

running start

2024 Annual Report

Preparing next generation's leaders
to change the world



Running Start High School Program participants visit the White House in June 2024

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Contents



Running Start Board Members and supporters at the Young Women to Watch Awards

3

Who We Are

4

CEO & Board Chair's Letter



High school participants with Rep. Thomas Suozzi

5

Our 2024 Impact

9

Our Community in Action



Alums Tatenda Dzvimo and Lakeisha Skinner with President of Iceland Halla Tómasdóttir

10

Our 2024 Partners

Who we are

Our Mission

Running Start is a nonpartisan nonprofit committed to empowering young women to become dynamic leaders in politics and catalysts for community transformation.

Recognizing that political leadership pathways are rarely linear, we provide ongoing support for our alumnae. We foster inclusive and supportive environments that nurture their growth and success. We are building a future where diverse voices will shape our political landscape and strengthen our communities.



Participants at the 2024 HBCU Women's Leadership Summit



Running Start delegation at the 2024 Reykjavik Global Forum

Our Impact

Since 2007...

27,500+
young women trained

50
US States

15+
Countries

We center our programs around participant experiences as opposed to stereotypical expectations of political paths.

Our alums are changemakers in their communities. Compared to similar populations, Running Start alums are:

3x more likely to be active in their communities.

4x more likely to feel confident in their abilities.

57x more likely to put their name on the ballot.

CEO & Board Chair's Letter

Over the years at Running Start, we've learned so much from the 27,500+ young women who have come through our programs. Their guidance has made us the nationwide powerhouse that we are today.

Some of the lessons we've taken to heart:

- Young women have grand visions for a better future, informed by their lived experiences. They are eager to work with others to help their communities grow.
- What young women need as much as skills training is inclusion in supportive, empowering communities of both peers and mentors.
- The path to politics is rarely linear- and the best careers often start by building strong ties in one's own community.
- It is transformative when young women gain access to opportunities they thought were off limits.

In 2024, we leaned into these lessons. We launched our Next Step program to give alums access to continuing training, networking and support. We opened our Congressional Fellowship to internships not just on Capitol Hill but in District Offices so our Fellows can build ties where they are most likely to run for office. For all our programs, we ensured that financial hardship would not be a barrier to entry, and we flew participants to DC from all over the country, and even to a global conference in Iceland!

In 2025, we have ambitious plans to expand Running Start's reach. Our network will meet with mentors and peer supporters in small groups right in their own communities. We'll do more to connect our young women with the elected female leaders in their hometowns who can help them envision their path to power. And we will continue to create nationwide and global opportunities for connections and networking for all our alums.

This quote from Tatenda Dzvimbo, one of our alum mentors for the high school program, sums it all up for us: "Our visits to the White House and Congress were incredible , but even better was showing these young women that they, too, belong in these spaces."

Thank you for your support!

Congresswoman Ileana Ros Lehtinen
Board Chair of Running Start

Susannah Wellford
CEO & Founder of Running Start

Our 2024 Impact

A Year in Numbers

1,500+ Women leaders trained

125+ Electeds engaged, from the local to global level

100+ Educational institutions reached, including 30 HBCUs

50+ Trainings hosted across the US



Fellow Julia Lever with Rep. Michael Guest



Fellow Camille Boursiquot with Rep. Ayanna Pressley



High School Participants with Rep. Pat Fallon



Running Start 2024 Ambassador Marissa Pittman with Rep. Haley Stevens

100% Congressional Fellows felt confident in their networking skills

98% HBCU Summit participants felt confident to express their authentic selves

95% HBCU Summit participants believe they will qualified to run for office in the future

89% Fellows were inspired to run for office / further their political pursuits

Our 2024 Impact

Political Leadership

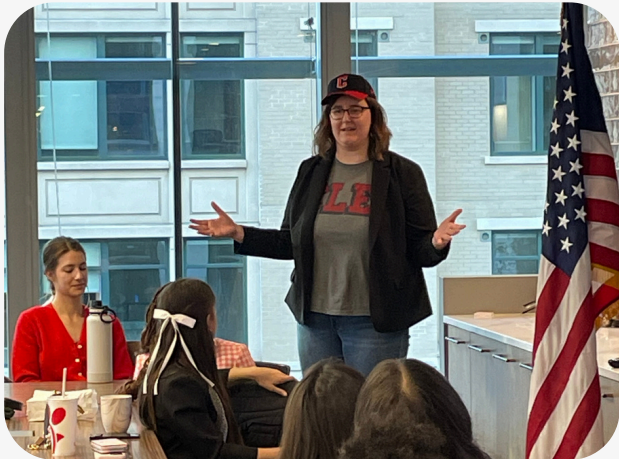
Our work creates a stronger, more representative political system, filled with young leaders who demonstrate integrity, compassion and resilience. With our help, young women hone critical political and leadership skills, including public speaking, fundraising, resilience and civil discourse.

More than 80 young women from 30+ HBCUs participated in a 2-day Summit hosted by Running Start and Xceleader in Washington DC in November. Participants learned to craft an elevator pitch, connected with peers, and made a plan to run for office.

Fifteen alums participated as delegates at the Reykjavik Global Forum, including as panelists. Supported by mentors, alums connected with international leaders and shared their visions of leadership.

“It wasn’t until I heard about the Running Start conference that I realized I had muted my dreams of wanting to run for public office. But being in this space with so many impassioned young women has reignited my ambitions.”
2024 HBCU Summit participant

117 travel scholarships awarded to make our programs accessible to all



Fellow Lillian Ross gives her campaign simulation stump speech



Alum Iyanla Kollock speaks on a panel at the Reykjavik Global Forum

Our 2024 Impact

Stronger Communities

Running Start is building a future where diverse voices will shape our political landscape and strengthen our communities. We support our alums through community based Elect Her trainings. Elect Her is our one-day workshop where young women learn how to run for student government and political office.

The majority of our 2024 trainings were facilitated by Running Start alums, giving them an opportunity to develop local community relations.



Elect Her training at the Poway, CA Unified School District

“The energy at the training was incredible! Very open and supportive.”
2024 Elect Her participant

33 Community-based trainings across the country

500+ Young women reached

Political Inclusivity

One third of our Fellows identified as left-leaning, one third identified as Independent, and one third identified as right-leaning. Half interned with a Republican Member of Congress, and half with a Democrat.

Our updated curriculum provides space for budding changemakers to articulate their own values, discuss difficult topics, and build connections with others in their communities.

“During the Fellowship I learned to listen to other points of view, accept how they feel, and be respectful about discourse.”

2024 Fellow

Our 2024 Impact

Continued Alum Support: Relaunching Next Step

Running Start adopts an alum-first approach while designing and evaluating our programs. Our goal is to not only build a pipeline for young women into politics and civic leadership, but to support them along the way. The Next Step program brings together Running Start alums who are seriously considering running for office or pursuing civic leadership opportunities.

Our alum community consists of talented early- and mid-career professionals. We connected alums to exciting professional possibilities through job and opportunity fairs. This also allowed our partners a glimpse into the richness of our network.



Alums make connections at a Job & Opportunity Fair in April 2024

22 Alums in the pilot Next Step program

25 In-person and virtual networking events

50 mentor-mentee connections

34 members in our 2024 delegation to the Reykjavik Global Forum



Alums and mentors at a networking dinner in November 2024

[Next Step] was an incredibly enriching experience that helped me build my confidence in a lot of leadership areas, especially the fundraising campaign that made me step out of my comfort zone.

2024 Next Step Participant

Our Community in Action

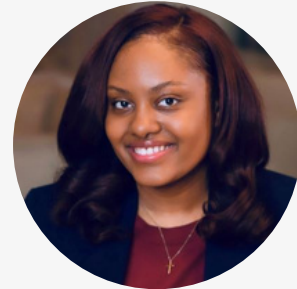
Our community is full of changemakers who are actively working to strengthen our democracy. Below are select achievements from 2024. Click the photos to learn more!



Alyssa Anderson
Women’s Congressional
Staff Association Leadership
Impact Award



Samina Hyderey Burke
2024 Forbes 30 Under 30
- Finance



Allyson Carpenter
Affordable Housing
Finance’s prestigious Young
Leader Award



Hailee Clack
Elected Delegate (MI-08) for
the Democratic National
Convention



Anderson Clayton
Elected as North Carolina’s
DNC Delegation Chair,
youngest ever in the country



Charlotte Clymer
NLGJA 2024 Excellence in
Blogging Award



Tasha Cole
Powerful IDEA Transforming
Party Award



Shavonne Hines-Foster
Elected 79th SGA President
at Hampton University



Leland Pan
Obama Foundation
Voyager Scholarship

Our 2024 Partners

Partnerships make Running Start programs accessible to everyone. We are grateful to our 2024 partners for their commitment to support the next generation of leaders.

Corporate and Foundation Partners



Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation



Akin American Hotel & Lodging Assoc. Brownstein
DLA Piper King & Spalding Qualcomm Brides for a Cause
EY Pacific Life Uber
RBC Wealth Management



Fellows visit the Home Depot office during DC week



Fellows prepare for Capitol Hill visits with mentors from Walmart

Our 2024 Partners

2024 Running Start Board

Chair

Tasha Cole

Vice Chair

Congresswoman Ileana

Ros Lehtinen

Secretary

Isaac Fordjour

Treasurer

Karen Goldmeier Green

LaKeitha Anderson

Angela Baker

Rosemary Becchi

Nancy Bocskor

Peter Brown

Allyson Carpenter

Charlotte Clymer

Zoë Glas

Jessica Grounds

Sohini Gupta

Nishita Henry

Jessica Hogle

Alethia Jackson

William Minor

Pepper Natonski

Alyse Nelson

Lucinda Robb

Sabrina Schaeffer

Laura Siegrist



Fellow Folakemi Elekolusi practices her stump speech for Running Start Influencers



Fellows with Board Member and mentor Isaac Fordjour

Individual Supporters

Ambassadors (\$10,000+)

Angela Baker

Liz Baldick

Charlotte Clymer

Heather Mills

Lucinda Robb

Robyn Ross

Global Delegates (\$5,500+)

Rosemary Becchi

Tizzy Brown

Adrienne Christian

Michelle Dorothy

Kelly Gibson

Abbie Hodgson

Jessica Hogle

Rene Jones

Mia Keeyes

Emily Lampkin

Ashley McNeil

Heather Mills

Tracie Potts

Influencers (\$2,500+)

Tamara Adrian

Jade Agudosi

Marjorie Clifton

Johanna Derlega

Christine Enemark

Natalie Farr Harrison

Martina Fitzgerald

Sohini Gupta

Nishita Henry

Celina Gerbic

Val LoCascio

Dawn Lurie

Monique Maley

William Minor

Irina Norrell

Roxy Ndebumadu

Casey Pick

Amy Selco

Kim Smith

Morey Ward

Sharon White Paez

Sharon Yuan