

# Nonprofit Board Leadership Program

## An initiative of the Social Enterprise Program

[www.gsb.columbia.edu/socialenterprise/alumni/nonprofitboard](http://www.gsb.columbia.edu/socialenterprise/alumni/nonprofitboard)

The Nonprofit Board Leadership Program (NBLP) at Columbia Business School provides students with a professional opportunity to work with alumni who are actively serving on nonprofit boards. The program cultivates the next generation of nonprofit board leaders while providing a valuable service to alumni and the nonprofit organizations on whose boards the alumni serve.

### Program Overview

- Students attend one or more board meetings. By attending board meetings, students are exposed to the inner dynamics of nonprofit boards, gain a better understanding of strategic and tactical issues facing the organization, and learn about the differing roles of board members and nonprofit managers.
- Alumni serve as mentors and connect the student with the nonprofit's executive director and staff. Together, they agree on a project to be completed during the course of the academic year. The student works independently on the project which provides a meaningful experience drawing on his/her coursework from Columbia Business School. Please turn over for examples of past projects.
- Students participate in volunteer functions, staff meetings or other relevant events hosted by the nonprofit to gain a holistic understanding of the organization.

These practical experiences as well as the training sessions provided by the NBLP, prepare students for future board participation.

"I am learning as much from the students as they are from me and I feel lucky that some of these friendships will last a lifetime. It is an honor to be part of the NBLP, CBS's best kept secret."

—Tess Mateo '97, Board Member, American Composers Orchestra

### Program Timeline

#### September

- Students submit applications
- Selected students are matched with board mentors and organizations based on student interest and business experience
- Students complete the program's orientation and nonprofit board training
- Students refine scope of projects with their mentor

#### October–March

- Students attend volunteer event(s) to gain an understanding of the organization
- Students attend board and/or sub-committee meetings with board members
- Students work on their independent project

#### March–April

- Students complete project and present their findings to Executive Director / Board as appropriate
- Closing reception



Mentees Ashley LeMaire '14 and Matthew Rutter '13 with Prof. Ray Horton at the NBLP Closing Reception.



Cecily Carson (right), Social Enterprise Advisory Board member has served as a mentor to NBLP students.

## Sample Projects

### Minds Matter

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Working with Chymeka Olfonse, Executive Director of MindsMatter, and John Bernstein '08, Chairman of the Board, **Lindsay Norcott '12** helped to research and draft a three-year strategic plan for MindsMatter. MindsMatter has grown to nine chapters across the United States on an almost exclusively volunteer-led effort. Lindsay solicited feedback from chapter leaders on three pillars of the organization: Chapter Growth, High Quality Programming, and Staffing. By conducting over 25 interviews, Lindsay listened to the unique concerns and ambitions of individual chapters, compiled this feedback into areas of consensus, and made recommendations to the board for moving the organization forward.



### Girls Inc.

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Girls Inc. is a national nonprofit youth organization providing educational programs to millions of American girls, particularly those in high-risk, underserved areas. **Sarah Qian '12** joined mentor Judy Vredenburg to research corporations with strong women's networks in order to potentially align with them, and also analyzed the approaches taken by similar non-profits. Finally, she presenting proposed next steps for transforming the fundraising strategy.



### Community Resource Exchange

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**Matthew Rutter '13** worked for the Community Resource Exchange (CRE) to provide the organization with a menu of focused core services aligned with its mission. Matt's project focused on identifying targeted services that reflect CRE's core values, customer base, and competencies/strengths. Matt also worked to analyze the cost/inventory of services provided to its customers in terms of the average hours incurred and additional resources required as well as an understanding of the market dynamics for specific services.



"Before learning about SafeMinds' core mission from individual board members, I understood little about the environmental components of autism and how deeply it affects families daily. My mentor and several leaders took me inside and shared the complex challenges of facing this issue. I feel grateful to have provided my insight into current organizational and developmental programs to benefit the organization here and elsewhere." — *Ashley LeMaire '14*

"Through the Nonprofit Board Leadership Program, students have the opportunity to apply their business talents and energy to real-world projects and come away with insights into board management gained through first-hand experience. The program provided our organization with invaluable skills to complete critical research and compile leading edge industry data. The work completed will be transformative for our organization." — *Melissa Raso '96, Secretary of the Board, All Souls School; Social Enterprise Advisory Board member*