



## Current Student Support Partners

### Bottom Line

- Third year of partnership with Project Onramp (86 students matched in 2021)
- Serves 3000 students, across 18 public and private colleges and universities
- BL focuses on the “movable middle,” students who may not have top GPAs but have potential
- Provide 200-250 student pool of students in STEM and non-STEM (e.g. business, finance) fields, who are open to look for opportunities in STEM
- Have 2-3 dedicated staff members dedicated to executing all Project Onramp functions, such as student vetting, prep, resume curation and advising
- Provide kickoff programming for Project Onramp
- Act in an advisory capacity regarding any student related matters

### Thrive Scholars

- First year partner with Project Onramp (16 students matched in 2021)
- They are a 6-year college access/college success/career development program
- 2 tracks in supporting students in STEM (tech engineering + life sciences)
- They serve 1st generation college students across the country, with about 26 eligible students in Mass. in 2021
- Staff working on Project Onramp are based in California, developing a Massachusetts pipeline in future years

### Minds Matter Boston

- First year partner with Project Onramp (7 students matched in 2021)
- They are a national organization in 13 cities, focused on college access and success. They stop working with students after freshman year of college, but keep in touch with many students.
- Minds Matter Connect is an internship network they currently have. Project Onramp is an addition to that program
- They would commit to assigning a staff member to work with Project Onramp in 2021

## Other Partners

**Clark University** (11 students in 2021)

**Wily Network** (3 students in 2021)

**LEAH Project** (4 students in 2021)

What works:

Clear, consistent feedback from Lila on what companies are looking for

Consistent communication from Lila to support partners and students

## Challenges

1. How can we make technical and more niche job descriptions more understandable and desirable to students?
2. Hiring cycle is challenging: jobs coming in on a rolling basis, and a two-week response time is difficult for students. Need to educate students on life sciences hiring cycles and different norms/culture around recruiting. Challenging for students to keep on top of deadlines.
3. Company communication: companies had high expectations for email communication and responsiveness. Students were not used to sometimes aggressive recruiting style.
4. Job descriptions: Many are not clear, and jargon filled. Internships created for Project Onramp are sometimes less structured, which makes it difficult for the student when they start working (this is feedback from Onramp alums). The students often did not have a clearly defined project, or an idea of the job scope, with a very broad job description going in.
5. Accessibility: Need to make sure opportunities are accessible for students as more internships become in-person moving forward. Accessing suburban locations is almost impossible for most under-resourced students.
6. Partner staff resources and time: Quick curation of resumes, student coaching if multiple offers are on the table, help with professional email communication etc. How open are companies to notifying students where they are in the hiring process?
7. Student support partners are challenged to reduce timelines: reduce student response time about job openings and deadlines. Partners with trust relationships built, who are able to text students, fare better. Need for dedicated staff resources for student outreach. Trust building is required to review resumes, apply, and prepare for interviews.

## Student Support Partner Focus Group Discussion

### 1) Central repository of job descriptions that all partners access.

Create a system that enables a pop-up notification when Lila has uploaded x job descriptions to the shared folder, Lila gets notification when nonprofit sends resumes over. Would need an investment in technology.

### 2) Transparency around timeline for recruiting and hiring

This helps partners shift timelines to work around the company's schedule which results in more effective communication to students. Create segmented recruiting cycles (e.g. Wave 1, Wave 2, Wave 3 - each wave would be periods in which select companies can recruit)

### **3) Refine expectations for companies**

- Manage expectations for employers; the more the program grows, the more we need to put a structure around company engagement
- Require companies to communicate timelines upfront is vital to scaling PO and improving the student experience
- Small companies that don't have formal processes and are vastly different among themselves -> difficult to standardize processes
- With structure, the process will become less personalized for companies. Will this affect outcomes?
- Engage other companies in the life science mix that aren't life science companies (e.g. insurance companies/risk policy/legal)

### **4) Refine expectations for student support partners**

- Advising needed to improve student communication (e.g. some students give one-word responses in email)
- Student support partners could create email templates for various scenarios for students to review and use
- What is the capacity for partners to scale up with student numbers, especially for R&D positions that require advanced coursework?
- Incorporating more non-STEM students: bigger companies can hire social science majors, while smaller companies don't have fully developed functions outside of science.
- Is there interest among students? Risks in bringing additional companies on board but not having enough students to fill positions, given the burgeoning tech and finance ecosystems in MA
- How will the lack of in-person lab experience during COVID impact hiring in 2022?
- Solving transportation issues: students prefer jobs in Boston, Cambridge and Worcester. Can companies provide transportation help and benefits?

## **Synthesis**

- General positive feedback from students and student support partners on the experience and outcomes; PO offers strong value-add to existing efforts from student support partners
- Multiple partners express desire to communicate to students sooner the important deadlines, recruiting norms, culture, and expectations from companies
- There are many non-STEM students (business, humanities, social sciences) who may be interested in PO if job descriptions/opportunities aligned
- Standardizing PO processes for companies is difficult because most companies are startups with different internal procedures/staffing; however, high potential broad ideas were surfaced including segmenting student recruitment in waves to give students and student support partners more time to manage the workflow
- Opportunity for student support partners to work together on providing students with resources for professional communication (e.g. writing professionals emails, responding to job offers)
- Multiple voices express the need to help companies approach student engagement with an equity lens (not just job placement); this means more discussion needed around accessibility for in-person

internships and ways to maintain virtual options for students who otherwise may not be able to participate