappiness” — an unwavering resolve to accomplish an objective.

Scrappiness is not only part of the selection criteria for Fellows but is also a disposition cultivated by MLT. As one Rising Leader put it, the “biggest lesson” she learned from her participation in Career Prep was “being scrappy. That stands out to me ... scrappy to me is resourceful, creative — you go above and beyond to get the job done.”

Over the past 15 years, the Career Prep cohort has grown from 30 Fellows in 2003 to 314 in 2016, hailing from approximately 100 colleges and universities in 36 states. In 2016, the Career Prep completion rate was 90 percent, representing a substantial recovery from 2013 when a quarter of the Fellows did not complete the program. (See Appendix E for Career Prep acceptance rates and completion data.)

Competition for admission has increased since the program's inception.<sup>15</sup> Business Partners seek educationally and professionally prepared students. With each class, MLT tries to create a mix of savvy, well-prepared students combined with students who have had fewer opportunities to excel, but who demonstrate high potential. For these other students, MLT considers their “scrappiness and passion.” MLT coaches are considered good at identifying “diamonds in the rough” and at identifying candidates who most need MLT if they are to succeed. Still, a “pain point” for MLT is that the Career Prep program cannot grow and become more inclusive in its admissions policies unless MLT has the resources to bring on Business Partners that can support the students.

There can be a natural tension between satisfying the corporate objectives and priorities of MLT Business Partners and the career goals of the Fellows. MLT's orientation however, is to enhance an individual's career trajectory, as that will enable economic mobility and transform the talent pipeline of U.S. companies. As John Rice, MLT CEO noted, the program “always focuses on the best next step for the individual — [Business] Partners don't want someone who is not going to be a good fit for them.” This was echoed in interviews with other stakeholders.

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<sup>14</sup>Career Prep 2016 End of Program Survey Results, June 2017.

<sup>15</sup>For example, of late, approximately 50 percent of applicants have had exposure to the corporate world through internships, which is a substantial increase according to interviews with MLT program staff, October 12, 2017.

## III. FINDINGS

### Motivation and Personal Meaning

Data for this section derive from qualitative interviews and focus on the motivations for key stakeholders (Fellows, Rising Leaders, Coaches, and Business Partners)<sup>16</sup> to become involved with the MLT Career Prep program. While each stakeholder group offered different perspectives on motivations to join MLT, an underlying theme was the shared perception of the program as a valued and effective vehicle for pursuing their personal and organizational agendas. Perspectives on Career Prep from each stakeholder group are provided below.

#### Career Prep Fellows and Rising Leaders

Career Prep Fellows and Rising Leaders described having been strongly oriented toward careers in business from early on in their college experience, although not all majored in business. Many viewed MLT's Career Prep program as a valuable opportunity to receive vocational guidance and help in overcoming barriers Students of Color face in pursuing a corporate career. Fellows described Career Prep as providing the "leg up" they needed to pursue a business career in the absence of a solid business background. They described this dynamic in terms of Career Prep helping them to compensate for the lack of a business major or needed social or familial contacts in the business world, as this alumnus described:

*I didn't necessarily come from a family where people pursued business careers. There were a lot of doctors and lawyers in the family, but there really weren't any examples of people who went into business. And given my interests and skill sets, that was really compelling to me. But without a road map of how to get there, it was kind of daunting.*

In addition to providing a "leg up," some Fellows described the influence of an admired peer as a catalyst for participation in Career Prep. As one put it:

*I also saw people getting great opportunities from the program. Like one of my sorority sisters; she was in MLT the class before me. And I watched her very heavily because, you know, she was close to me, and I saw that she was going to all these different seminars, and she was telling me the development that they had ... So, it pushed me to do it as well ... It's like you don't want to be left behind either. Like you want it so that you're staying ahead of the curve, too.*

For some Fellows, the barriers also included their status as first-generation college students.<sup>17</sup> Here's how one described that phenomenon:

*My parents are not in the corporate world. They've never had an internship before. I'm one of the few in my generation to actually go to college and go through everything, and stay in it and graduate. And so, it's not like I could've gotten advice from [them] ... Going through the MLT program and having that one-on-one coaching was really beneficial.*

#### Career Prep Coaches

All seven Career Prep coaches typically talked about their work as a vocation, not just a job. Uniformly, they described feeling motivated and personally fulfilled by the opportunities their jobs give them to have a direct and tangible impact on the careers of talented Students of Color. Simultaneously, they often expressed a strong commitment to MLT's mission of uplifting communities of color and increasing diversity in the business world.

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<sup>16</sup>Three Fellows, 25 alumni, 7 MLT Coaches, and 8 Business Partners were interviewed between August and September 2017.

<sup>17</sup>One-third of Fellows are first-generation college students (based on available MLT institutional data).

## Career Prep Business Partners

MLT Business Partners cited Career Prep's perceived ability to deliver high-performing minority talent consistently as the top reason for their investment in the program. They considered that outcome a win for the advancement of their companies' diversity and inclusion goals. As one Business Partner explained:

*What I think separates MLT from a lot of different programs is that the students are incredibly qualified. It's not just a charity effort. It's not like, "Oh, look at this nice little kid. Let's just give him a shot." The students come here, and they do quite well. They can compete on any level, and frankly they're better than pretty much the competition. And that's what has allowed MLT to be successful over the years — because they really sharpen the knife.*

Many Business Partners considered MLT a leader in the field of minority talent development. They perceived it as a well-run, highly professional operation, as this comment suggests:

*I think [MLT's] ability to execute, their ability to listen to their client and really serve up top-notch talent, is the kind of organization that I want to be involved with. And I see a lot of organizations who have a similar kind of mission, but they don't execute in the kind of professional and strategic way that MLT does.*

A majority of Business Partners endorsed Career Prep's philanthropic goals, and some commented that they liked that it is a minority talent development program and not just a commercial staffing agency. However, a few partners stated that when it comes to corporate priorities, MLT's social mission comes in a distant second to its ability to "help drive business strategy" around diversity and inclusion. It is possible both to advance the social mission for Fellows and serve business needs, but strategic challenges arise when there is a tension between the two — a point discussed later in this report.

## Impact on Career Prep Fellows

Multiple data sources were used to assess the impact of the Career Prep program, including interviews, online surveys, national data, and institutional data. This section examines outcomes for Fellows based on themes that emerged from the interviews and were supported, when applicable, by comparative data.

The key evaluation question was whether outcomes could be attributed to the Career Prep intervention. In answering that question, comparisons were made within the MLT cohorts (for example, comparing low-income Career Prep students to those who are from high-income families), and across comparison groups (national survey data and a sample of high-achieving, low-income Pell recipients at a public flagship university). On many of the college-to-career and early career outcomes, significant differences were found that can be attributed to the Career Prep intervention. Only findings of significance are reported.

The section concludes by summarizing what works well with the Career Prep program and the challenges and opportunities for improvement.

## College-to-Career, Early Career, and Career Progression of Alumni

Multiple data sources and methods are needed to understand and assess the impacts of Career Prep on alumni. Outcome data from the 2017 online Career Prep Survey (N=167) for Pell Grant recipient alumni were compared with similar outcome data on a group of Pell Grant recipient graduates from a public flagship university (N=168). Matched national B&B data were compared with Career Prep alumni on a more limited set of available outcome measures according to race, gender, and first-generation college graduate status.

(See Appendix F for National survey descriptive data and Appendix H for regression results.) MLT institutional records were drawn from the MLT Salesforce database and board presentations. These were in addition to qualitative interviews with current Fellows and alumni.<sup>18</sup> Findings from all sources are integrated below, following the five themes that emerged in the stakeholder interviews:

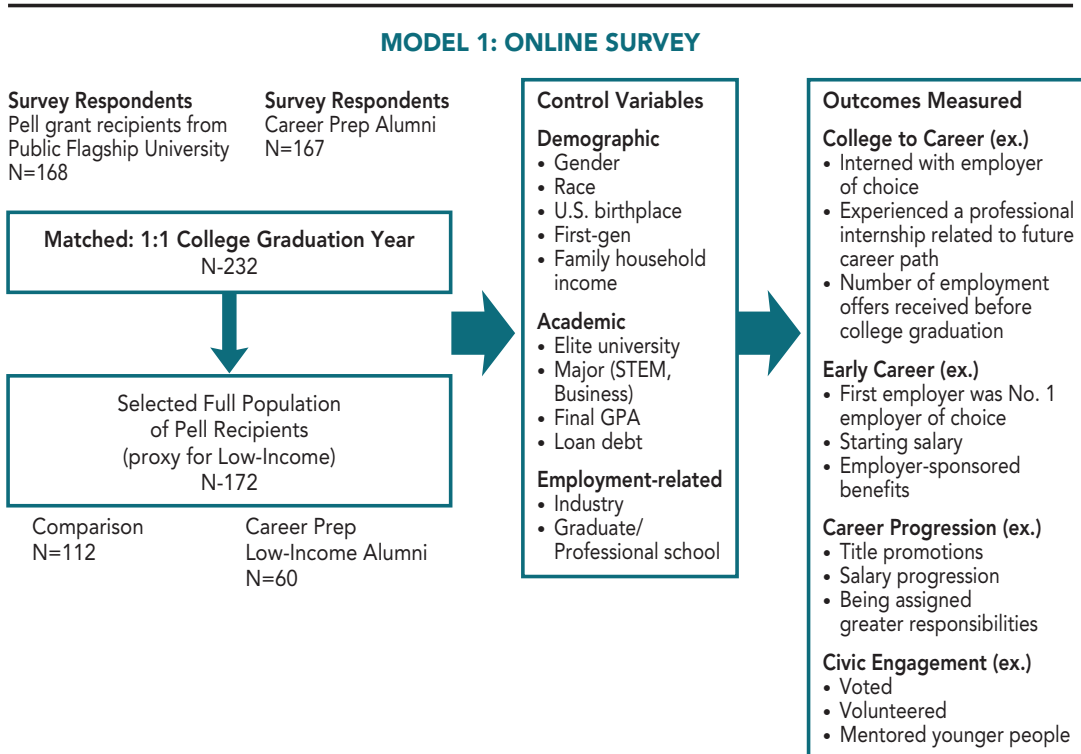
- Acquisition of top-tier internships and jobs
- Clarified career goals
- Raised self-confidence and aspirations
- Enhanced professional skills
- Expanded professional and social networks.

The bottom line is acquisition of top-tier internships and jobs, so we begin with that. Other key enablers follow. Additionally, there are reported impacts with respect to leadership and civic engagement that are addressed in a community section later in this report.

### Acquisition of Top-Tier Internships and Jobs

The positive impact of Career Prep on Fellows and alumni during the college-to-career transition and in early career success is evident in a number of outcomes. On a number of measures, MLT alumni who were Pell Grant recipients while in college compared favorably with alumni from a public flagship university who were also Pell recipients, as noted below. Also, all MLT alumni compared favorably against a national sample across demographics (race, gender, first-generation college status) on a number of measures. Impacts are reported first for Pell Grant alumni. Figure 1 presents the regression model with college to career, early career, and career progression outcomes.

**Figure 1: Summary of Analyses Comparing Career Prep Alumni and Flagship Public University Alumni**



<sup>18</sup>Only students who completed the Career Prep program were interviewed and not those who withdrew or were dismissed.

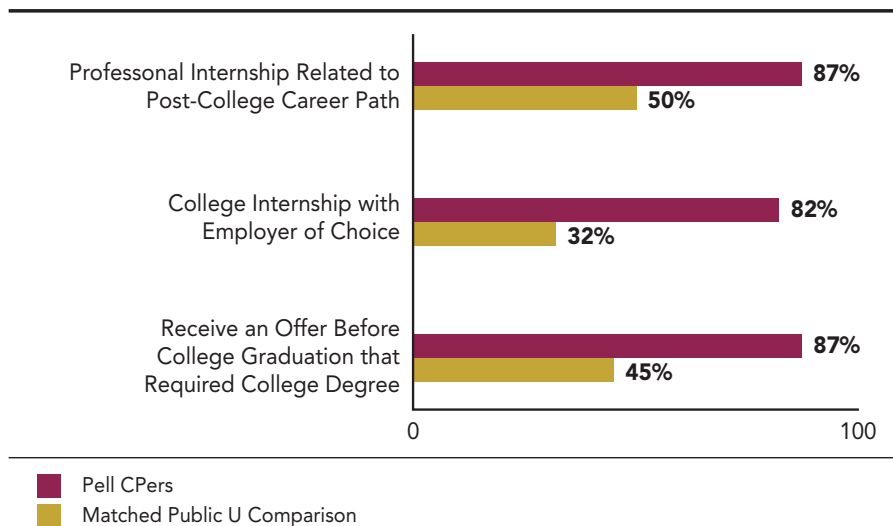


Based on the regression model shown in Figure 1 for college-to-career outcomes (using odds ratio from logistic regressions),<sup>19</sup> Pell Grant recipients among Career Prep alumni were found to be:

- Almost ten times more likely than the comparison group of Pell graduates to have a college internship with one of the top three employers of choice;
- More than three times more likely to have had a professional internship related to their post-college career path; and
- More than 12 times more likely to have received an employment offer before college graduation that required a college degree.

Chart 2 highlights the superior college-to-career outcomes for students enrolled in MLT, showing the significant percentage differences for these college-to-career outcomes.

**Chart 2: Career Prep Alumni Have More Successful College-to-Career Transitions**



Pell Grant recipients among Career Prep alumni also acquired jobs with better benefits than their counterparts at the public flagship university. More specifically, Career Prep alumni Pell recipients<sup>20</sup> were:

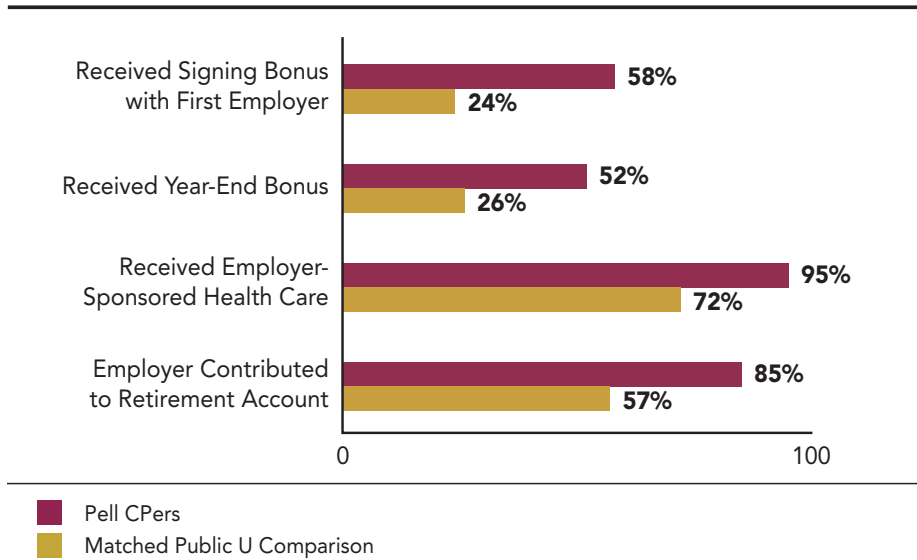
- Greater than three times more likely to receive a signing bonus
- Four times more likely to receive a year-end bonus
- More than seven times as likely to receive employer-sponsored health care benefits
- More than three times as likely to have their employer contribute to a retirement account.

These findings are supported by research showing that first offers matter in later career progression (Gibbs & Hendricks, 2004). Together, the data suggest that the quality of jobs Career Prep alumni acquire after graduation translate to full-time jobs with long-term career potential. Chart 3 identifies the percentage differences on four early career outcomes.

<sup>19</sup>Logistic regression results allow for the expression of findings in terms of the odds ratio (OR), that is the probability that the event will occur divided by the probability that the event will not occur. For example, Career Prep alumni are more than 10 times more likely to have an internship with a top employer. The formula for calculating the OR in this example is  $82/32 (2.56) / 18/68 (.2352) = 10.88$ . See Appendix K for original data.

<sup>20</sup>Based on early career outcomes in Figure 1 above.

**Chart 3: Career Prep Alumni Have Higher-Quality First Jobs Post College**



There were no differences between Career Prep Fellows who were Pell recipients and Pell public university alumni in career progression on the following outcomes: title promotions, increased responsibility, and current salary. This could be due to a variety of factors, including that most Career Prep alumni who responded to the survey graduated in 2014 or afterwards, which did not allow sufficient time to measure career progression. (See Appendix K for significant and non-significant logistic regression outcomes between low-income comparisons. Descriptive data can be found in Appendix J.)

Qualitative interviews with Career Prep Fellows and alumni provided more in-depth information about college-to-career outcomes for Career Prep Fellows and alumni as a whole. Overwhelmingly, program participants interviewed reported a direct connection between their participation in MLT and their eventual acquisition of internships and post-graduate jobs in top-tier firms. They typically affirmed that MLT changed their career trajectories by giving them access to internships and jobs they didn't see themselves acquiring otherwise. MLT's partnerships with a wide range of elite corporate employers gave Career Prep Fellows premium access to college internships and/or post-graduate full-time jobs in these companies. As one Rising Leader noted:

*I had a dream to work for a brand that I really admired, that I really loved. ... So as soon as I connected the dots that [the brand] was an MLT partner, and that I could interact with [its] HR, marketing, and all these people that can have some sort of an influence over whether this would be attainable to me or not, and that MLT was the avenue to that, I just made that my goal. I made [Name Brand] Corporation my goal for that summer, and I reached it with lots of support from MLT.*

Several participants attending smaller or less elite<sup>21</sup> colleges remarked that, because top corporate employers rarely recruited at their schools, their participation in Career Prep made all the difference in their ability to gain access to internships and jobs that were the envy of their undergraduate peers.

<sup>21</sup>For the purposes of this analysis, "elite" is defined as a private college or university with 15 percent or less admission rates and a public college or university in the top 15 percent (according to U.S. News and World Best College Rankings, 2017).

One Rising Leader noted:

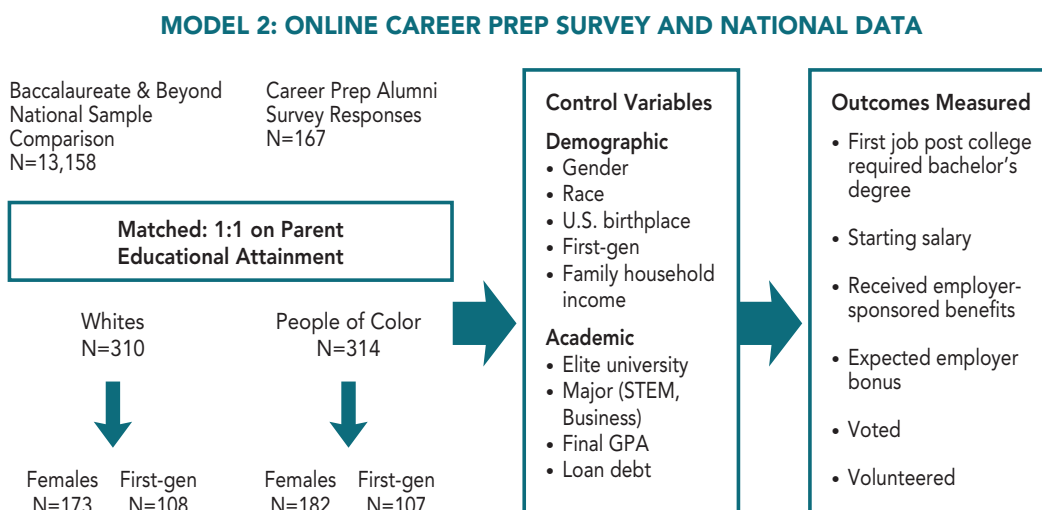
*I would say that [MLT] influenced the entirety of my career path ... it didn't give me my first two internships, but it gave me my first full-time job. [Top-tier consulting firm] is a very close MLT partner. [L]iterally without MLT, [top-tier consulting firm] would have just skipped right over my resume.*

Interviews with coaches confirmed the sentiment of the Fellows and alumni interviewed. For example, one MLT Coach commented:

*I have year over year, very high placement rates, mostly approaching ... 100%. I think there were one or two years where it was 99% or something like that, but my Fellows meet their objectives to get traction with the internships that they want. And then those translate to full-time opportunities. So, I'm excited that my Fellows are gainfully employed by the time they leave college in really, really competitive careers.*

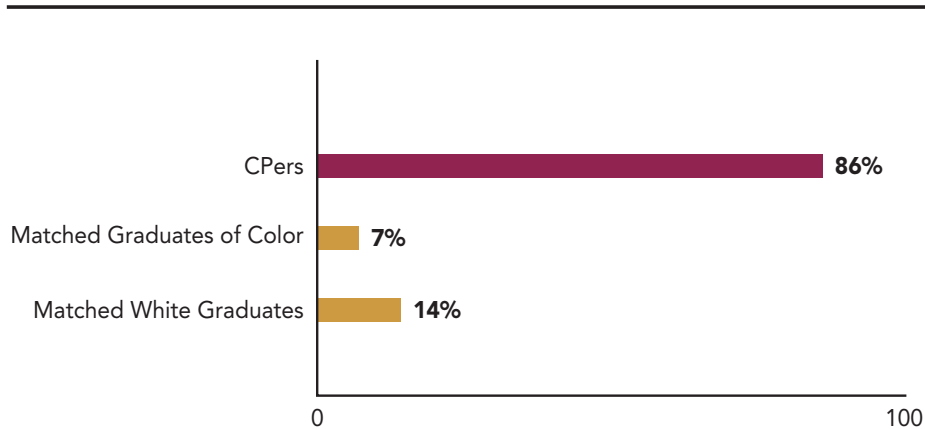
Career Prep alumni also had stronger outcomes in comparison to a matched national sample of graduates of color. These analyses were further broken out to compare Career Prep alumni with a national sample of White graduates, and sub-analyses were conducted for women and first-generation college graduates in both groups. Figure 2 shows the regression model guiding this comparison.

**Figure 2: Summary of Analyses Comparing Career Prep Alumni and a Matched National Cohort**



In comparison to national data, analyses show Career Prep alumni were more likely to acquire a first job post-college that required a bachelor's degree and in which they could expect an employer bonus. This is true when comparing Career Prep alumni to People of Color, Whites, women, and first-generation college graduates from the Baccalaureate and Beyond dataset. Alumni were more likely to have a higher starting salary (over \$50,000) when compared to People of Color, Whites, and White women tracked in the national data. Chart 4 illustrates the percentage difference with respect to this end of the salary range, with 86 percent of Career Prep alumni earning starting salaries over \$50,000 compared to 7 and 14 percent of national comparison groups, respectively.

**Chart 4: Career Prep Alumni are More Likely to Earn Starting Salaries Above \$50,000\***

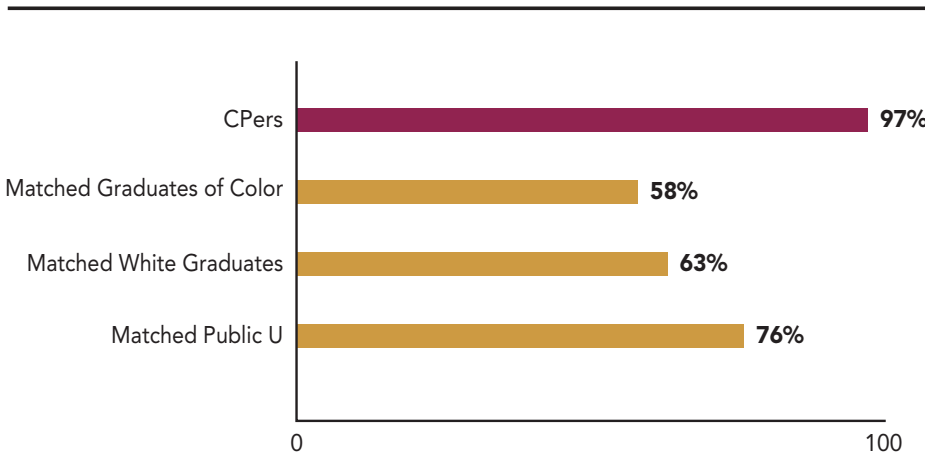


Career Prep alumni performed better than nearly all alumni in post-college jobs requiring a college degree, as Chart 5 illustrates.

Noting the impact on early career success, a Rising Leader commented on how these impacts would not have been likely without MLT:

*[Career Prep has] been just a really great opportunity to have access to things that I can't through my family, and that I probably wouldn't have the ability to do through my university's network as well ... I think just access to opportunity, financial stability ... I've had friends who didn't do MLT, and they've had trouble with jobs. One of my friends has been laid off. And I think MLT positioned me really well in terms of going into the tech industry, which is the industry that I'm in, and having a lot of stability so that I don't have to worry about who I'm going to lean on because I can't lean on my parents.*

**Chart 5: Career Prep Alumni are More Likely to Get a First Job Out of College that Requires a College Degree<sup>22</sup>**



<sup>22</sup>Ninety-six percent of Career Prep alumni matched with the national People of Color sample had post-college jobs requiring a college degree.

\*Non-program effects for this difference include, in part, college major and first post-college position obtained during recessionary years of 2008-2009. (E.g., in the comparison group, a statistically significant higher number enrolled in non-STEM, were non-business majors, and earned under \$50,000; and a statistically higher number obtained first post-college job during these recessionary years.) Part-time employment status is another possible correlate, but this variable was not available for inclusion in the analysis.

A rising leader further commented:

*I thought the Career Prep program would be a great fit for me at the time, with my goals of going into marketing. I applied. I was accepted. I went through the entire process, was actually able to intern at [company], and then ultimately get a full-time offer from [consulting firm] ... So MLT as a whole provides an incredible network. I just think without MLT I wouldn't have been able to get my first job out of college.*

Summing up the many Career Prep impacts relative to the national comparison groups (using odds ratios), here are impacts by race, gender, and first-generation status:

### **Career Prep Alumni Were ...**

Compared to a matched group of college Graduates of Color from a national dataset:

- Over 15 times more likely to have their first job require a bachelor's degree;
- Significantly more likely to have their starting salary over \$50,000; and
- Better than six times more likely to expect a bonus.

Compared to a matched group of women college Graduates of Color from a national dataset:

- Greater than 10 times more likely to have their first job require a bachelor degree; and
- Over seven times more likely to expect a bonus.

Compared to a matched group of first-generation college Graduates of Color from a national dataset:

- Over 20 times more likely to have their first job require a bachelor degree; and
- Over 17 times more likely to expect a bonus.

Compared to a matched group of White college graduates from a national dataset:

- Over 5 times more likely to have their first job require a bachelor degree;
- Significantly more likely to have their starting salary over \$50,000; and
- Seven times more likely to expect a bonus.

Compared to a matched group of White women college graduates from a national dataset:

- Almost six times more likely to have their first job require a bachelor degree;
- Significantly more likely to have their starting salary over \$35,000; and
- Better than eight times more likely to expect a bonus.

Compared to White first-generation college graduates from a national dataset:

- Nearly 14 times more likely to have their first job require a bachelor degree; and
- Over three times more likely to expect a bonus.

### **Clarified Career Goals**

Clarification of career goals is not a metric tracked by MLT nor through the online survey. Yet, during interviews, Career Prep Fellows and Rising Leaders frequently mentioned that MLT helped clarify or even entirely realign their career goals. The process of career clarification and development occurred through the one-on-one coaching relationship, the broad exposure to different industries and career paths in the curriculum, and first-hand job experiences in internships. Some students experienced major shifts in their career directions as a result.



A current Fellow began his college career by majoring in engineering, but then quickly realized that the scientific and technical demands of the major were not a good fit for him. He was profuse in his gratitude to MLT for helping him discover a new interest in the field of sales:

*I have figured out a passion in sales that I would not have ever thought of before the MLT Career Prep program ... My coach gave me the right tools ... and she kind of helped me figure out where I wanted to be. She suggested the tech industry would fit my personality ... Being in the Career Prep program opened me up to so many different opportunities and allowed me to kind of spread my wings and get out of my own comfort zone into something that's more fulfilling for me.*

In an open-ended survey question, first-generation Rising Leaders were more likely than continuing-generation Rising Leaders to identify how their relationship with their coach helped clarify career goals. For example, one Rising Leader wrote:

*When rationalizing or weighing your career options, it is helpful to have someone to hear your options and weigh in their own experience. It also helps clear your own mind when you have the opportunity to hear your options out loud.*

Similarly, another first-generation Rising Leader commented:

*Having a Coach was priceless, and I am forever grateful for the guidance she provided me. It truly changed my career trajectory and made me more confident as I was seeking a full-time position.*

While it is not possible to know whether these and other MLT Fellows would have made career shifts absent the coaching by MLT, it is likely that the systematic process followed by MLT surfaces these issues sooner and with greater clarity than would have happened through the traditional academic advising available in most universities.

### ***Raised Self-Confidence & Aspirations***

Fellows and Rising Leaders often mentioned experiencing greater self-confidence as a result of their participation in the Career Prep program. Measuring confidence, specifically in communicating their brand and story, is an outcome measure tracked by MLT since 2014. On average, Career Prep institutional data showed that 98 percent of Fellows strongly agreed or agreed that MLT helped in this regard. The interviews indicated that current and former Fellows generally felt more confident about their professional and leadership skills as well as their ability to succeed and make an impact in the business world. A current Fellow put it this way:

*I just really changed how I think about myself and the impact that I can make in general. Before I started MLT, I'm like, "Oh, I'm just another [college] student trying to figure this whole thing out." And now I look at myself as like, "Oh, I'm someone who can make change in the tech industry. I'm someone who can be a leader. I'm someone who can make it to that C suite." And so, before I started, I don't think I had that same mindset. ... I think I'm a lot more confident ... I just believe in myself now, and I don't think I did that before.*

Some Fellows and Rising leaders linked their greater confidence to the professional development skills they acquired in the program as well as to their since proven ability to acquire and maintain a prestigious internship or job. As one current Fellow explained:

*Being a member of the Career Prep program to me means knowing that I was professionally developed in a manner that provides me confidence when I go into a meeting, when I go into a board room, when I'm speaking to my boss. It provides me a certain confidence in how I'm holding myself, in how I'm creating my own goals because I know I went through a program that provided me the tools to do those things. So that's huge.*

Current Fellows and alumni also described various experiences in the program that were deeply affirming of them as talented People of Color who belong in highly competitive sectors of the business world, despite their underrepresentation in those arenas. One of the most powerful confidence builders according to program participants interviewed was the opportunity to see so many other gifted peers of color who were succeeding in various professional pursuits. Witnessing success in their peers and support by their peers inspired them to believe they could do the same.

Additionally, former and current Fellows claimed that MLT helped raise their educational and professional ambitions in important ways. Their increased aspirations included the decision to pursue graduate degrees in business, develop more ambitious occupational goals, and aspire to future leadership roles. These aspirational shifts were particularly notable in Fellows who were first-generation college students, because they sometimes entered the program with lower expectations than their peers — as one Rising Leader suggested:

*I would say before MLT, I probably wouldn't have been at all even going to consider a graduate degree. And that's definitely something on my radar now, getting an advanced degree. So, I didn't really see the value in it before MLT ... I would also say I was thinking about my career after college very small-minded like, "I'm going to school. I'm going to do something like sell insurance," and I'm pretty sure I mentioned something like that when I was interviewing to get into MLT. And they were like, "Sell insurance? You can do so much more than that." And so, I mean I completely adjusted sort of where I was thinking I would end up ... I'm like "I can pretty much do anything I want to do." So, it pretty much changed my perspective.*

Gaining greater self-confidence as high potential young professionals provided one important foundation for program participant's increasing career aspirations. Current and former Fellows claimed that MLT helped them aim higher in their career goals because of the encouragement of their coaches.

Fellows and Rising Leaders were also inspired to aim high because of the example set by their high-achieving peers in the program, and the culture of striving at MLT. One current Career Prep Fellow described this as follows:

*I would say before I applied for the program, career success was just kind of getting an internship, getting a job, and just working 9 to 5. Now [MLT] inspired me to be a leader because all the kids, or young adults, that I've worked with are going above and beyond. And when you're in a group like that, the energy that's there is contagious. They want you to be the best that you can be. And the amount of resources that they can put into you, it's unfathomable. You can't just say I want to sit there and just work an entry-level job after going through the MLT program. No. You've got to say, "No. I want to be a leader. I want to fight for the next person." The MLT program just did so much for me.*

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***"I would say before MLT, I probably wouldn't have been at all even going to consider a graduate degree. And that's definitely something on my radar now. ... [MLT] pretty much changed my perspective."***

—MLT Rising Leader

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Open-ended survey data supported this finding of raised confidence, and suggested that the benefit continued well after Fellows completed the Career Prep program.

As one survey respondent wrote:

*Those within MLT that I have met since I've completed the program (whether they did Career Prep, MBA, or another program), have held me [accountable] professionally, personally, even emotionally and spiritually at times. MLT, to me, is a family. I feel like those within the organization are sincerely invested in my development, growth, and leadership. They want me to succeed, but more importantly, they want to see me find happiness and fulfillment. I would not be who I am without MLT. I would not have had the opportunities I have had professionally and personally. I would not know my worth and know my value proposition to society.*

However, education and work aspirations did not differ for low-income Career Prep alumni when compared to low-income graduates from a public flagship university. The aspiration measures focus on leadership, education, and doing important work. (See Appendix J for measures and descriptive data). These data suggest that the comparison group of low-income students also had high aspirations. It is possible that MLT further lifted aspirations, as the interviews suggest, but that cannot be determined without pre-post data.

### ***Enhanced Professional Skills***

Professional skill-building forms the backbone of the Career Prep program, and these lessons are structured into the curriculum through assignments, seminar workshops, and one-on-one coaching sessions. In the interviews, participants reported acquiring important new professional skills from Career Prep, such as interviewing, writing resumes and cover letters, navigating relationships at work, proper business etiquette, and more. This was consistent with MLT survey data from 2016 that showed 95 percent of Fellows on average strongly agreed or agreed that participation in the Career Prep program helped with interview preparation. Similarly, 98 percent strongly agreed or agreed that the program helped them better manage relationships.<sup>23</sup> In qualitative interviews, past and present Fellows repeatedly mentioned how useful these skills were in navigating the job market. As one alumnus stated:

*I would say my entire basis of everything I know about interviewing and presenting myself is entirely from MLT. There's just so many tips and tricks, and how to structure your interview answers. And I would say pretty much when I'm at an interview, I'm fairly confident that if I meet the basic qualifications, I'll move on to the next step. And that's mostly due to all the tips that MLT has given me.*

Learning the art of professional self-presentation in corporate settings was particularly important for first-generation college students, some of whom described having little exposure to these implicit rules. One first-generation college student who is now a Rising Leader described his first encounter in MLT with these lessons:

*I remember flying to New York and interviewing at some of the best companies in the world and speaking to some of the best leaders about how to best represent myself in an interview, how to dress appropriately. I mean they went from soup to nuts, and what I really liked about the MLT experience, even in Career Prep, [is that] our Coaches said the things that you needed to hear regardless of what it was. If it was the fact that you came in and your shirt was wrinkled, or your shirt wasn't buttoned enough, they would tell you flat out ... Someone in your own community may not know that, but they knew it, and they were willing to say that. It [wasn't always] comfortable, but it was like they're going to get you to where you need to be.*

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<sup>23</sup>This figure represents an average over the three years — 2014-2016 — in which the question was asked.

Other soft skills mentioned during interviews or in open-ended survey responses included enhancing self-awareness to be able to monitor one's self in the work environment, learning how to manage professional relationships with bosses and mentors, understanding unspoken expectations on the job, and learning the etiquette of negotiating job offers. In the eyes of one business partner, MLT candidates stood out for their professionalism in comparison to candidates he worked with from other talent development organizations:

*We have received very positive feedback [about MLT candidates] from the interviews. I think MLT should continue to focus on the candidate preparation and business etiquette considerations such as responsiveness to offers, decision due dates; I think is just really key.*

Career Prep alumni frequently mentioned that they regularly used the professional skills they developed in the program after its completion. As one Rising Leader put it:

*I can probably venture to say quite comfortably that those [Career Prep] trainings are pretty evergreen across the career path.*

In the online survey, low-income alumni and the low-income comparison groups ranked themselves on 16 general skills/abilities, most of which flow from the Career Prep curriculum. The ranking of skills/abilities ranged from “demonstrates strong goal-setting ability” to “utilizes emotional intelligence/self-awareness.” (See Appendix G for descriptions of the full inventory of skills/abilities.) Findings showed no significant differences in how the two groups perceived their skills/abilities. These data suggested that the comparison group of low-income students also had a strong self-perception of their general skills/abilities. It is possible, however, that MLT enhances these skills/abilities, as the qualitative analysis and MLT's institutional data suggested, but that cannot be determined without pre-post data.

### ***Expanded Professional and Social Networks***

In interviews, many past and present Career Prep Fellows mentioned that one of the major benefits of program participation was access to a large and lifelong network of alumni from Career Prep as well as from MLT's other professional development programs. MLT institutional survey data supported this; over a three-year period, an average of 98 percent of those surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that MLT helped develop lifelong relationships. As well, in open-ended survey responses, participants identified networking as one of the top-five benefits of program participation. Thus, there is strong evidence from multiple sources that MLT makes an impact by expanding professional and social networks.

To its members, MLT is not just another generic professional network. Composed exclusively of professionals of color, the MLT network plays a critical role in supporting and promoting the careers of its members, who work within the overwhelmingly White (and male) corporate environment. An African American Rising Leader eloquently described this dynamic:

*I think the relationships that MLT provides has been probably the biggest thing I've gained. I mean, I think you can learn professional skills everywhere. If you meet the right people, you can get a job. But the [MLT] network is very unique, especially given the small number of People of Color, women of color in most of the fields that we're working in. No matter where I am in the country, for the most part, I know I have an MLT community that I can tap into, and reach out to, and they've always been receptive.*

A few participants highlighted direct help in securing a job — through the MLT network or directly with an MLT associate. One Rising Leader described how the MLT network helped him land his

current job at a prestigious consulting firm, where his application got the attention of a partner in the firm who is also an MLT alumnus:

*I currently work at [elite consulting firm], which is an extremely hard firm to get into because everyone applies. But the reason the [elite consulting firm] partner answered my email when I emailed him was he was part of MLT MBA Prep. He literally told me that was the only reason he replied to my email...I earned my place, but that network is being built for us and by us at the same time.*

Friendships made in the program could also lead to professional success. For example, two Rising Leaders formed a powerful bond during their time together in Career Prep and, as a result of their common professional interests and goals, later co-founded an international tech start-up together, which one of the co-founders described as “a huge inflection point” in his career. One MLT Fellow summed up the impact of MLT networking as follows:

*Having a network of like-minded individuals from all around the country inspired me to do more. Being one of the highest achievers at my school didn't allow me to have people to bounce ideas off of. Now I have a family of 365 people.*

It is the case, though, that the MLT network appeared to be more beneficial to students who were not the first in their families to graduate from college. Fellows and alumni who were first-generation college students were less likely than continuing-generation students to indicate (in an open-ended survey question) that the MLT network was beneficial to them (32 versus 54 percent).

To explore this difference in networking further, responses to eight network questions collected in the online survey were analyzed. The analysis revealed no statistical differences based on first-generation college status. (See Appendix I for survey questions and descriptive analysis.) That is, first-generation college Career Prep alumni were just as likely as continuing-generation Career Prep alumni to participate in organizations or programs that helped develop professional networks. However, there was a significant difference between Career Prep alumni from low-income families and low-income graduates from a public flagship university (MLT mean 2.82 vs. comparison group mean 2.34). While there was no major difference within MLT by first-generation status, the presence of some differences (as revealed in the open-ended survey responses) suggested that it would be prudent for MLT to assess networking outcomes based on intersectional identities (first-generational status or gender, for example) and provide added support when needed.

## **Perceptions of What's Working Well**

As shown throughout this report, Career Prep participants were enthusiastic about the program and its capacity to leverage high-impact results for Fellows and Rising Leaders, evidence supported by qualitative and quantitative data. Overall, participants believed Career Prep was set apart from its competitors in the minority talent development space by its comprehensive, holistic, and community-building approach. Four program components achieved this effect: 1) “high-touch” and holistic guidance from a personal coach; 2) a highly structured curriculum focused on “insider” rules for success in business; 3) structured access to top-tier corporate employers and internship opportunities through engagement with MLT business partners; and 4) a cohesive community offering support and encouragement to succeed as People of Color, both individually and collectively.

Career Prep's strong community was achieved through a program culture that encouraged striving for collective and not just individual success, and in which “giving back” was considered a part of



the success equation. Underlying many of these program elements was a tacit focus on providing a wide range of structural and cultural supports that help students of color move from outsider to insider status in elite and traditionally White-dominated sectors of the corporate world.

### **Perceptions of Career Prep Challenges and Opportunities to Improve**

When participants were asked to identify the least-valuable aspects of the Career Prep program from their perspective, they would often pause and hedge their answers by saying that there was little “not to like” about the program. With some prompting, participants eventually described certain areas of the program that could be improved. Most of their responses focused on the need for certain changes in the curriculum, as well as adjustments in Career Prep’s response to its own growth and popularity in recent years.

#### ***The Curriculum: Too “One-Size-Fits-All”***

There was widespread sentiment among Fellows, Rising Leaders, Coaches, and some Business Partners interviewed that the Career Prep curriculum could be too narrow or standardized in places — a bit too “one-size-fits-all.” In general, they expressed a desire for MLT to customize its curriculum in three areas to address more adequately the varied needs of MLT’s Fellows: 1) more targeted (and expanded) programming; 2) more intersectional programming; and 3) more explicit programming on race and racial discrimination in the workplace.

First, participants interviewed desired more targeted (and, in some cases, expanded) programming tailored to the varied professional skill levels and career interests of Career Prep Fellows. Specifically, they felt that the assignments need to be timed and targeted to meet the particular needs of each Fellow, rather than offered on a standardized timetable to everyone regardless of their starting position. For instance, some Fellows who came into the program with a strong career focus felt frustrated by some of the assignments that required extensive career exploration. Other Fellows, by contrast, observed that the assignments and some of the seminar sessions were overly general, and not sufficiently tailored to student’s particular areas of interest with regard to industry or functional role. Participants also wanted to see Career Prep expand its programming to cover a wider range of career tracks, beyond the well-resourced sectors of finance, consulting, and technology. In particular, participants pointed to a need for more focus on sectors such as media and entertainment, public/nonprofit/social impact, and entrepreneurship.

Second, some participants interviewed expressed an interest in seeing greater program attention to diverse identities within the communities of color that Career Prep serves. These participants recognized that such issues can be difficult to address in a sensitive way, but insisted that they should be an essential part of the curriculum, as this Business Partner asserted:

*I just think that organizations always have to think about the different dimensions of diversity as they’re managing a cohort, right? Because there’s a conversation that has to be had — whether it’s gender, whether it’s LGBT, whether it’s disability ... I think that’s something that just has to be a part of the equation.*

A few interviewed participants expressed a desire for programming that addresses socioeconomic-based diversity among the Fellows. They described a class divergence among Fellows that can be particularly striking in some program contexts. One MLT alumnus recalled observing high-powered networking events at Career Prep seminars in which “the rich kids and poor kids would break out pretty clearly.” In his perception, the “poor kids” felt less confident about approaching the “powerful, amazing” corporate players in the room because of their class background. He believed that these students would have benefited from receiving more explicit acknowledgement and support from the program concerning such class-based feelings of insecurity. A first-generation Latinx college student recalled the painful social class divide she felt between herself and some of the other Fellows, especially in the early days of her program experience:

*[MLT] picks students from all the top schools. You have kids who went to Harvard, Yale, and what not. And then you have kids like me, who went to a school that no one knows in the middle of nowhere, and my mother's not a doctor, unlike yours, and my father's not a lawyer, and I didn't have the kind of confidence to inject myself in certain conversations that they would have.*

Such social divides based on class may help to explain why first-generation college students were less likely to mention the MLT professional network as having been a benefit to them relative to their continuing-generation counterparts (noted earlier in the report). Though speculative, it may be that first-generation college students felt less socially at ease with their peers, and therefore less likely to take advantage of the network.

Finally, some Fellows and Rising Leaders expressed a desire for more explicit attention in the curriculum to issues of race and racial discrimination in the workplace. They observed that these issues are addressed largely through informal channels (mostly via the coaching relationship), rather than through the curriculum. Many interviewees found these contexts for discussing such sensitive matters helpful and appropriate, but some felt the program could be enhanced by a more consistent and explicit curricular treatment of racial issues, particularly in the workplace. Two Rising Leaders remarked that since graduating from the program they had occasionally experienced racially insensitive remarks by colleagues and a sense of isolation in their heavily White-dominated workplaces. Each felt they could have benefited from having more explicit and ongoing discussions of these kinds of workplace dynamics in Career Prep to prepare themselves better for these experiences. A Rising Leader said that she thought Career Prep did a great job of teaching “the things we need to do” to stay competitive in the workplace; however, she added, “sometimes *the things that we need to do* don’t always work for someone of color versus [someone who is] not a Person of Color.” Continuing, she said, “I think [Career Prep] could be doing more to discuss certain racial inequities ... that are currently systemically happening.”

### ***The Underside of MLT's Success: Growing Pains***

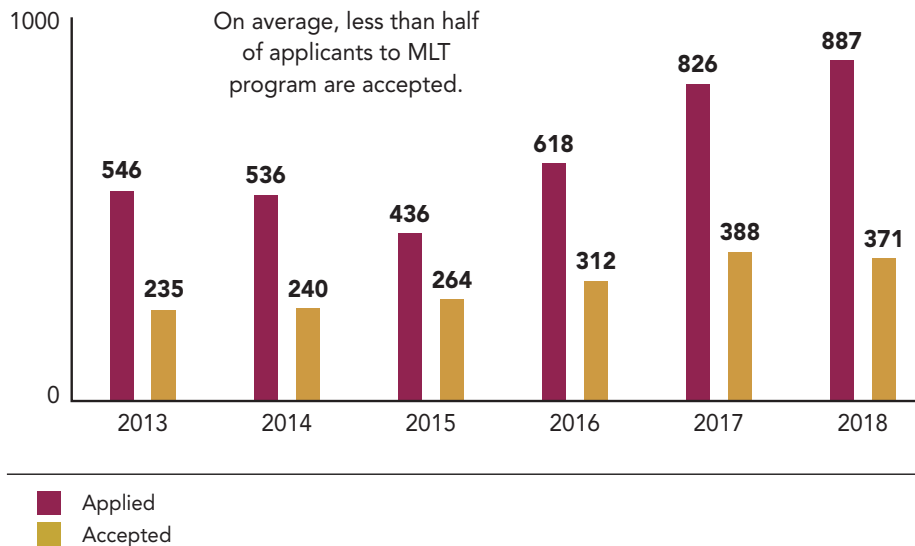
Participants interviewed described MLT as having become an increasingly well-known and prestigious brand in the minority talent development field in recent years. While MLT's success is a welcome phenomenon, it has also come with two key challenges: 1) the cohort size and selection has increasingly and disproportionately included students from upper-income families and elite colleges; and 2) MLT's growing portfolio of Business Partners has created greater competition among Partners for potential MLT recruits.

***Cohort Size and Selection.*** As a result of Career Prep's growing profile, the program has been able to attract an increasing number of highly qualified applicants (with the most recent candidate pool numbering almost 900). The program has been able to accommodate many of these applicants (growing from 235 in 2013 to 371 in 2018). Actual acceptance rates for the past six years vary between 42 percent and 61 percent. (See Chart 6.)

As MLT's yearly applicant pool has expanded, it has found itself having to turn away good candidates. MLT is able to grow its programs only as quickly as it can raise money to support more Fellows. MLT might consider alternative modalities of program delivery to accommodate and personalize the Fellow experience.

MLT evaluates and admits candidates with the goal of creating cohorts that have the highest potential for successfully completing its programs and becoming leaders in their organizations and communities. MLT's experience is that minorities from all income brackets face significant

**Chart 6: MLT Acceptance Rates are Increasingly Competitive**



obstacles and challenges in their careers, and so MLT admits candidates from across the economic spectrum.<sup>24</sup> That said, a logistic regression of admission data found individuals from higher-income families and elite colleges were more likely to be enrolled in Career Prep than the waitlisted or denied students. This may be explained in part by the correlation between income and factors that MLT considers in its admissions process, such as GPA and admission to highly selective colleges.

MLT's almost unique focus on maximizing career success is worth highlighting. MLT's conviction that minorities from all income backgrounds need help maximizing their career success, as evidenced by the dearth of minorities in leadership positions in many sectors of our economy, contrasts with traditional philanthropic narratives that revolve around pulling up those from the lowest economic bracket. MLT may want to consider investing further resources in explaining how its focus on career success fits into the larger narrative associated with prioritizing assistance to those with the most economic need.

***A Growing Number of Business Partners.*** As Career Prep gains in popularity among students, it also achieves greater visibility in the corporate world; correspondingly, the program attracts a growing number of new high-profile business partners, especially in the popular high-technology space (e.g., Amazon, Google, Facebook). From the perspective of students, broadening the number and diversity of MLT corporate partnerships is desirable; it provides the basis for a more varied menu of internship and career options (addressing to some extent the problem of “one-size-fits-all” programming discussed earlier). More partners also provide MLT with a broader funding base and increased financial support. However, from the perspective of business partners, MLT's expanding portfolio of Business Partners creates greater competition for talent. Two long-time Business Partners, for example, viewed these additional corporate players as increasing the competition for a highly sought-after pool of talent. Both partners have seen lower Career Prep “conversion rates” (when students accept full-time job offers from Business Partners with which they have interned) at their companies in recent years. While increased competition is somewhat unavoidable, MLT should be careful to manage its growth in partners and students to ensure it can continue to serve all of its constituents adequately.

<sup>24</sup>Approximately one-third of most Career Prep cohorts can be classified as low-income or Pell-Grant eligible.

### ***The Seminars: An Important but Demanding Component of Career Prep***

Both Business Partners and Fellows alike recognized the critical value of the seminars in the Career Prep model. However, the substantial investment by all parties was perceived as taxing at times. First, some interviewees remarked that these events can at times be overprogrammed, without enough down time for the Fellows. A Business Partner observed that, while the “busy multi-day events” are “super, super helpful for Fellows, a lot of times it can be exhausting ... I know just from talking with folks after events, it’s like, ‘Oh my gosh. That was the longest two days, and I hardly retained any information, just because it was information overload.’” A few Business Partners suggested that some of this programming might be replaced by more formal and informal opportunities for networking with Fellows.

Second, quite a number of Business Partners noted the hefty commitment of time and money involved in hosting seminars or simply attending and developing programming for them. One Business Partner reflected that he was still struggling to get buy-in from senior leadership in his company to host a Career Prep event because of the significant investment of resources required to do so: “It costs money. You’ve got to pay for all the food. You’ve got to have conference security, you know, all that.”

Another Business Partner remarked that, while she valued Career Prep’s many opportunities for intensive engagement with Fellows, “it really is a lot because I’ve managed both MBA and [Career Prep], and there’s just multiple touch points, and it’s a lot of preparation on our part with finding resources, space, practitioners, content, building out content in some cases, designing content.” She wondered whether there might be ways to integrate and streamline the management of programming for corporate sponsors hosting multiple MLT programs (e.g., Career Prep, MBA Prep).

### ***Engaging the Alumni Base***

Interviewees suggested that Career Prep could better engage the alumni network by creating more forums and opportunities to connect with each other and give back to the program over their full careers. Fellows and Rising Leaders expressed pride in their association with MLT and interest in staying connected. One Fellow suggested the need for “better organized alumni resource groups” that help alumni find and connect with each other, especially after moving to a new city. MLT staff also suggested harnessing the desire of alumni to give back to the program by finding opportunities to involve them in educating current Fellows about their experiences in different industries and functional roles. Finally, one of the Business Partners suggested leveraging and “monetizing” the alumni base through a paying membership model that could mutually benefit both alumni and Business Partners by creating a lifelong pipeline of diverse talent for Business Partners as well as ongoing placement opportunities for alumni members.

## Impact on Business Partners

Each Business Partner interviewed was asked about MLT’s impact on their organization. Three themes — two focused on results and one on process — emerged from these interviews. First, in terms of results, the relationship with MLT was viewed as advancing diversity and inclusion goals within companies. Second, Career Prep alumni were perceived by Business Partners as high performing employees. In terms of process, MLT was viewed as having a customized approach for working with Business Partners.

### Diversity and Inclusion Goals

Business Partners consistently remarked that Career Prep delivered strong results in helping their companies effectively advance their diversity and inclusion goals (D&I). Career Prep was valued by partners for its superior ability to identify, develop, and recruit high-quality, diverse talent who enter leadership tracks in the partner companies. An MLT Business Partner reflected on how Career Prep affects his firm in this regard:

*I think this work of diversity and inclusion and recruiting diverse talent is always an uphill battle, and I think when you have an organization like MLT that can truly go out into the market place and identify and deliver high-quality qualified talent, I think it's helpful because it's difficult to scale a recruiting organization to find all of this talent. So, having an organization like MLT as a partner to help us deliver that talent to the business is critical.*

Another Business Partner was enthusiastic in her endorsement of Career Prep’s corporate impact, saying “they’re helping us move the needle ... [MLT] helps our overall D&I agenda in a tangible way.”

### High Performers, Strong Leaders

Business partners repeatedly described Career Prep alumni as making a strong, positive impact on their companies once hired; they were often identified as “strong contributors” and “high performers.” In particular, Career Prep alumni were noted for their leadership skills and their ability to spearhead important new business initiatives. A Business Partner described how one Career Prep alumni was “leading pretty significant initiatives within our business” and had recently launched a new product “which is a huge innovation in our personal care business.” Another Business Partner used superlatives to describe the leadership impact of Career Prep alumni on the company:

*Their leadership skills and ability to drive business results is exceptional compared to their peers. So, all of the MLT alumni that I know are driving great business results, have had great career progression, and have really had that kind of leadership presence that we really want and need as a company in order to drive our vision forward.*

Several Business Partners also observed that Career Prep alumni often took leadership roles to advance their companies’ diversity & inclusion goals. Specifically, partners described alumni as actively supporting corporate initiatives to recruit diverse candidates (often by helping recruit new Career Prep Fellows to company internships or entry-level positions), as well as participating and taking leadership roles on corporate diversity committees or in related enterprises. One Business Partner at a well-known financial services firm described the impact of Career Prep alumni in advancing corporate diversity goals at her company:

*For me personally, the biggest benefit [of the Career Prep program] is that I have a strong pipeline of underrepresented minorities that are new hires to the firm, that are very invested in wanting to give back and continue partnering with MLT or other partnerships to improve our D&I brand. So, it gives me a really big pool of people to select from to continue moving the needle forward.*

## Customized Approach

Business Partners identified Career Prep’s close engagement with sponsors and its highly customized approach to the relationship as one of its most effective attributes from a recruitment perspective. They appreciated the many structured opportunities to engage with and court students throughout the year. As one Business Partner observed, “[MLT has] multiple touch points and multiple sources and ways to engage with the students, which is an advantage when I look at all the other partnerships that we have.” Another Business Partner put it this way: “I think their events staff does a very good job of providing an experience where it’s very straightforward to kind of show up, meet students, where you need to be. They provide a lot of different opportunities for interaction. That’s a very kind of well-oiled machine.”

Business Partners also liked the ample opportunities to work closely with MLT on talent development and recruitment strategies that were customized to fit their corporate needs. As one Business Partner observed, “We believe that MLT does a great job with identifying skill sets that are needed at each individual step within the career path, and really catering their programming towards those specific skills that jive well with what we need from our business partners.” Finally, a few partners expressed their admiration for MLT’s willingness to innovate and improve continuously so as to become more responsive and effective in advancing the goals of its sponsors.

## Impact on the Community

MLT has a social impact mission that is advanced primarily through coaching and other direct support for Fellows and Ascend Scholars. Interview and survey data revealed that alumni engaged in a variety of civic activities including, mentoring others, voting, and contributing to MLT as a form of community service. These outcomes represent additional forms of social impact that MLT has on the community level.

## Paying it Forward: Leadership, Civic Engagement and Giving Back

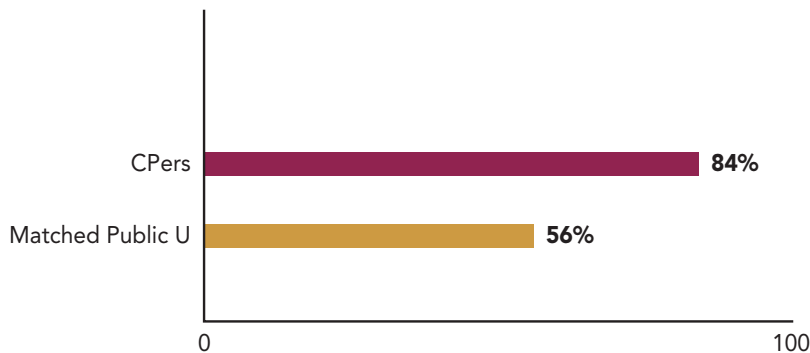
Alumni were more likely than the comparison groups to “pay it forward” or give back in general — and specifically to communities of color. During interviews, many Fellows and alumni cited MLT as their source of inspiration for civic engagement. For example, one alumna commented:

*I think one thing that [MLT has] done certainly is it made me conscious of giving back and how important that is. So, I’ve done it in an informal capacity in terms of talking to MLT current Fellows. I’ve also done it in a more formal capacity through volunteering with organizations that focus on underrepresented youth and trying to make sure that they have the right career and educational opportunities to succeed, or even donating to organizations that do that. So, I think it’s made me kind of more civically minded.*

There are various ways of giving back. Mentoring younger people is one such civic engagement indicator measured in the survey comparing MLT alumni who were Pell recipients to their counterparts among the public flagship university graduates. Results indicated that MLT alumni were significantly more likely to mentor younger people as illustrated in Chart 7.



**Chart 7: Civic Engagement Higher Among Career Prep Alumni (Pell Recipients)**



Numerous examples of mentoring younger people were garnered in interviews with Fellows and alumni. Here is an illustrative example, which links to the MLT experience:

*[MLT] definitely makes me feel a lot more committed to helping people in my community. So whenever I get a call from a kid who wants to go into banking, even if it's on LinkedIn and I have 20 of them at the same time, I will try to go to every single one of them and talk to them in a way that I know that some of my counterparts who didn't do a program like MLT don't, just because I feel like so many people from this community poured so much into me, it's my job to continue pouring that into people moving forward ... I think it really did make me think a lot more about giving to my community, and not just community service, but really giving in a way that's like, when I actually have a seat at the table, making sure that I'm vouching and pushing for other people that don't have that same seat.*

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***"[MLT] definitely makes me feel more committed to helping people in my community. ... about giving to my community, and not just community service, but really giving in a way that's ... vouching and pushing for other people. ...."***

—MLT Fellow

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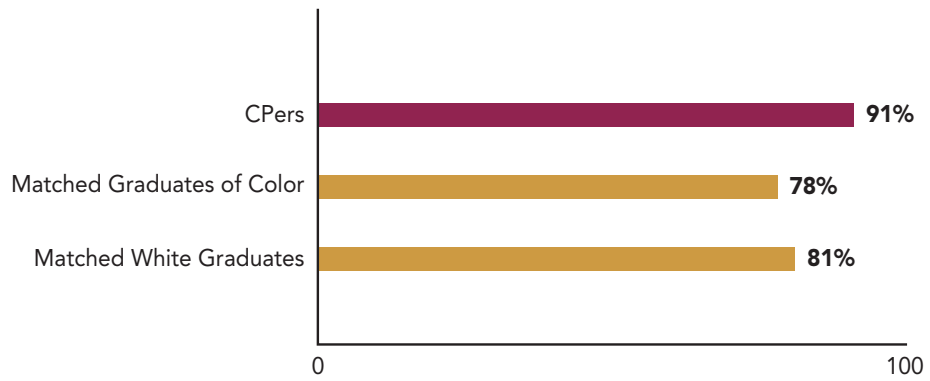
Another example focuses on building the pipeline in minority communities:

*So, I think MLT really pushed to the forefront the need for us to pay it forward — and when I say us, I mean all of us in MLT — and make sure that we are active and intentional about building a pipeline of African American and Latino professionals ... And the burden of building that pipeline needs to fall back on all of us who are currently in the industry.*

In comparison to the matched national group, MLT alumni were much more likely to vote and volunteer. This was true in comparison to People of Color, Whites, and women in the matched dataset. Charts 8 and 9 illustrate these percentage differences.

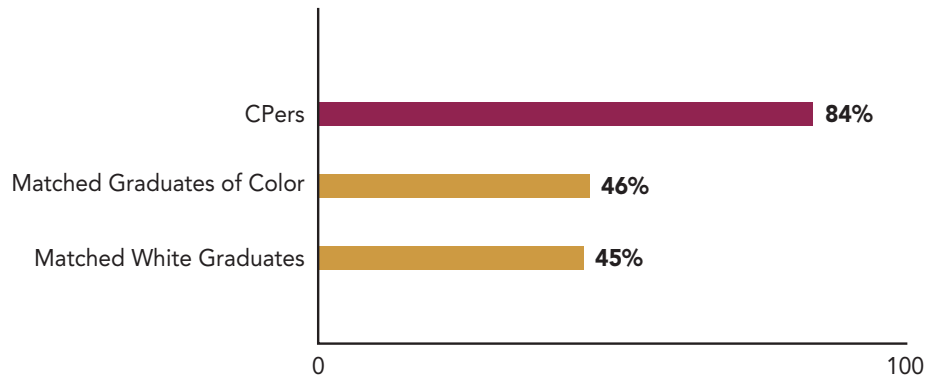
**Chart 8: More Career Prep Alumni Vote<sup>25</sup>**

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**Chart 9: Volunteering is Higher Among Career Prep Alumni**

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<sup>25</sup>Ninety percent of Career Prep alumni matched on their counterparts (People of Color) in the national sample, voted.

## IV. LIMITATIONS

There are three key limitations to this evaluation. First, its quasi-experimental design is subject to internal validity concerns. Without random assignment, differences between treatment and comparison groups on observed and unobserved characteristics may not be due to chance, which suggests caution around the statistical significance of the differences in outcomes.

Second, MLT in-house data quality is limited in that important variables are missing in whole or in part. This is due, in part, to decentralized data (not all data are located in the Salesforce database), data parameters that have changed over time (such as household income ranges), or data on variables for this evaluation are not collected at all. The quality issues with MLT data make it difficult to determine whether the survey data collected are representative of the populations that are served. It also made it impossible to compare MLT institutional data with national data.

Third, almost all survey response rates were low. This could be due, in part, to limited time and resources allocated for the study. Importantly, the low-response rate to the survey from the Career Prep waitlist population, which is the most desirable comparable group, made it impractical to use as a comparison group. Further, the Career Prep alumni response rate was only 8 percent. While achieving an impressive 50 percent response rate, the low-income public flagship university alumni was only best compared with low-income Career Prep alumni, which left no real comparison group for middle- and upper-income Career Prep alumni on important outcome variables not available through national data. The small “n” in various groups also raises the possibility of statistically significant relationships that would be visible with larger samples.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Curriculum.** At the same time of this evaluation, the Career Prep curriculum was being modified by integrating more sector-specific targeted skills. It is recommended that the curriculum be aligned with incoming skill levels, so Fellows can progress from their individual baselines. In addition to this modification, three other curriculum changes are recommended.

1. Provide more recognition of and support for intersectional identities. Class and gender were the intersectional identities most often discussed, especially as it relates to attending seminars and engaging with Business Partners, alumni, and other Fellows.
2. Be more intentional about integrating discussions concerning real-life diversity challenges in the workplace into the curriculum.
3. Consider the different agendas of stakeholders during the seminars, including allowing Fellows and Business Partners to have more informal time to network and socialize.

**Managing Growth.** While every Person of Color can benefit to some degree from the Career Prep services, some students with limited financial and social capital resources (“diamonds in the rough”) might benefit even more than others. Given that Business Partners seek the best prepared Career Prep recruits, this can create a tension around who is admitted, especially as applications for Career Prep have increased while openings have not.

1. Continue utilizing data to develop profiles of successful Career Prep Fellows who meet the “scrappiness” criterion but may not have earned the average GPA for admission decisions.
2. Monitor students against criteria — such as family income and attending an elite college — to stay within an established bandwidth that reflects economic diversity.

**Career Prep Data.** Extensive data have been collected over time with the Career Prep program, as is evident in Board reports and other internal documents. The challenge faced in conducting this evaluation, in part, was that the data reside in different files that are not yet integrated on a single platform. Further, some key variables are not collected (e.g., student loan debt), data categories are not consistent (e.g. family income), and other important data are missing for the majority of students (e.g., generational status).

1. Determine key short-, medium-, and long-term outcome measures, track, and integrate on a single platform. Many outcomes are included in the Career Prep survey.
2. For medium- and long-term outcome measures, MLT needs to build a culture among alumni of giving back in the form of data by responding to surveys. One option is to conduct an annual salary survey and issue an annual salary report as an alumni service.
3. Determine differential factors to account for in measuring impact, such as gender, family income, type of higher education institution, loan-debt, and industry pursued, for example.
4. Without random assignment to assess the impact of the Career Prep intervention, think about pre-post research design to measure outcomes. Possible outcomes include perceived aspirations, networks, general knowledge and skills taught through MLT curriculum, career awareness/direction, access and exposure to businesses, and

community service. Also, consider non-cognitive validated scales measuring motivation and engagement, grit, self-regulation, and resiliency. Collect data through surveys before Fellows begin Career Prep and after they complete Career Prep to measure changes in outcomes of interest.

5. If it is not already a Career Prep practice, conduct exit interviews with Fellows who do not complete the program. Information gleaned from withdrawals can be particularly helpful for process improvement.
6. For a future evaluation, the strongest comparison group is the MLT waitlist. Think about how to engage these students in the near term, such as through a lower-cost Career Prep model, for which efficacy of the model can be tested and loyalty to MLT can begin to be established. For example, a lower-cost model might involve a self-paced curriculum with less access to a Coach and virtual attendance at seminars. Both can be beneficial for future impact assessments.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this evaluation highlight the potential of college coaching programs such as MLT's Career Prep to strengthen the leadership pipeline of talented, underrepresented minorities in the transition from college to career.

The Career Prep evaluation provides strong support for the efficacy of this college-to-career program in achieving two of its primary goals: 1) enhancing program participants' chances of acquiring top-tier internships and post-graduation jobs; and 2) enhancing their civic engagement and community impact. These findings are supported by multiple data sources, including matched comparisons with a nationally representative dataset and Pell Grant cohort recipients from a public flagship university. Other areas of program impact supported by qualitative and institutional-based data include enhanced career aspirations and confidence, improved professional skills and networks, and clarified career goals. Interviews with key stakeholder groups suggest that the program's comprehensive, holistic, and community-building approach, as well as its intensive engagement with top-tier employers, may be core ingredients of its success in these areas. Additionally, business partners are enthusiastic about MLT's efficacy in helping them achieve their diversity and inclusion goals through access to a high-performing, diverse talent pool.

In addition to documenting these highly encouraging findings, we identify three key areas for program improvement: 1) developing a more customized curriculum for Fellows that attends to individual and group differences in interests, skills, and social background, and which includes more systematic attention to racial dynamics in the workplace; 2) managing program growth, both in terms of cohort size and selection and with respect to Business Partners; and 3) strengthening data systems to permit more rigorous program evaluation in the future.

This evaluation highlights the remarkable promise of MLT's coaching intervention through Career Prep in supporting the college and early career advancement of students of color. It is our hope that this evaluation provides a solid foundation in building the base of research in this socially consequential area.



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