

**Next Generation Venture Fund:  
Empowering Under-Represented Scholars to reach their  
Academic Potential**

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## **Next Generation Venture Fund:** **Empowering Under-Represented Scholars to reach their** **Academic Potential**

The Next Generation Venture Fund is a scholarship program designed to increase the number of bright minority students who are fully prepared to enter highly selective colleges and universities, and assist them in doing so. The program brings these under-represented children to the highest levels of academic achievement through participation in rigorous summer programs, year-round distance education courses, specialized weekend courses, a mentoring program and year-round academic counseling. The Next Generation Venture Fund (NGVF) is operated by The Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth (CTY) and the Duke University Talent Identification Program (TIP).

CTY, in conjunction with Duke TIP, designed an evaluation model to document the implementation and effectiveness of the Next Generation Venture Fund. This evaluation model was based on the previous research and evaluation of the Goldman Sachs Scholars program, implemented by CTY beginning in 2000, which also targeted highly able under-represented youth. The Next Generation Venture Fund evaluation expanded on the successes of the Goldman Sachs Scholars program to further our understanding of the academic, motivational, and counseling approaches and practices that are needed to prepare and empower gifted under-represented students to reach their academic potential.

Students are selected into the program based on evidence of ability, financial need, and minority status. Students begin the NGVF program in the summer after their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year and continue in the program until graduation from high school. There are currently 97 tenth graders and 32 ninth graders in the program. Data are collected through student and parent surveys, academic records, teacher evaluations, and pre- and post-testing. These data are then analyzed to determine which components of the program are most beneficial to the academic advancement of the students as evidenced by outcomes such as high level academic achievement throughout high school (e.g., Program participants take more honors and advanced placement courses in high school than a comparison group of non-program participants) and eventual college admissions to selective institutions (Program participants are more likely to apply to, and be accepted by, the most competitive colleges and universities).

The presentation includes a description and discussion of this innovative program, evaluation results and lessons learned. Through this presentation, we hope to provide information that will help teachers, schools, and other groups who work with under-represented gifted students to better meet their needs.

## Introduction

In our fast-paced, technologically-based society, it is becoming increasingly necessary for all of our students to excel. It is not enough to simply be an average kid; one must be well above average, at least in some aspect of one's life. However, for those students whose strength lies in the academic realm, it is getting more and more difficult. Many school districts are cutting back on or eliminating their gifted and talented programs in order to focus on bringing the below-average performing students up to the norm. While there is nothing wrong with insuring that all children receive adequate school instruction and that they graduate school with the same basic skills, it is inconceivable that we should ignore the needs of our brightest and most promising youth, who will one day shape this nation.

Gifted and Talented Programs often come under attack as being biased and unfair due to the under-representation of minority and low income students. There has been much debate about the reasons for this discrepancy, with some claiming that the admissions test and procedures are biased, and still others viewing gifted education as another way to re-segregate schools (Gallagher, 2005). Suggestions were made to change the definition of giftedness, to modify the admissions procedures for such programs, or to simply teach gifted students in the regular classroom (Scott, et al., 1997; Robinson, 2003). Changing the standards, however, is not a solution to the problem. Some very able students are simply not as prepared academically as other students (Lynch & Mills, 1990). In addition, under-represented students who do score high enough to qualify for gifted and talented programs might be limited due to financial constraints.

Research has shown that under-represented students can excel in gifted and talented programs when they are given the resources to do so. For minority students who are doing reasonably well in school, it only takes some basic skills reinforcement to increase their standardized tests scores in order to qualify them for gifted and talented programs (Lynch & Mills, 1990; Mills, Jones Stork & Krug, 1992). Tomlinson, Callahan, and Lelli (1997) found that mentorship, family outreach and modifications in the classroom helped several low-income minority students to reach their full potential. Providing academic and social support for these under-represented students can lead to these students outperforming their classmates in both test scores and school attendance (Watt, Powell, & Mendiola, 2000).

### CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars Program

Based on this knowledge, in the summer of 2000, the CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars Program began an initiative to identify academically talented under-represented youth and support their educational development. A primary goal of this program was to increase the likelihood of these students attending prestigious colleges and universities. The program was designed to bring these under-represented children to the highest levels of academic achievement by providing them with full scholarships for 2 rigorous summer programs, and a mentoring program (NFTE). The CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars

Program was a partnership between the Goldman Sachs Foundation and the Center for Talented Youth (CTY).

The CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars program served as a pilot project for the Next Generation Venture Fund Scholars program, and ran for 4 years, with a total of 403 students (102 in cohort 1, 103 in cohort 2, 98 in cohort 3, and 100 in cohort 4). All cohort 1 students were identified from the New York City region. Students in cohorts 2 and 3 were identified from within four geographical areas: New York City, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Cohort 4 was selected from the previous areas, with the addition of Boston and Maryland/DC. All students received 2 three-week summer sessions of a CTY class offered on various college campuses across the country. In addition, they received a Business Mentoring program from the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) for a series of 6 sessions.

### The Next Generation Venture Fund Scholar Program

The Next Generation Venture Fund was initiated in 2004 as a means of identifying academically talented under-represented youth and supporting their educational development. The program was designed to bring these under-represented children to the highest levels of academic achievement through participation in rigorous summer programs, year-round distance education courses, specialized weekend courses, and a mentoring program. The Next Generation Venture Fund is operated by The Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth (CTY) and the Duke University Talent Identification Program (TIP).

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### **Students**

The first cohort of the Next Generation Venture Fund was selected in the summer of 2004. A total of 94 CTY students were offered the scholarship; 89 accepted. Of these 89, 88 students participated in a summer program in 2004. In addition, Duke TIP selected 10 students, all of whom attended a summer program in 2004.

These students are currently in the middle of their 10th grade year. Academic advisors remain in close contact with students throughout the year, and the researchers at CTY have utilized this close relationship to ensure a greater response rate to research questionnaires. For the first round of surveys, we have achieved a response rate of 100%. In addition, 99% of students have returned questionnaires related to family background and demographics.

**The Next Generation Venture Fund  
Five Year Schedule of Programs and Activities**

8<sup>th</sup> Grade

- First CTY Summer Session
- Parent Training Workshop

9<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Individualized Mentoring Education Plan
- Second CTY Summer Session
- Distance Education Course
- Parent Training Workshops (Fall and Spring)
- Business Training through National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) – Saturday program (for NY and LA students)

10<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Academic Advising
- Optional Third CTY Summer Session
- BizCamp through NFTE (for those students who do not reside in NY or LA)

11<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Academic Advising
- Leadership and Career Courses
- SAT Preparation Course

12<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Academic Advising with Focus on College Application

## Data Collection

From summer 2004 to fall 2005, information was gathered from parents, students, and the students' instructors. Data gathered included information provided through the CTY application process, responses to questionnaires, and ratings and narrative evaluations of performance during summer programs. This report contains information regarding data that has been collected thus far. This information will be compared against similar information after each year of high school to assess any changes as a result of participation in the CTY Next Generation Venture Fund Scholars program.

## Timeline

### Summer 2004

- Demographic information from registration forms

### September 2004

- Demographic information from Student Biographical Survey
- Family Structure Questionnaire
- Narrative Evaluations from Registration files
- 15-item rating scale from instructors

### October 2004

- Student summer program follow-up
- Parent summer program follow-up
- Educational Goals

### April 2005

- Educational Follow-up
- Year-end Student Survey
- Year-end Parent Survey

### October 2005

- Student summer program follow-up
- Parent summer program follow-up
- Educational Goals
- Narrative Evaluations from Registration files
- 15-item rating scale from instructors

## **Background information**

### **Demographic Data**

Demographic data was obtained from families from registration forms submitted to CTY for selection of summer programs, as well as from Biographical Surveys. Background data included gender, ethnicity, age, birth date, standardized test scores, and summer program information. Family and household information was also collected via a student questionnaire.

## **Questionnaires**

### **Summer programs follow-up student questionnaire**

Following their participation in summer programs, students were given a brief follow-up questionnaire asking about their experiences in summer programs and with the Next Generation Venture Fund Scholars Program to date. This questionnaire was distributed and collected at the Parent training sessions in Fall 2004. The summer programs follow-up questionnaire not only asks about experiences over the summer, but it also has questions pertaining to how the summer programs experience has improved them personally, and academically.

### **Summer programs follow-up parent questionnaire**

As with the student follow-up survey, the parent questionnaire was distributed and collected at the NGVF parent training sessions in Fall 2004. The parent follow-up questionnaire used essentially the same questions as the student survey except that they were reworded to assess the parents' perceptions of their child's experience at CTY.

### **Educational Goals**

At the Parent training sessions, students were also given a questionnaire to determine the importance of such things as completing high school, going to college, and getting a good job after college. This questionnaire also included questions on how much time students spent outside of school hours doing homework and extracurricular activities, how often they talked to various people about college, and the highest degree that the student plans to pursue.

### **Educational Follow-up**

This survey was designed to examine the students' academic goals and achievements. Questions include items that address what honors and AP courses have been taken, academic awards received, and opportunities for leadership. Students were also asked about course acceleration and supplemental coursework. This questionnaire was mailed to the students in April 2005.

## **Year-end Student Survey**

This questionnaire was designed to evaluate the activities that the student participated in during the school year and how valuable these activities were to the student. The students were asked to identify which CTY activities they participated in and how these activities impacted on other aspects of their lives. Students were also asked to rate the overall value of the Next Generation Venture Fund Scholars program.

## **Year-end Parent Survey**

Like the students, parents were asked about the value of various CTY experiences and the overall value of the Next Generation Venture Fund Scholars program.

## **Summer programs assessments**

### **Summer program narrative evaluations**

Each summer, teachers complete narrative evaluations of their students' performance in their course. These narrative evaluations are coded on a 5-point scale, reflecting the balance of positive comments, negative comments, and suggestions for improvement.

### **Summer program quantitative evaluations**

Teachers completed a 15 item quantitative rating scale reflecting the performance of students in their course. Students are rated on topics concerning attitude, effort, completion of assignments, thinking and learning, expression of ideas, class behavior, and creativity and insight.

### **Pre-post testing**

Several instructors were contacted before summer programs and asked to participate in pre-post testing. Instructors developed a quantitative measure of their choosing to measure the amount learned by students in the course. Courses with Next Generation Venture Fund Scholars were pulled aside to assess if there is a difference between Next Generation Venture Fund Scholars and other students.

## Summary of Results of Pilot Program (Goldman Sachs Scholars)

### High School Education

The success of the CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars program can be measured in a variety of ways. One such way is to gauge their educational progress through high school; even after they are no longer an active participant in the CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars program. It is believed that the students' rigorous two years of supplemental educational experiences will give them the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to excel throughout their high school career.

In order to assess the achievements of past CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars, current 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders are mailed the high school education follow-up questionnaire. This questionnaire deals with students' experiences including accelerated coursework, honors course work, Advanced Placement courses, test scores, and the possibility of early admission to college.

In March of 2005, 174 past CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars were mailed the high school education follow-up questionnaire. In order to increase response rates to the questionnaire, students were offered a ten dollar gift certificate to Barnes and Noble if they completed and returned the questionnaire. 48 students returned the questionnaire.

In order to assess how well CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars are performing during high school, they were measured against a comparable group of students. For this study, a comparison group was obtained through CTY talent search records. Students that qualified for CTY summer programs but chose not to attend were selected for the control group. In order to maximize return rates, the high school education follow-up questionnaire was mailed to 225 non-Goldman Sachs Scholars. 44 students returned the questionnaire.

### Summary

#### Survey responses

	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade
CTY-Goldman Sachs Scholars (N= 48)	24	24
Control Group (N = 44)	17	27

