



# CREATING NEW LEADERS OF **COLOR** FOR THE SOCIAL SECTOR

A Case Study of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's  
Investment in Management Leadership for Tomorrow  
and New York University's Wagner School of Public  
Service and Stern School of Business

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**Corey Blay is going to be a great leader for the social sector.**

*In many ways, he already is. At 30, Corey has his sights set on creating a new middle school for boys of color in Harlem, a vision he created while working as a teacher in the area.*

*A Catholic school kid from Long Island, Corey concentrated in public policy and African-American studies as an undergrad at the University of Chicago and worked during college on the South Side tutoring kids of color. He also ran a summer program for privileged youth from all over the world at Columbia University. "I spent a lot of time trying to triangulate those two experiences with my own middle-class upbringing. There are a lot of holes related to our education system and its impact on communities," he says.*

*Teaching at a middle school in the Bronx after college made him realize how much larger those holes are for young boys of color, so, in 2008, Corey decided to do something about it. He made a leap of faith and applied to two top MBA programs to gain the skills he'd need – but he didn't get in.*

*He became stuck, not sure where to go next. He knew he had a great deal to offer, but he couldn't find the right path to follow. That's when friends urged him to apply to the MBA Prep program created by Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT).*

## The Gap in Leadership of Color

Corey Blay's story is just one example of a systemic problem that's apparent throughout the country's social sector, from schools to government to nonprofit organizations and charitable foundations of every size and scope: the absence of a clear, accessible development pipeline for aspiring leaders of color.

The U.S. population is rapidly becoming more culturally and racially diverse. The percentage of individuals claiming minority status in the United States increased from 23% in 2000 to 34% in 2007. By 2020, the majority of youth in the country will be people of color. By 2030, the majority of the workforce under age 25 will be people of color. And by 2042, "minorities" as a whole will represent a majority of the U.S. population. Yet social sector leadership does not reflect this trend. Nonwhites hold only 16–25% of leadership positions in nonprofits and only 10% of leadership positions among funders. Leadership within government reflects a similar situation. At the federal level, only 15% of members of Congress are non-white, and only 13% of their chiefs of staff are people of color. People of color are also underrepresented in state and county leadership roles, and they likely are not on par with the nation's demographics.

There are many reasons for this underrepresentation, but one is clear: The social sector lacks straightforward, accessible pathways for minorities to find social sector leadership roles. Students of color who complete college and graduate school often do not see a clear career path toward social sector leadership roles (as compared to corporate ones) and may have a tough time finding networks and mentors to guide them.

Fortunately, there are many organizations that are working on this problem, and a host of new ideas under exploration. This case study highlights

once such approach: a unique partnership between Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT), the Annie E. Casey Foundation and New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service (Wagner) and Leonard N. Stern School of Business (Stern). Together, these partners are bringing their proven areas of expertise to the table to create a new influx of talented leaders of color to the social sector.

### The MLT Solution

This underrepresentation of leaders of color is also pervasive in the private sector. In fact, it's what led to the birth of MLT, a nonprofit focused on equipping high-potential minorities with the critical skills, coaching and mentoring and access to opportunities to help them unlock their potential as leaders. One of MLT's key strategies has been helping people attain and leverage MBA degrees to further their careers.

When founder and CEO John Rice attended Harvard Business School, he found the experience to be transformative. He wondered why more African-American students like him did not have access to the same experience. "As I began to explore this problem, I came to understand that there were a number of significant gaps in the way minorities were navigating their career paths," says Rice. "I started MLT to help ambitious young people of color who wanted to go out and accomplish big things. I wanted to give them a very clear understanding



of the bar of excellence at the best organizations, as well as a road map for how to succeed once they were there. I wanted to help them understand how they needed to approach their careers, based on how people at the top got there. MLT formalizes the instruction and delivery of the ingredients every senior leader says are key: coaching, mentoring, door-opening relationships and the hard and soft skills not necessarily taught in graduate school."

Since its inception in 2002, MLT has grown to offer programs focused on undergraduate career prep; MBA prep for early career professionals; ongoing professional development for enrolled MBA students; and a career advancement program for high-potential, mid-career managers who

have the potential to advance to the executive levels. All told, more than 3,000 participants, called MLT Fellows, have benefited from MLT.

While Rice focused initially on helping students earn and leverage MBA degrees in the corporate world, a desire to create impact within the social sector was always present.

“There was a clear set of points in the corporate sector where we could engage and prove that our model would work,” explains Rice. “Once we did that, we studied the similarities and differences in the social sector so we could customize our approach and target a set of very committed and influential partners.”

MLT’s approach caught the attention of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “We have intentionally prioritized supporting diverse talent in the social sector,” says Rafael López, associate director of talent and leadership development at the foundation. “When we looked at data about the social sector, we saw that CEOs and senior leaders were overwhelmingly white. Then we looked at changing demographic trends in the country and asked ourselves, ‘How is it that we can serve a diversifying population without diversity in leadership?’

“We went to MLT specifically because they are leveraging their private sector success in growing the social sector pipeline. They are testing their ideas about how to expand the pipeline, just as we are testing ours. This partnership was meant to be.”

In 2011, with support from the Casey Foundation, MLT created the Social Sector Talent Initiative, designed to significantly expand the diverse leadership pipeline for the social sector – with an ambitious goal of engaging and accelerating the careers of 2,000 minority rising leaders in the sector over five years. MLT is fueling the initiative by purposefully seeking out and admitting into its programs

applicants who have work experience in the social sector and/or plan to seek social sector opportunities after graduate school.

“MLT has always been focused on building the general skills, relationships and experiences you need for career success no matter what your interests,” says Kevin Donahue, vice president of partnerships. “For the Social Sector Talent Initiative, we’ve overlaid specific social sector career needs on top

a partnership with Stern and Wagner. With a shared focus on building a national pipeline of diverse graduate students and early-career and mid-career professionals for social sector careers, the three organizations, with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, have leveraged one another’s expertise in many ways to make the Social Sector Talent Initiative a robust experience for rising leaders of color.

### The MLT Method

It takes more than classroom education to create leaders. It takes hard and soft skills, early exposure to high-impact career opportunities, an understanding of the path to the senior levels and inspiring leaders and mentors. These things have historically been provided to business and social sector leaders through informal channels, but MLT has formalized the process with programs specifically targeted to college students, MBA students and executives. Each MLT program is laser-focused on the needs of the individual and provides:

- A road map of specific steps to take to achieve one’s short and long-term goals
- One-on-one coaching to develop the specific skills needed to distinguish oneself as a high performer
- Skill-building seminars that focus on boosting analytical, leadership, communication and management abilities
- Mentorship to avoid career-limiting mistakes
- Door-opening relationships to prestigious employers that can lead to a “big break”
- Internships to boost resumes, experience and confidence
- Direct connections to high-performing peers who provide motivation and support.

of that. One of the biggest areas of impact has been in helping young people better link their unique gifts, talents and passions with clear and actionable career goals. Too many young people are managing their careers in the wrong way. They need to start by looking at the end game and the impact they want to make, and then look at others who have done similar things and what skills, relationships and experiences those leaders had. The Social Sector Talent Initiative puts each of those components into action.”

To strengthen the Social Sector Talent Initiative even further, MLT entered into

### Social Sector Talent Initiative Programs

Similar to MLT’s corporate-focused model, the Social Sector Talent Initiative reaches prospective leaders at multiple stages, from college to mid career. MLT spends a lot of time at the beginning of each program helping participants understand their true passions, what their unique talents and gifts are, and where they’ll have the most impact in the social sector.

Once they understand those factors, participants are exposed to an intense set of experiences that allow them to

develop the skills and relationships necessary to succeed in the social sector. For example, in 2012:

- Undergraduate juniors who participated in MLT's Career Prep program not only learned about the best entry-level corporate opportunities but also delved deeply into Social Sector Career Exploration sessions; in one practical skill development activity, they developed expansion recommendations for Teach for America.

"This was a powerful experience for changing people's perceptions about what it's like to work in the social sector," says Donahue. One student from Wellesley College remarked, "I do not think anyone was expecting to number crunch and use these numbers to make a decision that impacted 12,000-15,000 kids in the Teach for America rotation. It was a lot of fun. It was very effective at changing our mind-set about TFA."

- Fellows in the MBA Prep program, like Corey Blay, developed skills needed for business school, with an eye on how those skills would also prepare them for jobs in the social sector. MBA Prep participants attended a social sector "boot camp" created in partnership with Wagner, which provided an intensive look at career paths in the sector. They met with representatives from Bridgespan, Teach for America, Goodwill Industries and the Casey Foundation, who led the participants through meaningful case studies that examined the challenges facing social sector organizations. Toni Harris, Wagner's director of career services and alumni relations, also delivered a lecture tailored for the MLT Fellows about the social sector ecosystem.

"The boot camp experience allows our MBA Prep Fellows to apply MBA-oriented skills to come up with solutions that benefit vulnerable communities. It shows them exactly how their MBA will directly apply to and have an impact on organizations and causes they're

passionate about," says Donahue.

- MLT MBA Prep Fellows are encouraged to explore the MBA/MPA "dual" degree offered by Stern and Wagner – a program that had existed for some time but is also being reshaped to speak directly to the needs of the MLT Fellows. Corey was the first MLT Fellow to enroll. Stern and Wagner provided significant scholarship funds for this new partnership, as well as deep knowledge about and connections for boosting students into social sector careers.

- At MLT's annual career fair, social sector partners conducted more than 50 interviews with MLT Fellows who are currently earning their MBA degrees.

- Three current social sector leaders



enrolled in MLT's Career Advancement Program, a six-month leadership development program for the highest-potential minority talent on track to assume executive positions.

- In addition, hundreds of individuals participated in portions of the programs mentioned above.

The Social Sector Talent Initiative also provides each MLT Fellow one-to-one coaching, a pivotal part of the MLT experience across programs. Coaches are full-time MLT employees who meet monthly with each Fellow to guide them through the process of career development. A key part of their role is helping Fellows connect with MLT alumni in social sector fields of interest and build successful relationships with them. Coaches also

work with Fellows to create a "personal board of directors," thinking through different relationships they'll need to be successful and how to build and leverage those relationships.

### Leveraging Social Sector Partners

MLT, Wagner and Stern have worked closely with leading social sector organizations to provide real-world understanding for their Fellows. Organizations like Bridgespan, Teach for America, Foundation Strategy Group (FSG), Goodwill Industries International, the Ford Foundation, the Broad Center, Echoing Green, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and even the Central Intelligence Agency have served as partners and participated in the social sector boot camp.

"Many people don't realize it, but Goodwill generates billions in retail revenue, which it uses to provide employment, job training and other community-based programs," says Donahue. "They've worked with us to develop our curriculum, created a number of case studies, offered internships and hired some of our undergraduate Fellows. Last year we piloted an internship program with Goodwill that was hugely successful, and we're working on rolling it out more broadly to Goodwill regions across the country."

As Donahue sees it, there is another direct benefit from working with the social sector partners. "There is very little chance that our talent pool would have thought there was a place for them at Goodwill or understood what they need to do to succeed there if it were not for the Social Sector Talent Initiative. I would say the same holds true for many of our other social sector partners. And even though some of them might have ended up in Teach for America's large teacher corps, they probably would not have made the leap of moving into the management of the organization."

## **Opening Doors to Social Sector Leadership**

Corey's MBA Prep program experience began in 2010. He worked with a designated MLT coach who helped him focus his thought processes and pinpoint the various MBA programs that would be the best fit for him. He was given numerous "homework" assignments, including analysis of different schools and their programs, application essays and even exercises to help him understand his own story – all of which he reviewed monthly with his coach. Corey attended quarterly seminars with other program participants, visited a number of business schools and exemplary businesses (including Nike headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon) and met with many business and social sector leaders.

The Teach for America segment of the Social Sector Boot Camp proved especially meaningful to Corey, who, having been denied employment there as an undergraduate, was skeptical about the opportunities for employment on a management level. "The Social Sector Boot Camp opened my eyes to how I could leverage my expertise and background in diversity work to help Teach for America advance its mission. Through MLT's partnerships with TFA and Education Pioneers, I ultimately obtained a summer internship where I created a pilot mentorship program for staff of color and/or low-income background designed to improve retention, deepen their engagement in TFA's mission and values and ensure their career growth within the organization."

"The entire MLT MBA Prep program was a great opportunity to build networks, get exposure to different industries and put my own personal brand forward," says Corey. "It also was central in helping me think through the process of applying to MBA programs and figure out what school would be best for me. I was able to overcome challenges that would normally lead candidates of color to drop the process."

Those challenges, Corey explains, include psychological hurdles for students who may have difficulty seeing themselves as MBA students and understanding that they belong in an MBA program. MLT's MBA Prep program also provided structure to keep him focused on the goal of enrolling in the right program. For Corey, the right fit ended up being the MBA/MPA dual-degree program at New York University (NYU), where he became the first student in the pilot effort targeted at directing more MLT Fellows to a dual-degree program focused on developing leaders who are interested in making an impact in the social sector.

"A lot of people told me that I shouldn't be applying to business school because I'm an educator, and I was torn, but I really wanted to go," Corey says. "MLT helped me recognize something inside that told me to do the dual degree – that I could use what I learned from both programs to make the difference I wanted to in the social sector. MLT helped me see that an MBA/MPA was much more valuable to me than either degree individually."

Corey began his studies in the dual-degree program at NYU in fall of 2011 and will graduate in 2014.

## The Value of a Dual-Degree Program

The existing web of connections and relationships between MLT, NYU and the Casey Foundation created a fertile space to experiment with the notion of furthering minority exploration of social sector leadership by encouraging MLT Fellows to pursue a MBA/MPA dual-degree program, as Corey Blay is doing now.

“When we thought about MLT and our focus on graduate school, and after several interviews with senior leaders in the social sector, we realized that MPA degrees are a career accelerant in that sector and that we should include that in what we’re doing,” says Donahue.

NYU’s Stern and Wagner were natural partners to explore the power of a dual degree. Stern has been a partner of MLT’s since MLT began, hosting seminars for MLT Fellows as well as matriculating more than 60 MLT Fellows over the past decade. Wagner’s mission has always centered on developing social sector leaders and its commitment to assuring diversity in the sector has only strengthened over time. Dean Ellen Schall of Wagner has worked closely with the Casey Foundation over the last 20 years to further a shared desire to build a pipeline for leaders of color. Additionally, Wagner has explored in depth the issue of minority leadership in various sectors and levels of society both through the research and programs offered by its Research Center for Leadership in Action and its Master of Public Administration in Public and Nonprofit Management and Policy.

“Wagner is able to bring a deep understanding of opportunities in the social sector, how rising leaders get recruited, how they ultimately make a meaningful difference and where the gaps lie for many leaders of color,” says Schall. “This partnership was a great opportunity to further bridge

the gap between the social sector and business sector to help ensure more opportunities exist for careers in both sectors that have a direct and positive effect on societal issues, and that welcome leaders of color to that work.”

“From a business school perspective, we have an increasing recognition of the need and desire on the part of our students to pursue degrees that are more cross-cutting and integrated in nature,” says Stern’s Dean Peter Henry. “We want students to realize that you can pursue a degree in business and a lifelong engagement in public policy or public service. We want to demonstrate to other institutions that this is the way forward.”

The NYU dual-degree program was launched in 1999. Recently, the two schools began to work together to streamline the application process for the dual degree and provide students enrolled in both schools with a more integrated experience, so that they felt like they were part of a single program rather than juggling two separate ones. Stern and Wagner also worked together to provide scholarship funds for exceptionally talented students who demonstrated strong potential for future leadership in the social sector.

“One of the unintended benefits of this partnership is that we realized that just offering two degrees isn’t enough,” says Schall. “You have to have a coordinated program that clearly presents the value of both degrees, helps students see the connection between them

and helps them engage more deeply at each school. Working with MLT made us focus on what would attract students and what value the program would yield to them. And it’s made our relationship with Stern even more robust.”

Together, Stern, Wagner and MLT are providing support services for MLT students, including personalized road maps for creating impact in the social sector, access to door-opening relationships and connections to fast-track job opportunities at leading nonprofits and foundations.

At Wagner, because the social sector partnership with MLT is still serving a small number of students, there’s room for a lot of one-on-one focus. “We work with each person, thinking carefully about the skills they’ll need, the internships they should do and who they need to meet,” Schall explains. “We started to do this just for our MLT joint-degree students, but now we do it for all dual-degree students. Being thoughtful about your career is a skill – one that you can use throughout your career. We teach people how to think about the roles to which they aspire and the kinds of change they want to make, in what kind of system and using what skills.”

“Stern and Wagner have done a ton of work internally at NYU to make it easier for candidates to apply for the dual degree and make it a much better experience for individuals during the program,” says Donahue. “They’ve

## The Wisdom of Wagner

As a graduate school devoted to preparing the future leaders of institutions and organizations in the social sector – for whom a diverse world is a given – in its 75-year history NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service has often strived to take a leadership role in organizing efforts to deepen our understanding of the needs of diverse communities, create strategic partnerships and expand the School's ability to be a leader in this work. As part of this effort, Wagner has developed strong relations with historically black colleges and universities, participates in targeted diversity recruitment events with its peer schools of public affairs and is a member of the Public Policy and International Affairs Program, a national program that prepares young adults for careers in the social sector and has an outreach focus on students from groups historically underrepresented in leadership positions in government, nonprofits, international organizations and other institutional settings. As part of its planned activities for admitted students, Wagner has an annual event that focuses on and celebrates diversity in its student body, curriculum and research institutions in an effort to make clear the school's commitment to and activities around leadership and diversity. Moreover, through the Research Center for Leadership and Action, Wagner offers the Fellowship for Emerging Leaders in Public Service, a seven-month leadership development program for a diverse group of early-career public service professionals in New York City, as well as the Global Social Change Leadership Institute, an intensive two-week summer program drawing university and graduate students and recent college graduates from around the world to build the practical knowledge and skills to advance social justice in their communities.



taken what can be a very challenging process to navigate and made it very smooth and straightforward. Stern and Wagner have removed institutional barriers to the dual application and the provision of dual services. NYU has made it a coordinated program that provides a great, unified experience.”

### **Growing Overall Awareness for Building a Social Sector Career Pipeline**

The Social Sector Talent Initiative has served as a catalyst for MLT, Wagner, Stern and many other partners to pay more attention to intentionally building a pipeline for social sector leaders of color.

“MLT and its partner organizations agree that investing in talent improves outcomes,” says Donahue. “Investing in diverse talent – especially in those who come from underserved communities – can bring new ideas, passion and skill sets to attack the problems in those underserved communities, and it drives better outcomes for populations that our partner organizations are serving.”

“The reason that organizations like Goodwill, and Teach for America work with us is because they want to expand their talent pool. They believe there is value for their constituents and improved outcomes in their work when their talent pool is more diverse and brings more perspectives to their work. Building a pipeline for that diverse talent takes time, but our partners are devoting that time.”

Both Wagner and Stern also have refocused on moving more leaders into the social sector and broadening NYU’s outreach well beyond the MLT dual-degree program.

“Since engaging in this project, we’ve not only diversified the dual-degree program at NYU but also doubled it in size,” says Vanessa Hutchinson, assistant director of admissions at Wagner, who coordinates the dual-degree program and the partnership with MLT.

Enrollment of people of color in NYU’s dual-degree program has increased from 35% to 50% over the past year. Dual-degree applicants of color went from 47% of the total applicant pool in fall 2011 to 55% of the total applicant pool for fall 2012.

Hutchinson also credits the MLT partnership with a heightened awareness of how to reach potential students of color.

“It allowed us to reevaluate our recruiting practices across the board and determine new and better ways to reach out to people of color and talk to them about social sector careers, individually and in partnership with Stern. We’ve looked for ways to engage potential leaders of color more deeply. We are reaching out to students who may not have considered which graduate degree they might want but who may be interested in the social sector. It’s about cultivating that interest ahead of time. It helps us make an impact overall as people of color become interested in social sector careers, whether or not they apply to Wagner.”

Stern has also increased its focus on social sector information to reflect the growing student interest it sees in social sector careers. “We put people who have social sector career paths in front of our students, such as Dr. Helene Gayle, the CEO of CARE USA, who previously worked for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control, is a board member of a Fortune 500 company and was listed as one of 2012’s ‘100 Most Powerful Women’ by *Forbes* magazine,” says Henry. “Our dual-degree students are the ones who have pushed us to think harder about how to bring in the right role models for all students. They will be in the audience for presentations like Dr. Gayle’s, but they’re not the only ones we’re hoping to reach.”

## **The Strength of Stern**

One of the nation’s top ten business schools, NYU’s Leonard N. Stern School of Business believes in the tremendous potential of individuals to solve global problems through the power of business. Founded on this belief, its vision is to develop people and ideas that transform 21st-century problems into opportunities to create value for business and society. To that end, Stern is dedicated to increasing leadership opportunities for underrepresented minorities in the business world. Stern is a member of the Consortium for Graduate Study in Management, an alliance of business schools and corporations dedicated to reducing the serious underrepresentation of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans in business. Stern encourages all eligible candidates to apply. In addition to its partnership with MLT, Stern also participates in the annual conferences of the National Black MBA Association (NMBMBA) and the National Society of Hispanic MBAs.

Under the leadership of Dean Peter Henry, Stern has also broadened horizons of MBA students and raised awareness of career and leadership opportunities in the social sector, including the flagship MBA/MPA dual-degree program offered in conjunction with Wagner.

## **Personal Victory**

*For Corey, the feeling of victory swelled the minute he arrived at NYU to begin his studies in the MBA-MPA dual-degree program.*

*“The value of going through the MLT Prep program manifested itself very quickly once I got on campus,” he says. “I had an increased level of confidence and self-awareness about who I was and what I was trying to do. I had navigated different opportunities that presented themselves, and so I feel confident about belonging here.”*

*“This is the perfect program for me,” he says. “The dual degree gives me access to every corner of the university to explore what I’m personally passionate about and to grow and learn in ways I couldn’t do anywhere else.”*

*Corey describes his MLT and NYU experiences as “inseparable,” and he sees value in the MLT experience beyond just his MBA Prep program.*

*“A number of MLT Fellows ended up at NYU,” he explains. “Stern has long been committed to diversity, so we have one of the most diverse classes of any business school in the country. But the students all blend together – that’s a testament to the comfort we developed during MLT. My classmates at both schools are all socially engaged, collaborative and supportive of one another. All those traits are basic to MLT, so I’m comfortable in this space. I thank everyone involved for the opportunity to be at NYU.”*

## Early Victories and Lessons Learned

Although it's still early in the game, MLT can point to victories when it comes to growing the pipeline for minority leaders in the social sector.

### Early Victories

MLT is well on its way to hitting its goal of engaging 2,000 people in the Social Sector Talent Initiative over five years. In fact, it has engaged 770 rising leaders in years one and two. Many of those 770 leaders previously may not have considered the social sector as a place for a viable career. In addition, more than 70 MLT Fellows successfully started new jobs in the social sector in 2012 – nearly twice the 40 Fellows who did so in 2011.

MLT has worked with its social sector partners and other organizations (such as Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy and Young Nonprofit Professionals Network) to encourage participation in the Social Sector Talent Initiative. This, combined with MLT's strong word-of-mouth recruiting network, has exceeded expectations for interest.

"People are now coming to MLT who are specifically interested in being social sector leaders," says Donahue. "We've never seen that before. Applicants have asked specifically about what we're doing with the social sector. We are now reaching and attracting candidates that we've never reached in the past."

The Social Sector Talent Initiative is also starting to make progress in terms of elevating the importance of social sector careers and elevating the profile of management careers within the social sector, says Donahue. "In the past, many people viewed being a manager at a major corporation as

more prestigious than having the same role in the social sector, but, actually, achieving a leadership role in the social sector can be much more difficult. We're working to raise the perception of the importance and significance of social sector careers to be on equal footing with management careers in the corporate world."

In terms of the dual-degree partnership with NYU and Casey, Rice says, "We're most proud about the speed at which we've been able to not just plant a seed but get something off the ground and immediately fast-track people like Corey and the classes admitted after him. That's not very typical of how most major universities and large foundations move. It shows an entrepreneurial spirit and a true interest in this work. We're building great momentum, and that gives me a lot of confidence that this initiative is a winner."

"I'd say one of our biggest successes has been the strength of our partnership, the increase in the number of dual-degree applicants across the board and the high quality of students we've been able to attract," says Schall.

"I would say the biggest success so far is changing student mind sets," says Henry. "We live in a world that's not so much 'either or' as it is 'and.' Getting students to realize that you can pursue a degree in business and a lifelong engagement in public policy or public service is a great accomplishment. I also think we're demonstrating to other institutions that this is the way forward."



"Our sector is rich with opportunities and stories of transformation, but desperate for making connections to those who want to make a difference in communities where we work," says López. "To me, one of the most significant accomplishments so far is taking a program that has worked very well in the corporate world, translating it to the social sector and already engaging many more people than we anticipated. Thanks to MLT's work with the Social Sector Talent Initiative, and the way that NYU's Stern and Wagner Schools have shared information and messages about the social sector, we've actually reached several thousand people. Think of all the emerging leaders who now better understand the value proposition for entering the sector, and who can see viable careers and income streams that can come from working in it. They can see that by serving as CEOs or finance professionals or programmatic leaders, they can deliver results in meaningful and rewarding ways."



### Lessons Learned

Now with two years of practice under their belts, Rice and his colleagues can point to several key lessons learned from implementing the Social Sector Talent Initiative that may inform the broader work of building a pipeline of minority leaders for the sector.

**MBA can be a four-letter word.** “One hurdle we’re now addressing is the historical perception in the social sector that ‘business skills’ and ‘MBA programs’ are bad words,” says Rice. “While the social sector appreciates the skills, it doesn’t outwardly value the business school experience. The Social Sector Talent Initiative has been hugely important not only in shaping the experience for MLT fellows but also in helping shape the perception that the business and social sectors can come together in a winning combination for next-generation minority leaders.”

**Tracking short-term goals is critical to attracting supporters.** “Everyone in the social sector grasps the importance of creating a broader pipeline of minority leaders, but we’ve also learned you have to have a near-term set of initiatives and outcomes that demonstrate a good return on investment for your partners,” Rice reports. “In our case, that’s the number of folks entering our programs, where they end up, what they’ll do right out of school in first and second jobs and what the organizations who are partnering with us to hire them see over the next two to five years. It’s a lesson we learned from the corporate sector, and it’s important for attracting

and keeping ongoing commitment of funders and hiring organizations. One exciting thing about this program is that we’re able to show growth and celebrate the successes of those students in near and long term.”

**Securing investments in talent is challenging.** Getting more social service organizations to invest in talent – even in something as basic as hiring an intern – remains challenging, says Donahue. “It’s hard to get organizations to look at the importance of investing in, recruiting, and retaining talent. We’ve been fortunate to work with some key social service organizations that understand the benefits and value of this, and, once they do it, most organizations understand that it’s really powerful, but overcoming the hurdle of investing time or money to work with an organization like MLT can still be challenging.”

**Career conversations with prospective students need to change.** “Through working with MLT, we’ve realized that for our social sector leadership efforts to really become robust, we need to change cultural conversations about work, particularly for those from non-wealthy backgrounds,” says Schall. “We need to emphasize that it’s possible to both make a living and do good. Students can experience the incredible, high-level opportunities in government, the nonprofit sector and in public-private partnerships while making a direct impact on their community and the larger society.

“One of the advantages of the shift in our economy has been a 20% decrease in law school applications. Law school and investment banking were the old ‘no sink’ options, but this decline in applications may indicate that those traditional options are no longer seen as desirable as they once were. We have an opportunity to enlarge the conversation and meet the needs of today’s students, who are passionate, entrepreneurial and increasingly interested in cross-sector careers. They desire to have an impact on the larger

world around them, which often means addressing issues of social importance.”

**Partners with committed leaders make all the difference.** The joint degree partnership worked so well because of existing relationships and the shared desire to do what was best for students. As Henry says, “It’s not about who scores the points but who wins the game.”

“It’s been very important to know that among all the partners in this relationship, everyone has had the full support of leadership,” says Hutchinson. “They are all personally committed. Our success so far is a testament to having a strong belief in this work and the partnership at the top, combined with the ability to make things happen at the implementation level. We’re supported in this work top to bottom.”



## The Looming Challenge: Creating Commonly Recognized Career Paths Within the Social Sector

The social sector is increasingly compelling, challenging bright minds with large-scale problems and offering a number of ways to make a difference through government, nonprofits and public-private partnerships. But at the same time, compared to the corporate world, looking for a “typical” career path in the social sector can be like wading into a murky fog.

“Young people are increasingly looking for meaning in their work,” Schall points out. “Our idea at Wagner is that focusing on a particular sector is less important than focusing on students’ desire for impact. Our students are likely to work in more than one sector over their careers. The lines between sectors seem to blur more these days than they did 20 years ago. Back then, if you were in business, you’d make money, serve on a board or two and switch to the social sector at retirement. Now, there’s an increasing notion that graduate school is an opportunity to equip yourself with skills that give you more choices about where to deploy them. But there isn’t a clear, step-by-step path.”

Part of the work of MLT has been to concentrate on forging that path. “If you’re going to business school and are interested in consulting, you’ll likely have exposure to Deloitte,” says Donahue. “But if you’re passionate about social issues, chances are good you’re not going to have exposure to career opportunities in the social sector in the course of your business school experience. Those kinds of organizations don’t come on campus to show how you can use your skills in a career path. We’ve had to build exposure to those careers and help explain those paths: to show how you can use that MBA to have an impact on social sector organizations.”

“We’re in the process of implementing a model of mentorship and support for

the MLT partnership, working with the career planning offices at both Stern and Wagner,” adds Hutchinson. “Our goal for the class entering in 2013 is to provide mentors in the sector to help them navigate and create relationships. Right now we still have a small number of students, and each has very different career interests. There’s not one employer who would satisfy all of them, so it requires a much more customized approach.”

Approaching the career-building hurdle from each individual Fellow’s perspective is valuable, and the MLT/NYU partnership does it well – but there’s a larger issue when it comes to the way social sector organizations typically approach the search for talented, up-and-coming leaders.

“People like Corey want to make their careers in the social sector, but the way foundations and nonprofits identify and recruit talent is very different than in the corporate sector,” Rice observes. “We need to take a collective approach to engaging hiring organizations in the social sector. We’ll have to take an even more collaborative approach to create a critical mass of opportunities so that a hiring organization with unclear needs can still take full advantage of our model.”

“We’re not looking to build a new social sector recruiting firm,” says López. “We understand better now than we did a couple of years ago that the pathway

to a strong, rewarding career in the social sector is not easily defined. But as a funder, if we want a clear pathway for minority leaders we will need to dream up better ways to expose and engage talent more efficiently than one nonprofit at a time. MLT provides this so crisply for the corporate world, and we think they can help do that for the social sector as well.”

### What’s Next?

In terms of growing the Social Sector Talent Initiative, MLT will continue its activities for each level of its programming, add a social sector internship program for first-year MBA students and second-year dual-degree students and add a broad rollout of programs to its mid-career alumni in 2013.

“Building out more mid-career support for those in the social sector is especially critical, because it’s not enough to help someone get into a great grad school and get that first post-grad job,” says Donahue. “We’ve accelerated the career trajectory for all of our Fellows, but until they’ve achieved the impact they want to achieve, there is more MLT can do to support their efforts. Our vision is to make MLT a continuous, career-long experience, one that’s with you until you achieve your ultimate impact.”

In terms of expanding the dual-degree component of the Social Sector Talent Initiative, all partners are currently exploring the options. “Growing the

dual-degree program will depend a great deal on capacity,” says Donahue. “Even NYU can only admit so many students. We’re working on establishing partnerships with other schools, but it will be difficult to match the coordination and support NYU has put together for dual-degree students. There are other opportunities for young people to learn the skills they need without pursuing a dual degree. However, the dual degree may be the more efficient way for some of our MLT Fellows to attain their goals.”

Hutchinson is excited about the opportunity to reach potential social sector students earlier and see the partnership with MLT expand. “As our work continues, it will be about building a program that really meets goals for our students, and how MLT rolls it out to broaden the pipeline,” she says. “If MLT wanted to adjust their model and engage with students even earlier in their process to consider the social sector, I’d be interested in being part of that conversation.”

Of course, growing all aspects of the Social Sector Talent Initiative and

increasing the pipeline of talented, diverse leaders for the social sector means growing the number of players on the field. Rice and Donahue have several suggestions for those wishing to engage:

- Help MLT scale its work by becoming a partner. Partners can help develop curriculum, participate in events and network with and recruit MLT Fellows as interns or full-time employees.
- Concentrate on volunteer leadership. “We’ve been focused mostly on people who want to work full time, but there are opportunities to explore board seats and other volunteer leadership opportunities as well,” says Donahue.
- Spread the MLT method. MLT has spent a lot of time codifying its programs and practices so that other organizations and individuals can use its method for furthering careers. “We would like to see our alumni working with other organizations to help implement the MLT method for their target constituencies,” says Rice. “We also want to make our frameworks more broadly available to more individuals

and institutions, whether or not they participate or partner with MLT.”

- Encourage more social sector organizations to invest in talent. “We urge anyone to take the lessons from MLT or any other resource to further the work of increasing nonprofit investment in talent development,” says Rice. “Regardless of whom you work with, investing in talent will drive better outcomes.”

That’s a belief that the Casey Foundation holds dear. “We want to be on the cutting edge of this work,” says López. “We think it’s important and compelling for this country and the young people in it. We need to give those who want to solve complex problems, particularly for children and families, the best pathways to do that. But we also need to let the Social Sector Talent Initiative run its course. We’re still in the early stages, and the question of viability is still open. The challenge for funders like us is that the payoff is years and years ahead of us, as those entering the social sector will need time to grow into leadership roles. That’s a challenging timeline for philanthropy, but we think it will be worth the wait.”



### **What's Next for Corey**

*"It became more and more clear over the course of my first year in the dual-degree program that I should be pushing on the new middle school I want to create in Harlem," Corey reports. After a summer working at Teach for America, he and a fellow classmate decided to go for it. As Corey works to complete his dual degree, he and his partner have finished their business plan and are actively fund-raising for the school, which they have named Brotherhood Prep.*

*"This was all accelerated by MLT, NYU and even Casey, whether they intended that or not," he jokes. "That's a testament to the importance of focusing on leadership. I came from not seeing my worth in being in graduate school to being comfortable taking on leadership within it. Now I have a deep leadership team for my project, a network of support and this new school really has legs. A lot of people believe in this. There's not a day I don't feel privileged and glad to be where I am. I could still be a teacher somewhere, struggling with entrenched problems, but instead I'm on the cusp of building something new that could become an institution in Harlem and even in other parts of the country."*

For more information about MLT, visit [www.ml4t.org](http://www.ml4t.org) or call 212.736.3411. To learn more about NYU's MBA/MPA dual-degree program, contact [wagner.admissions@nyu.edu](mailto:wagner.admissions@nyu.edu), 212.998.7414, or visit [www.wagner.nyu.edu](http://www.wagner.nyu.edu) or [stern.nyu.edu](http://stern.nyu.edu). To discuss the Casey Foundation's involvement, please contact the Foundation's Talent and Leadership Development Unit, 410.547.6600.



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