



PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Since its inception in 1997, Umoja Student Development Corporation has created an important and unique niche for itself in the world of youth development and educational reform. Through holistic student development, Umoja's young people make the kinds of connections – with themselves, with their peers and adults, and with the neighborhoods in which they live – that will help them to thrive in the world. In order to meet the challenges of adolescence and transition successfully into adulthood, students require opportunities to integrate a range of skills, experiences and perspectives. Students involved in Umoja programs are raising their GPA's, showing leadership in addressing important community issues, and attending colleges all over the country.

Umoja uses **Student Development** as a tool to accomplish the following goals:

- Motivating and engaging students in academic success and discovery.
- Increasing student awareness around their post-secondary options and insuring that students graduate from high school with a plan for achieving their college and career goals.
- Bridging the divide between the school and community by actively engaging students in leadership and community building initiatives.
- Increasing students' connections with themselves, their peers and their community.
- Providing intensive, long-term, post-secondary follow-up for graduates.
- Actively involving parents, families and business and community partners in student achievement.

Umoja is active in the following areas:

- Academic Innovations
- College & Career Development
- Leadership Development & Service Learning
- Holistic Student Development

❑ ACADEMIC INNOVATIONS

Umoja believes that our young people must be able to make the connection between their academic achievement in high school and the options and opportunities available to them beyond. From African American History month's *Community Connections* event to monthly *student development* seminars, Umoja partners with teachers, administration and community partners to: 1) address the social, emotional and academic development of students, 2) prepare students for productive post-secondary options, and 3) build strong bonds between students, teachers and the broader community.

- Monthly, over 1,000 students at Manley participate in ½ day student development curriculum designed by Umoja in partnership with students and teachers.
- Annually, more than 200 business and community partners contribute over 500 hours of volunteer service to Umoja academic innovations programs impacting more than 1,000 students.
- When evaluating *student development* activities both students and teachers indicated very high levels of program satisfaction, with 100% of students stating that the activities were fun and held their attention. All of the respondents said that they would recommend the sessions for upcoming school years. Over 95% of teacher evaluations indicated that the students were involved in the sessions, that the curriculum was clear and that the teachers would recommend the sessions in the future.

"It's hard to say where Manley ends and Umoja begins... We are a team...sometimes groups come in with their own agenda; that doesn't work. Umoja is a group that knows and loves students and works side by side with us to help our students reach their potential."

- Dr. Katherine Flanagan, retired Manley Principal and President of the Umoja board

Additionally, during the 2005-2006 school year more than 230 freshman through senior students accessed resources through the Academic Resource Center (ARC) which is open Monday through Friday during each lunch period and every day after school. The ARC is equipped with computers, Internet access, educational software and games, books, magazines, and art supplies. The Homework



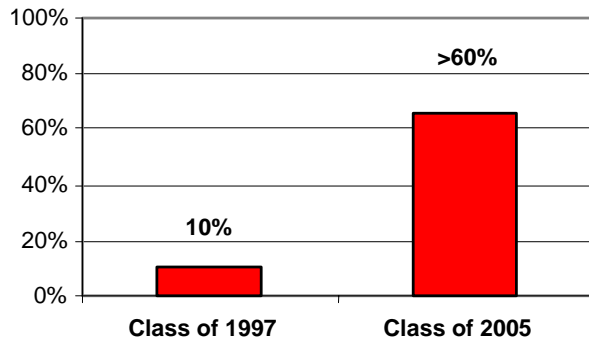
Club, Math & Science Club, and Freshman Fridays programs offer additional academic supports to students.

❑ COLLEGE & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Umoja's premise for college and career development is a simple one: successful people continue to increase their knowledge and skill set, not just beyond high school but throughout their adult lives. Umoja's young people know that college and career are two sides of the same coin. In order to succeed in the career world, they must pursue college and/or technical training. More than 60% of the recent classes of Manley graduates are attending colleges and universities across the country with the class of 2006 securing more than \$225,000 in scholarship awards.

"This has been a life experience I will and can never forget. You have basically laid out my journey for me and it's up to me to go down the right path. So I thank you for that. Also, you all have made me more determined and confident regarding going to college and completing it. I love you all so much, that comes from the bottom of my heart."
- Student, 2005 Umoja Senior Midwest Tour

Increase in Manley H.S. graduates going on to higher education since Umoja began in 1997.



- Annually, more than 100 freshmen through senior students visit colleges all over the United States where they attend classes, meet with students, and tour campuses.
- Annually, Umoja provides intensive individualized supports, scholarship assistance, innovative workshops and special events to all Manley seniors and their parents.
- Annually, more than 200 Umoja participants connect with more than 75 business and professional partners for non-traditional career exposure, networking, internship, and employment opportunities.
- Annually, Umoja assists in employing more than 50 students.

Additionally, Umoja students have completed the full gut rehab of two single family homes. More than 100 students completed community input surveys, designed plans with architects, and completed the mechanical and carpentry work in the gut rehab and affordable sale of these two neighborhood homes.

Finally, with the launch of the Umoja Alumni Association, formal programming for all graduates includes individual tracking, Umoja-sponsored Alumni Reunions, the Umoja Summer College Class, the Alumni Job Club, job shadowing and networking events, and the Community College Club. Graduates from the classes of 1997 to 2006 access Umoja Alumni services on a regular basis.

❑ LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & SERVICE LEARNING

"As a leader I guess I always thought that it was hard for people to come together to do things, but with Umoja I learned that if there's a purpose, people will come together."
- Marvell Brickhouse, SCDC participant

Umoja's leadership development & service learning programming works through the core belief that leadership development must begin with self-development. Students must understand and assume responsibility for their own actions, goals, and struggles as they move toward community building efforts and serving as leaders in their school, home, and neighborhoods. Umoja's model for leadership programming includes: self-development, the development of a peer community where students learn to understand power and share it, and finally, the development of an understanding of community issues and the means to address them.

During 2005-2006, more than 300 students participated in regular Umoja leadership programs including: Students Committed to Developing their Community (SCDC), Women of Destiny, Flipside, JUSTUS,



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Literature Circle, Leadership Retreats, and the Community Builders (CB) Internship. Recent highlights include:

- The SCDC “Unity Across Communities” event where SCDC participants planned the event, set the agenda, and co-led activities with and for young people from other communities.
- The Umoja poetry slam team’s spoken word tour and participation in the city-wide *Louder Than a Bomb* poetry slam.
- The Women of Destiny “Sex Education and Healthy Decision-Making” student development day where Women of Destiny participants collectively decided that issues around sex education at Manley were not being adequately addressed, surveyed students and parents, completed research and used their data to design a curriculum implemented in every 9th through 12th grade classroom.
- The 6th annual West side CB summer internship focused on “Meaningful Youth Involvement in Education” and the first-ever South side CB internship, in collaboration with the Revere Alumni Association, focused on the oral histories of the Greater Grand Crossing community. CB documentary videos have won more than 6 local and national awards for best youth-produced documentary since CB first started in 2001. During the 2006 summer, more than 40 students participated as CB interns.
- Since 2001, more than 60 students have traveled to all parts of the United States and the world including Trinidad, the Gullah Islands, Dominica, and Ghana on leadership and service-learning programs. Partnerships have included: Visions International, Civic Education Project, the Bauen Camp, The Kokrobitey Institute, The Chicago Botanic Garden, Circle Pines, Reach for Tomorrow, National Peoples Action, and Presidential Classroom.
- Since 2001, over 25 Umoja participants have been honored by the Chicago Urban League for outstanding performance in the areas of leadership and community service.

□ NEW SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Umoja’s *new school partnerships* are guided by the following principles:

1) Students succeed at schools where they feel known, challenged and supported; 2) Students need adult advisors and mentors, in addition to instructors; and 3) A comprehensive education must address social and emotional issues, college and career realities, and incorporate a leadership, service and citizenship framework. Building on our successes at Manley, Umoja new school partnerships reached more than 3,000 students and 300 teachers during the 2005-2006 school year.

“Umoja doesn’t give up – when they run into a brick wall they are always looking for another way around.”

- Joseph Williams, parent of Manley 2004 grad and Umoja board member

- Umoja provided weekly college and career counseling to seniors at Gage Park High School (Gage) and monthly college and career seminars to junior and senior AVID classes.
- Umoja offered monthly ½ day seminars to all 5th–8th grade students at Paul Revere Elementary School (Revere) addressing social, emotional, cultural, high school preparation, career and leadership topics. Umoja created all curricula, provided monthly professional development seminars to teachers to prepare them for each month’s activities, and modeled best practices in the classrooms through team-teaching. Summer offerings in partnership with Revere and the new Gary Comer Youth Center also included a mentoring program for 40 rising 9th graders, support of a leadership academy for 20 8th graders, and an intensive employment and college exposure program for 40 9th graders.
- Umoja supported monthly ½ day seminars at Benito Juarez High School (Juarez) addressing social, emotional, cultural, college and career, and leadership topics, serving all 1,700 students. Umoja worked with teachers to prepare the curriculum each month and led monthly professional development workshops for all Juarez teaching staff to prepare them for each month’s activities.
- Umoja offered professional development trainings around building a positive student-centered culture at both Al Raby High School and ACE Technical Charter School (ACE Tech) for more than 40 teachers. ACE Tech is Umoja’s newest school partnership as we provide more in-depth services during the 2006-2007 school year.
- During the summer 2006, Umoja staff coordinated more than 40 hours of planning and professional development with teachers, administration and students across all school partnerships.



□ **ADDITIONAL FINDINGS**

“... Stand out, let my voice be heard... Basically I was like the type of person that just sat back and watched people, but now I know that I get out and speak on it too.”

- Umoja Community Builder Intern, Summer 2004⁴

“... as a young person you can do a lot. It shows [CB internship] that young people can make a difference to make an impact on people’s lives.”

- Umoja Community Builder Intern, Summer 2004⁴

“What did I learn? That if you really want something done you have to be willing to work for it; and in the process of getting it done you have got to put everything aside that’s less important.”

- Umoja Community Builder Intern, Summer 2004⁴

“Umoja continues to provide opportunities for students to mature, gain confidence in their own skills and talents, and become more responsible. Students trust Umoja staff, and the staff mentors many students.”

- Evaluation Summary Report ²

“Students who are active with Umoja generally fail far fewer courses than do students who are less active with Umoja and they are likely to have higher Grade Point Averages (GPAs).”

- Student Achievement Report ¹

“Among the students with whom Umoja staff say they worked most actively, failure rates and grade point average were better in every subject than for all other students in the school.”

- Student Achievement Report ¹

“Umoja has been a non-stop beacon of energy geared against the machinations of poor performance at all levels: academic, professional, social, familial, and community... They offer more of a student-centered approach and acceptance to innovative learning strategies.”

- Manley staff ²

“Umoja is a major force in motivating students to pursue higher education. The intense counseling of seniors, the trips to colleges, and the scholarship searches are all valuable parts to this process. The Umoja staff is terrific. They really love these students and the students love them back. Manley’s rate of pursuing post-secondary education has grown tremendously and I credit Umoja for most of this increase.”

- Manley staff ²

“... it was an opportunity for me to better myself and make a change in my life. When I met the Umoja group they helped me a lot by giving me, influencing me, pushing me positively, telling me I could get things accomplished, helping me accomplish my goals.”

- Manley student, senior (Why do you come to Umoja?) ³

“... they try to give you a lot of positive feedback on whatever you come to them with and if you have problems – school, personal, anything, you come to them and they’ll help you with it.”

- Manley student, senior (What do you like about Umoja?) ³

“I feel that I am getting to know myself better... Because, it’s like I’m shy. It’s like when I go in there, everything just come out. I just change. I get more interested in things...”

- Manley student, senior (What do you feel you get out of Umoja?) ³

Sources:

- 1) *Student Achievement Report* completed by G. Alfred Hess and Ronit Bar Orion, Center for Urban School Policy, Northwestern University – January 2002
- 2) *Evaluation Summary Report* completed by James O’Brien of University of Illinois at Chicago and G. Alfred Hess of Northwestern University – June 2001
- 3) *Umoja Program Theory: What Do Students Say?* completed by Ted Christians, Master’s Thesis, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration – June 2000
- 4) *The Youth Development Experience* completed by Kate Walker and Dr. Reed Larson of the University of Illinois – March 2005