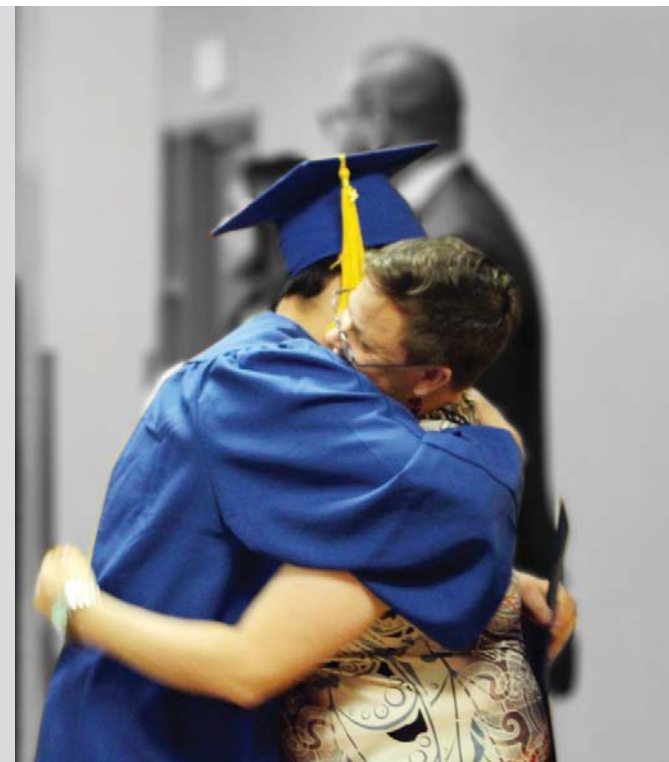




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Our Mission

X-Cel Education improves economic opportunity in underserved Greater Boston neighborhoods through accessible, individualized, and free high school equivalency education, post-secondary preparation, and career readiness development.



X-Cel students working together.



X-Cel tutor working with student.

Message from the Director

Don Sands

I'm delighted to share X-Cel Education's annual report for fiscal year 2016. This was an exciting year of expansion and refinement for X-Cel, during which we focused on two major areas: growing and improving X-Cel's core education programs, and serving Boston's opportunity youth through our new Connection Center initiative.

X-Cel's core programming saw significant growth in FY 2016. In keeping with our mission of bringing free education to underserved communities, X-Cel formed new partnerships to bring our classes to locations in three new neighborhoods: the Sportsmen's Tennis Enrichment Center on the Dorchester/Mattapan line, the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center in East Boston, and the Boston Living Center in Back Bay. In addition, X-Cel formed a partnership with the Madison Park Development Corporation that enrolls Madison Park youth in our classes and co-locates MPDC staff at X-Cel. At the same time, our staff and volunteers finished the revision of our math curriculum, and developed new writing and science materials to better align X-Cel's programming with the more rigorous HiSET exam. All in all, staff and volunteers created more than 400 worksheets and quizzes for our students, which contributed to X-Cel having twice as many HiSET graduates in the second half of the fiscal year as the first half.

FY 2016 was our first full year of operating the Connection Center, an initiative sponsored by the Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative. Through the Connection Center, X-Cel staff and volunteers match "opportunity youth"—individuals ages 18-24 who have a high school credential yet are under- or unemployed—with promising education and job training opportunities. This year, X-Cel worked with 257 youth across Boston and expanded the number of workforce development programs involved in the Center from 8 to 15. By the winter, we saw our first Connection Center alumni complete programs and enter their careers of choice. It's exciting to see opportunity youth begin well-paying jobs in the fields of carpentry, IT support, computer coding, healthcare, banking, hospitality, medical office technology, and more. Last week I walked into my local bank and was thrilled to be served by one of our Connection Center graduates!

The hard work put in by X-Cel's dedicated staff and volunteers, bolstered by the wonderful support of our contributors and board, is driven by our shared desire to bridge the income gap through education. We continue to be inspired when each of our students passes the high school equivalency exam and enrolls in college or completes a job training program, knowing each is about to begin a dream career that will support his or her family and make a positive impact on society at large. This annual report highlights some of this year's success stories, and I hope it gives you a snapshot of all our students, staff and volunteers have achieved. We look forward to continuing to improve X-Cel's programs and to impacting the lives of more Bostonians in the year ahead.

Sincerely,



Don Sands, Executive Director and Co-Founder

CITY OF BOSTON

THRIVING HEALTHY INNOVATIVE



X-Cel staff member and volunteer accompanying X-Cel graduates as they each receive a First Literacy scholarship.



Our History and Growth

X-Cel Education was founded in 2000 as a 501(c)(3) by two adult educators with a combined 20 years of experience. Their vision of accessible, customizable instruction led to the creation of an organization that would provide quality adult education services to residents of Greater Boston.

In 16 years, X-Cel has grown to 15 employees providing free classes, individualized/personalized instruction, and counseling at seven locations in Roxbury, Dorchester, Mission Hill, East Boston, Back Bay and the Mattapan/Dorchester line. The organization is supported by 120 hours of volunteer service each week. Over the course of FY 2016, we worked with 238 students and 257 opportunity youth.

X-Cel Advantage: A Pathway to Post-Secondary Education

X-Cel's college transition specialist works with X-Cel graduates to identify post-secondary programs, meet application deadlines, and properly submit financial aid paperwork. Research has identified each of these as key barriers to college access.

*"Given the growing complexity of college pricing and financial aid, information and procedural barriers present an increasingly important challenge to the effectiveness of the U.S. system of college finance."**

*Lindsay C. Page and Judith Scott-Clayton, "Improving College Access in the United States: Barriers and Policy Responses," NBER Working Paper No. 21781, December 2015.



X-Cel students with volunteer.

PROGRAMS

HSE-TO-POSTSECONDARY PATHWAY

Pre-HSE Prep

Build core reading/literacy skills.

HSE Prep

Customized instruction in math, reading, writing, science and social studies to prepare for the high school equivalency exam.

College Prep

A program for college-bound adults who have passed their HSE exam or who have a high school diploma, but would like to refresh their academic skills before taking college placement tests.

Post-Secondary Support

One-on-one support to help students navigate admissions, apply for financial aid, register for classes, and connect with tutors.

CAREER SERVICES

Career Readiness Development

X-Cel designs and delivers contextualized learning curricula (e.g., hospitality) in partnership with post-secondary certification programs. Local business site visits/employability skills seminars are also integrated into HSE Prep.

Connection Center

A one-stop resource to connect youth, who (a) are ages 18-24 and (b) have a high school credential but are not in school or a career-oriented position, with workforce development and/or post-secondary education programs.



X-Cel staff members.

An Innovative Approach

Partner with community-based organizations to minimize overhead costs and offer classes in close proximity to our students

Rather than offer classes at one centralized location, X-Cel partners with non-profit community-based organizations. X-Cel provides the expertise in adult education services while the partner agency provides the physical space. This collaboration gives X-Cel the flexibility to provide services in the neighborhoods with the greatest educational needs while lowering the program's overhead costs. The result: a greater percentage of X-Cel's funds can go directly to carrying out our mission, and we are able to bring our services directly to the neighborhoods with the highest educational needs.

Offer convenient and flexible schedule to serve students

All of X-Cel's Pre-HSE and HSE Prep classes have a rolling admissions policy. There are no waiting lists and new students do not have to stand by for several months for the next start date for any class. We register and assess new students every week. This practice maximizes students' motivation.

Target specific needs of students to help them efficiently achieve HSE credentials

In all of our classes, instruction occurs in small groups and each student advances through skill levels at his or her own pace. Individualized and customized instruction builds upon student motivation and allows every student to make the most progress in the shortest amount of time. X-Cel also partners with Bunker Hill Community College to support students as they transition to college campuses.

Leverage volunteers as a delivery mechanism

Through our partnership with Boston Cares, X-Cel employs widespread use of volunteers to assist our instructors in math, reading, and writing classes. Each week volunteers donate more than 120 service hours to our students. This consistent donation of time and effort enables X-Cel to provide both individualized and small group instruction in our classes.

Hire alumni as staff

Many of X-Cel staff members graduated from X-Cel's high school equivalency and/or college preparatory programs. Alumni staff have a personal connection to the communities that X-Cel serves and serve as role model for our students.

ANA MARIA DOS SANTOS DIAS

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Ana Maria was born and raised in Praia, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands.

Ana Maria left school when she was very young because she was bullied. "Kids used to pick on me because I looked different, being light skinned and having long, curly hair." Thereafter, she stayed at home, developed her passion for sewing, and took care of household chores. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1982 when she was 24. "I loved it from day one. I started picking up work, I enjoyed the music, and before I knew it I was speaking English."

Ana Maria first started high school equivalency preparation in early 1990s, but had missed her GED by a single point in 1995. From 2000-2004, she moved to Cape Verde, went back to school, and reached the 11th grade. She came back to the U.S. later in 2004 still determined to get the credential. Fast forward to 2011 and she enrolled in X-Cel's HSE Prep program. Her motivation was twofold: "A particular person always used to tell me to my face that I will never amount to anything because I failed a few times. He even told me to give it a rest; that education is not for me. I knew starting classes would improve my self-esteem. Also, I wanted to make my children proud."

Ana Maria passed each of her five HiSET exams in 2014, but did not meet the minimum *cumulative* score of 45. "My teachers helped me to always think positively. That in order to be successful you must never give up, always show up when you said you would." She did just that; Ana Maria worked tirelessly for over 15 months on math and social studies to boost her scores. While planning on re-taking each of these sub-tests, she raised her social studies score by six points, which gave her passing cumulative score. Ana Maria earned the credential in March 2016 and immediately enrolled in College Prep. She is deeply appreciative for the continued support of her three grown kids.

While continuing her daytime job as a receptionist program assistant at Mentor Network, she has enrolled as a part-time student at Bunker Hill Community College's Medical Interpreting Certificate program. Graduates from this program qualify for the certification exam by the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters and qualify for employment in a number of medical settings (e.g., hospitals, clinics, etc.) as a medical interpreter.

Her advice for X-Cel students: "Study at least two hours every day. And never give up."



High School Equivalency to Post-Secondary Results for FY 2016

*July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016

45

X-CEL HSE
GRADUATES

27

X-CEL STUDENTS
ENROLLED IN
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

7

X-CEL STUDENTS
ATTAINED A
POST-SECONDARY
CREDENTIAL*

* 4 students received post-secondary certificates and 3 students received associate degrees.

Note: X-Cel students include X-Cel College Prep graduates, but do not include OY who were connected to post-secondary programs via Connection Center.



VICTOR LUCHANGCO

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Victor is one of X-Cel's longest-standing active volunteers. He grew up in Singapore and the Philippines and moved to Boston to study math and computer science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he ultimately obtained an ScD in computer science. He currently is a theoretical computer scientist at Oracle Corporation, where he works on algorithms for large-scale multiprocessors. Reflecting on his experiences as a math instructor: "I really like to help the students learn math, especially the ones who discover it isn't the horrible, impossible subject that they learned it was when they were in school. I also appreciate how committed most of the students are to improving themselves, how much they appreciate our help, and how important it is for them to be able to get a high school diploma (and eventually a college degree) to get a better job and improve their situation." Victor primarily serves as an HSE Prep tutor, but also has helped several X-Cel graduates at the post-secondary level in computer programming and math/statistics.

He is inspired by the dedication, and often the selflessness of X-Cel students. "One thing I've learned at X-Cel is how many people deal with so many problems and still keep trying. I've had a pretty easy life, with most things provided for me, so I didn't really have to try hard to succeed. But so many of our students have all sorts of challenges, and far fewer resources to deal with them, and yet they keep on plugging away." Victor has seen personally the *emotional* impact that X-Cel's programming has had on its students; in opening the door for continued education, students' "spirits are lifted."

His advice to X-Cel students: "Think about what you want to achieve and what steps will help you to achieve it. Then take those steps, or find someone to help you take those steps, and keep at it. It's easy to get discouraged, so look for people who will encourage and support you. And always give back: 'it is in giving that we receive.'"



Number of students who
improved reading
and/or math by at least one
grade level* since 2000
(as of June 30, 2016).

1,103

*Grade level assessed by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE).



DIANE BURKE

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Diane is an X-Cel HSE Prep/College Prep graduate and a student at Bunker Hill Community College. She had left high school in her second year after she had her first child at age 15. Diane immigrated to the U.S. in 2014, when she was 41. Within the first few months after arriving in the U.S., she started to experience depression. "It was a different atmosphere, and I felt lost. I lacked confidence that I could make anything of myself." She eventually realized, however, that if she was going to build a career, she would have to start with education. Her dream from a young age was to be a nurse.

Diane enrolled in X-Cel's HSE Prep program in September 2014. She faced a rough transition into the program, as she did not recognize the discipline required to be a successful student. "I was not a punctual person and, after a few tough-love incidents, I soon realized how important it was to be on time." She quickly saw, however, that X-Cel *cared* about her success. "When I missed a class, there would be a call asking what was wrong and how they could help." A few months into her study, her daughter, who lived in the Caribbean, became very ill and she lost motivation; when she came back to class she was very emotional. "The staff members gave me nothing but encouragement. They repeated that I could do anything I put my mind to. I felt I had a home away from home."

Diane graduated HSE Prep in February 2016, and began College Prep that April. In College Prep, she learned that success in school is largely based on the work you do outside of the classroom. "In College Prep, you would be left out of an English discussion, for example, if you did not do the reading homework. I am now seeing the benefit of good studying habits in college."

Diane started classes at Bunker Hill Community College in September 2016, in hopes of getting into the highly competitive Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) Certificate program. She is currently taking the pre-requisites for this program. "Whenever I am in a hospital setting, I feel that this is the place I would like to be. This is where I would like to spend my time."



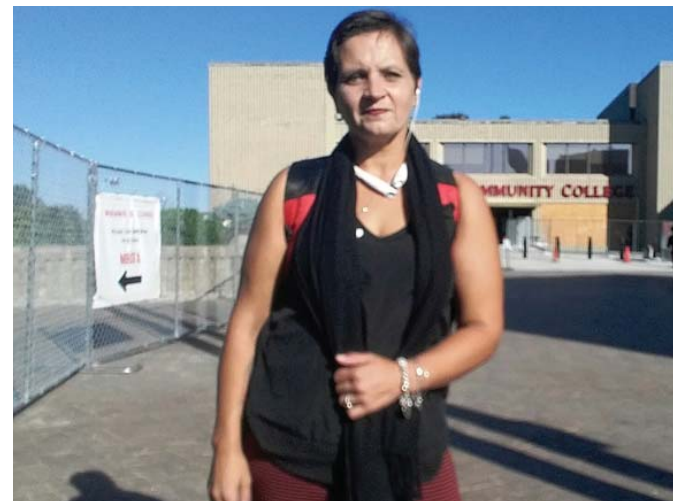
Number of students who
graduated from X-Cel's HSE
program since 2000
(as of June 30, 2016).

646



Number of X-Cel
graduates who have entered
post-secondary
education since 2000
(as of June 30, 2016).

388



CHARLENE JORDAN

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Charlene is from Dorchester, Mass. She graduated from Northeastern University with a bachelor's degree in business management in 2011, and completed a certificate program in paralegal studies at Boston University in Winter 2011. She is now retired after a 30 year career with The Gillette Company as an executive administrative assistant.

Charlene started with X-Cel in September 2012. "When I was younger I struggled with math concepts. It was hard for me to understand the *why* of the concepts." These struggles motivated her to start tutoring math at X-Cel. I found that X-Cel was a great opportunity to give back and help others gain confidence over their fears and anxiety attacks I once had." Charlene focuses on students in the first few units of our HSE Prep math curriculum. This primarily involves arithmetic, basic algebra, and decimals. "My favorite moment is when the student finally grasps the new concepts he/she is learning using algebra. Most of the students get frustrated, but I continue to encourage them as we work through the steps and sometimes make little jokes to lessen the tension of learning something new."

Looking back at her time at X-Cel, she considers the increased rigor of high school equivalency tests over the past few years as her biggest challenge as an instructor. X-Cel updated its curriculum to align with the raised standards, which required students to revisit chapters that they had completed, as new material was added. "A lot of the students were frustrated and felt they were being held back from their education because of the change. I informed them that we had a bigger challenge to conquer and we all had homework. After we all laughed we buckled down and began to tackle the new worksheets. I told them not to rush through the material and to make sure they understood it thoroughly, even if they had to review the instructions a few times."

Charlene firmly believes that communities can grow through a commitment to education. "The X-Cel program proves that neither high school nor college is out of reach for those who reside in even the most at-risk communities."





X-Cel volunteers from Fidelity Cares Day.

#GetConnectedNow: Success Coaching At the Connection Center



In FY 2015, X-Cel was selected to operate the Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative's Connection Center, a one-stop resource to connect youth, ages 18-24, who have a high school credential but are not in school or a career-oriented position, with workforce development and/or post-secondary education programs. The aim of the program is to prepare these individuals for sustainable, successful careers. X-Cel Success Coaches work with each client to develop personalized plans and provide a supported hand-off to each client's next step, following the young person's progress for at least one year and offering guidance at any time.

STEP 1: Establish a dialogue

To connect Opportunity Youth (OY) with career programs, Success Coaches begin with an intake. Intake consists of a one-one-one, personal conversation between the Coach and the OY, through which Coach learns about the OY's history. This dialogue is two-way; each Coach has dealt with similar life challenges to OYs, so they can speak personally to the struggles that their clients face. After this conversation, Coaches may refer OYs to a case manager, who can connect OYs with supportive services to the extent necessary.

STEP 2: Explore career interests

Step 2 involves identifying the OY's career of interest. To do so, Success Coaches utilize a program called Career Cruising, which identifies career matches based on the interests and skills of the OY. With this list in hand, OYs then conduct research on their career matches, such as job security, average salaries, and education requirements, to narrow down the matches to a "Top 3."

STEP 3: Get connected

Once the OY determines his or her career of choice, the Coach starts the "connection" process. If the job requirements call for an associate degree, the OY is referred to College Prep programs; if it is not college, then the OY and Coach will together go to an information session at a training program (e.g., culinary arts, banking and finance, construction, carpentry, health care, information technology, coding), and work together after enrollment for about a year.

The Connection Center Success Coach team is comprised entirely of X-Cel alumni. The program is part of the Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative, a group convened by the Boston Private Industry Council and the Boston Opportunity Agenda.

AARON DALE

GRADUATE / STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Aaron is a Connection Center Success Coach and a student at Bunker Hill Community College. Aaron grew up in Dorchester with his mother and sister. Reflecting on why he was did not graduate high school: "I was just lost. I went to jail during my senior year for almost 2 years."

When he came home, he enrolled in GED classes in June 2007. "X-Cel showed me the benefit of education and the long-term effects of not being in school. It gave me perspective on the amount of hard work necessary to eventually obtain my goals." Aaron graduated from X-Cel's HSE Prep in February 2008, and subsequently College Prep in September 2009. In Fall 2010, Aaron enrolled at BHCC as a part-time student in the Business Administration program, while also working as an office manager. While on the job, he quickly recognized that without further education, he had no upward mobility at work and slim prospects to enter fulfilling career. "I wanted to be taken more seriously at work and advance further. I wanted to achieve a *sustainable* living."

Reflecting on his current role as a Success Coach: "My job inspires me to be a better, well-rounded person, and challenges me to go further in my own education. To be a part of someone's progression towards a sustainable living is very motivating." Aaron is fascinated by the diversity to which he is exposed as a Success Coach and, after completing his business degree, he plans to study sociology. "I am interested in interactions and relationships across racial lines." He seeks to understand the drivers of social mobility and help continue to help empower at-risk youth and adults in low-income neighborhoods.

Aaron's advice to X-Cel students: "Stay hungry and don't get comfortable with any level of achievement."



Connection Center Results for FY 2016

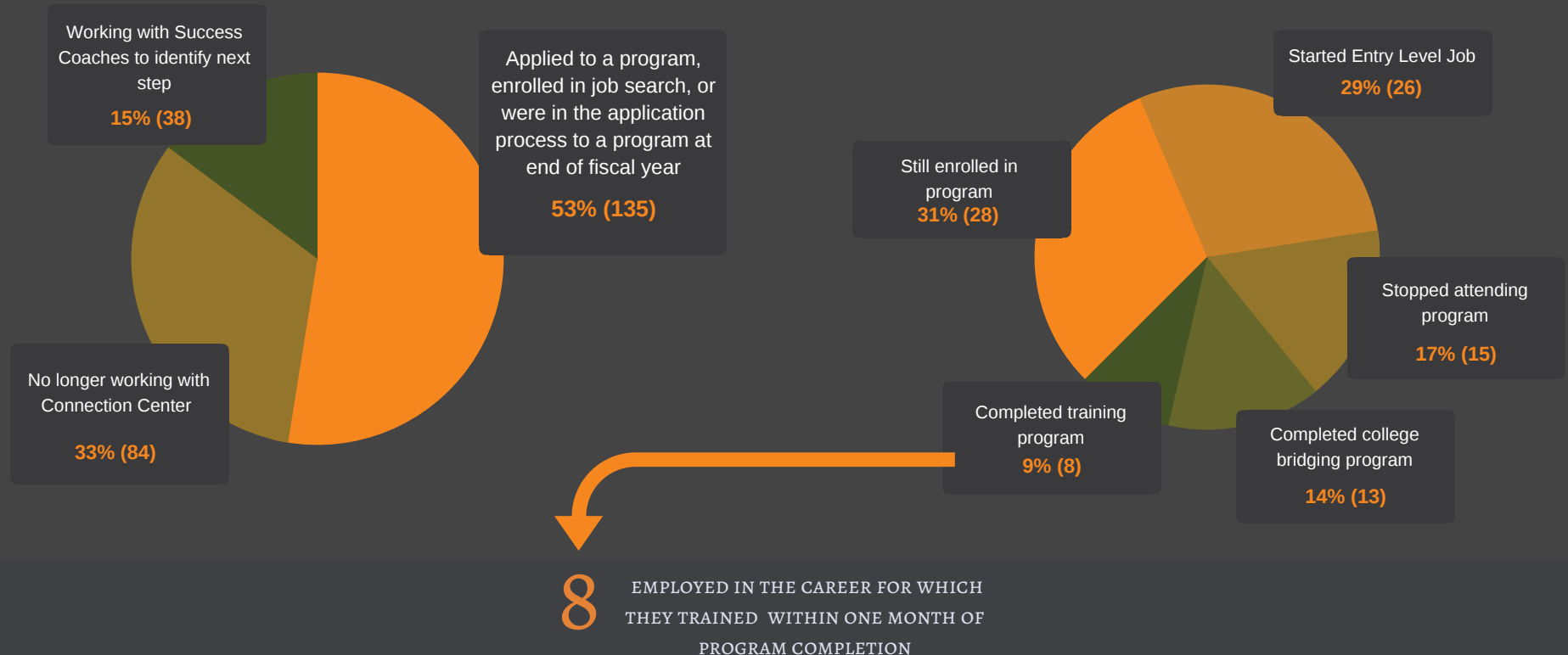
*July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016

OY COMPLETED AN INTAKE

257

CONNECTED TO A PROGRAM/JOB

90



Note: Opportunity Youth (OY) are individuals ages 18-24 who have a high school degree or high school equivalency credential. OY are unemployed/underemployed and not in school. OY on this page do not include students enrolled exclusively in X-Cel's HSE-To-Postsecondary Program.



Connection Center holiday party.

AMARFI SANCHEZ

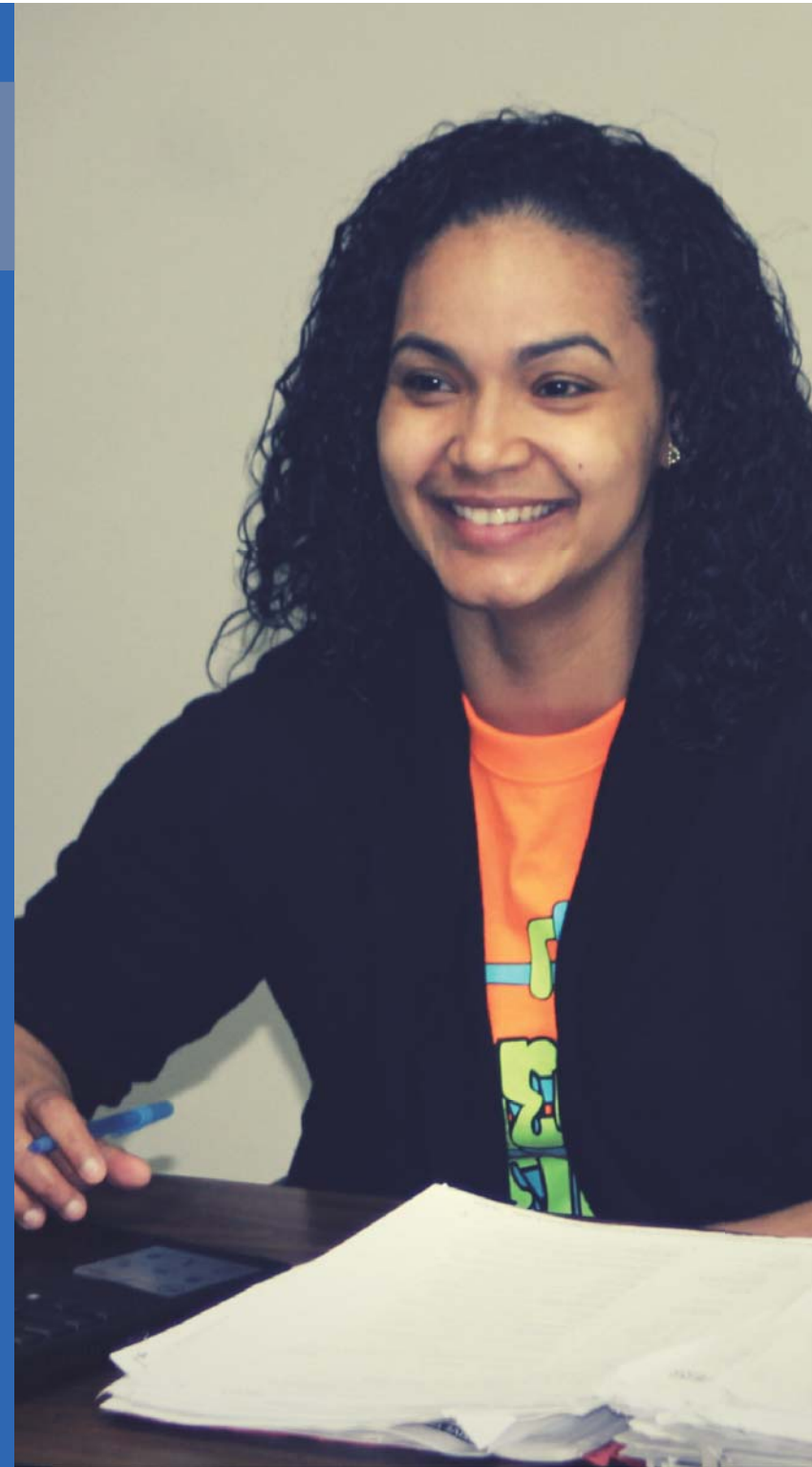
GRADUATE / STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Amarfi is an X-Cel Intake Coordinator, Connection Center Success Coach and accounting student at Bunker Hill Community College. She was born in the Dominican Republic and came to the U.S. in February 2003. Amarfi started high school at Urban Science Academy in West Roxbury, but moved back to Dominican Republic in 2007 with her mother. She completed her sophomore and junior years in the DR, and subsequently came back to the U.S. in 2009 to live in Lawrence, Mass. with her sister. Due to her age, however, she was unable to enroll in the public school system. After working minimum wage jobs for a couple of years, she moved to Boston seeking more opportunities.

After a rough first year—living in a shelter in Dorchester for seven months and enrolling in a separate GED program that she did not complete—Amarfi was able to land an internship at Boston Housing Authority. Quickly thereafter, however, she realized that because she had no high school credential, she would be unable to apply for any full-time jobs. As a result, she enrolled with X-Cel in Summer 2013 and earned her credential by June 2014. Asked how X-Cel helped her pursue a career, Amarfi first credits X-Cel's open enrollment policy with no waiting list. "To give some perspective, I was accepted off of a different Massachusetts program's high school equivalency wait list *after* I had my credential in hand." She adds that "X-Cel opened my eyes to college. I was exposed to college through dual enrollment while in HSE Prep, and knew I had a strong support system to lean on.

In Fall 2014, Amarfi enrolled at BHCC, where she originally planned to study criminal justice, but ultimately decided on accounting. She eventually plans to combine the two as a forensic accountant. Her biggest motivation is her son. "I want my son to go to college. Kids don't follow your words, they follow your steps. There is so much more to life than parties or the salon. I take pride in the fact that I will be the first person in my family to get an associate degree. I want to be a role model."

More broadly, she wants to eliminate the perception that single moms in low-income neighborhoods are incapable of pursuing meaningful careers. "I want to be an example that it doesn't matter what your situation is. You still can do what you need to do."





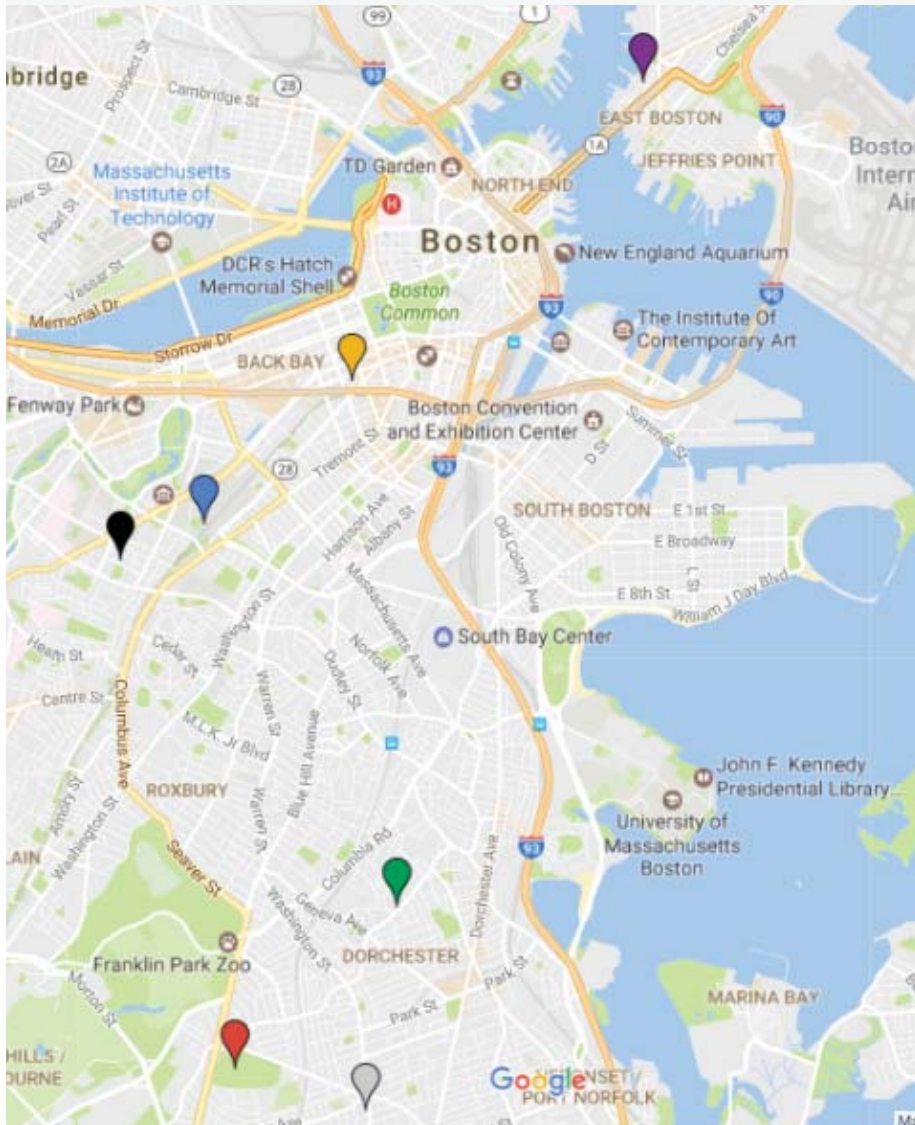
Connection Center success coaches with Mayor Marty Walsh.



Connection Center success coach with a graduate of JVS.

Main Program Locations

These locations serve as convenient community centers to some of the most underserved populations in need of adult education services.



EAST BOSTON NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH CENTER
250 SUMNER ST, EAST BOSTON, MA
PRE HSE & HSE PREP



BOSTON LIVING CENTER
29 STANHOPE ST, BOSTON
PRE-HSE & HSE PREP



RUGGLES STATION
150 FORSYTH STREET, ROXBURY
PRE HSE, HSE PREP & COLLEGE PREP; CONNECTION CENTER



MISSION MAIN
39 SMITH STREET, ROXBURY
PRE HSE, HSE PREP & COLLEGE PREP



LOG SCHOOL
222 BOWDOIN STREET, DORCHESTER
PRE HSE & HSE PREP



SPORTSMEN'S TENNIS & ENRICHMENT CENTER
950 BLUE HILL AVENUE, DORCHESTER
PRE-HSE & HSE PREP



STRIVE / CODMAN SQUARE
651 WASHINGTON STREET, DORCHESTER
HSE PREP

Financial Highlights

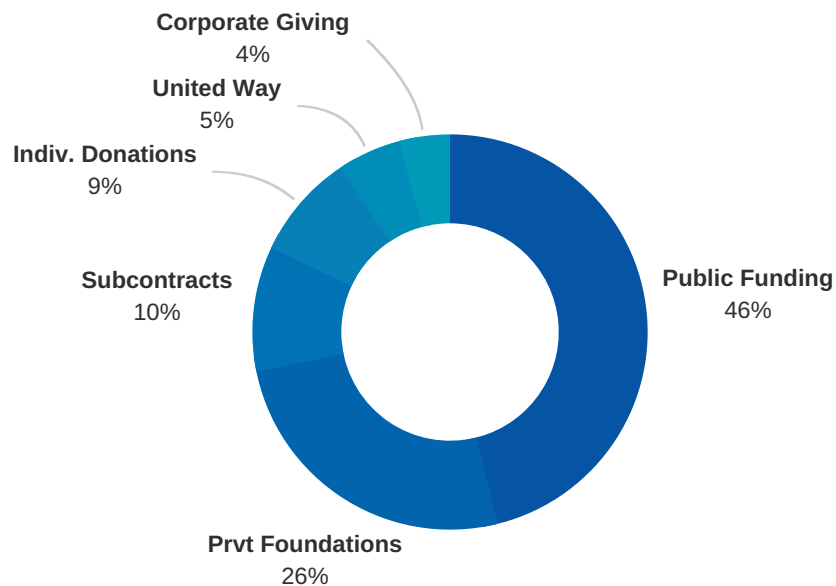
Year Ended June 30	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Revenues & Gains	\$336,773	\$261,483	\$288,888	\$357,655	\$482,976
Expenses & Losses	\$318,075	\$257,524	\$264,272	\$279,053	\$410,680
Revenues Less Expenses	\$18,698	\$3,959	\$24,616	\$78,602	\$72,296
Net Assets at End of Year	\$67,518	\$71,477	\$96,093	\$174,695	\$246,991

*Revenue reflects unrestricted and temporarily restricted dollars for each fiscal year.

FY 2016

Breakdown of Revenue by Source

Total Revenue = \$482,976

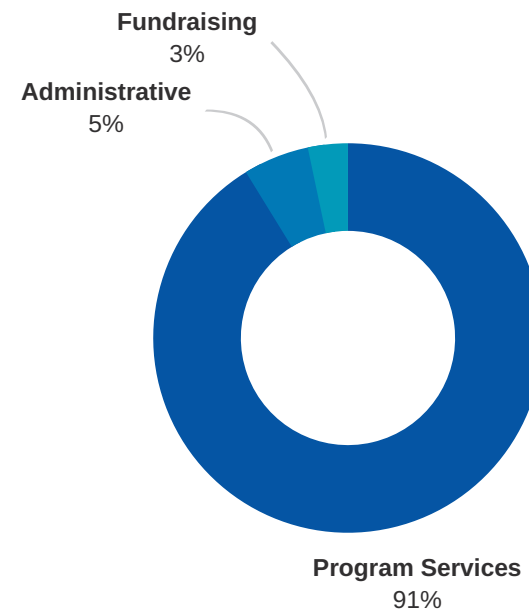


*Note: Interest Income (\$113) = 0%

FY 2016

Breakdown of Functional Expenses

Total Expenses = \$410,680



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Board President
Professor, Northeastern University



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Jennifer Kirby
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*Board membership as of June 30, 2016



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We thank the following financial contributors:

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John Hancock
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Mentor Network Charitable Foundation
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State Street Foundation
United Way

We thank the following program partners:

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Boston Private Industry Council
Boston Cares
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Innovation Fund
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Service-Learning at Northeastern University
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STRIVE



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