This report represents College Orientation Workshop Inc's responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of BBB Wise Giving Alliance, GuideStar USA Inc, and Independent Sector. Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

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Mission:
TO BUILD CONFIDENCE & INSTILL SUCCESS-ORIENTED HABITS THROUGH RIGOROUS ACADEMIC & PHYSICAL CHALLENGES TO PROMISING MINORITY STUDENTS AT RISK.

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1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

COW has several critical goals. The most essential ones are as follows: 1). Motivate underachieving (but capable) students to take more accountability for their education. 2). Provide all students (both underachievers and those serious about their education) tools and strategies for maximizing their educational opportunities during the remainder of their high school careers and beyond. 3). Instill in our participants a burning desire to seek higher educational opportunities and helping them to develop the confidence and self assurance that they can be successful in college. 4). Provide participants real world practical exposure to the college experience, expectations and requirements for success, and opportunities to learn how to expand their comfort zones. 5). Prepare our students academically, physically, and from an attitude perspective to be successful in school and in their community life. 6). Establish mentoring and coaching relationships for our graduates in their home communities so that the learning begun at COW will be continued indefinitely.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

The key strategies for achieving our goals are as follows: 1). Construct a diverse and exciting program of academic rigor, physical challenges, and community service projects that capture the imagination of the participants, and get them fully engaged in what we are attempting to do. The academic requirements are challenging, but not overwhelming for our students. The bar is set high in terms of what we expect from the students. The typical reaction on the part of the students is to step up to the expectations, even if done reluctantly. The physical challenges are demanding and provides the students opportunities to push themselves out of their comfort zone. The typical result is that the students develop a sense of great pride in their accomplishment, particularly when they had fear or reluctance to attempt an activity. These strategies are established so that the students can experience and then internalize the act of learning and growing. Once that is established, we use that phenomenon in other areas of learning and development. 2). Put students in positions of leadership so that they experience what that role entails and they begin to develop leadership attributes. 3). We have a comprehensive and activity packed schedule for the entire duration of the program to demonstrate through action that the students can accomplishment much more than they think possible initially. 4). We establish meaningful community service projects for the students to engage in so that they develop a stronger sense of community awareness and connectedness. 5). We establish several demanding wilderness challenges that compels the students to rely on each other to achieve success. The wilderness challenges includes mountain climbing, rappelling, whit water canoeing, rigorous obstacle courses, and high ropes challenges. The team building and self esteem enrichment that results from the sense of shared sacrifice and doom are compelling benefits of this strategy. A strong bond of brotherhood is formed as a result of these activities. 6). A system of recognition is established to serve as positive reinforcement for desirable behaviors. Likewise, a system of clear discipline is established and communicated for undesirable behaviors. Execution of both positive recognition and discipline for infractions are administered fairly and promptly so that positive outcomes results in both instances. 7). Regular feedback, both formal and informal, is provided to students as appropriate. Each week, formal feedback is provided on a one on one basis with the student encompassing the entire week's activities (both academic and non academic). Informal feedback is provided on the spot as appropriate. 8). Weekly formal feedback is provided to the families of the participant. This is done to keep parents and family fully engaged and to help solidify the change that we are attempting to trigger in the students.

3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?

Our organization is capable of achieving our goals and implementing our strategies because of our dedicated faculty and staff, and because of the availability of outstanding resources at VMI. Our teaching and leadership staff are all professional educators, coaches, and or college students who serve as student counselors. We have 3 Ph.Ds. on our teaching and leadership staff. All teaching faculty have at least Master Degrees and have decades of teaching experience. Most have varied backgrounds in addition to being professional educators, such as past military officers, or past business professionals. Our program has wide support among the business community and from various civic organizations. These groups assist in...
the education of our participants by providing resources as keynote speakers and volunteer presenters at seminars and other specialized programs. Our program has been in existence for 27 years and continue to expand and adjust to meet the needs of the at-risk high school student, which makes up our primary target group.

4. How will we know if we're making progress?

Our indicators of progress and success are both quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative measures include demonstrated progress towards mastery of academic proficiency and improvement physical fitness levels. Diagnostic testing is done at the beginning of our program and then at the end of the program. The degree of improvement, particularly in the area of Mathematics, and physical fitness levels can be directly measured. In addition, in the area of English and Public Speaking, oral presentations by the students are videotaped for self assessment and feedback. They are also used to track improvement over the course of the program. The qualitative measures of progress include the subjective assessment of the trained faculty and staff, the discernible improvement in work effort, attitude, and manner of conducting themselves. Every activity that we establish for the students provides an opportunity for the faculty and staff to observe and assess the students. The evaluation process is continuous and provides the basis for the overall assessment of each student.

Certificates of satisfactory completion are awarded to those students who meet the normal requirements of the program. Not all students earn certificates of satisfactory completion. Those students who excel in the program are recognized with awards of distinction. Assessments are made throughout the program on each individual which serves as input for awards of distinction.

5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?

One major area of focus for us, as an organization, is to bolster our post program component. Since we have students from across the country attending the COW Program, it is very challenging to have continuous contact and mentoring with them once they leave the program at VMI and return home. Our focus is to develop relationships with organizations who are local to the areas in which we get our students. The idea is to have our COW Graduates engaged with the local organizations and receive mentoring, coaching and other development assistance. We have existing relationships with some organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club in various states, the Communities In Schools organization, which operate in many school districts across the country. We have had a relationship with CIS in Pittsburgh, PA for a number of years, and have just begun a partnership with the CIS organization in Central Virginia. For many years, we have partnered with The Summer Search organization in several states (Massachusetts, California, Washington State, Pennsylvania, and New York). We also have a corporate partnership with UNUM Corporation and its affiliates in several states. We have recently established a partnership with the Masons organization in Central Virginia and will be expanding that to other areas of the country. The other major area of focus deals with updating the COW Alumni database and reconnecting with all of the COW alumni. There is currently approximately 615 COW Alumni across the country. Most of the COW Graduates who attended college were the first in their families to go to college. Based on those graduates who have maintained contact with us, a large percentage have achieved middle class status. Now is the appropriate time for them to "Pay Forward" the good that was shared with them. Establishing this commitment, on the part of the COW Graduates, will be a central focus area in the coming year.