



The  
Urban Alliance  
Foundation, Inc.

EMPLOYING YOUTH.  
INSPIRING EXCELLENCE.

### Sean Segal, Director of Alumni Services:

Many DC residents may mistake the following statistics for a foreign country the World Bank provides development services to:

1. 30% of youth live in extreme poverty conditions.
2. Almost half of these youth do not complete high school. And fewer than 9% receive a college degree.
3. 1 in 20 adults is infected with HIV and youth under the age of 25 are the fastest growing number of cases.
4. Only a third of older youth can find sustainable employment – the lowest rate in 50 years.
5. 37% of adults are level 1 literate, lacking the skills necessary to function in society.

But in fact these statistics describe the plight of youth in Washington, DC. And for the last 11 years, Urban Alliance, with the help of dedicated partners like the World Bank, has been working to improve outcomes for our young people.

Urban Alliance is a high school program that prepares DC youth for the world of work through education, mentoring, and meaningful paid internships. Over the last decade, Urban Alliance's accomplishments have included employing over 850 youth, a 95% high school graduation rate, and 8 out of 10 program alumni are enrolled in college. Urban Alliance's staff has worked steadily over the last three years to expand our services city-wide and strengthen the organization's capacity. Urban Alliance is unique in that we are the only organization to offer year-round, professional internships for DC youth.

Since 2000, the World Bank has partnered with Urban Alliance to provide over 85 District youth with year-round, paid internships - *far more than any other business partner*. Furthermore the World Bank has provided over \$200,000 in donations to our programs so that we can continue to expand our work. This support has included 10 complete desktops to establish Urban Alliance's computer lab, which provides internet access for all of our students to research college, complete scholarship applications, and explore career options.

On an individual level, the students employed at the World Bank have excelled. For example:

1. Last summer, World Bank interns scored significantly higher than an average high school student on Urban Alliance's "Job Skills Inventory" – a huge accomplishment.
2. The World Bank summer internship program produced the first student to garner a perfect score at Urban Alliance's annual Public Speaking Challenge.

3. 100% of the students employed by the World Bank in 2006 went on to enroll in college, and are now busy pursuing degrees influenced by their experience ranging from Political Science, to Economics, and History.

Of course, numbers tell only part of the story. Before coming to Urban Alliance, I worked as a teacher in low-income schools for five years. I saw, firsthand, many of the challenges that youth face each day. I learned that students in many of our public schools are not pushed to succeed, or even held accountable. Showing up late – or not showing up at all – was ignored by adults and, thus, became acceptable behavior. I learned that students aspired to be NBA players, bus drivers, or beauticians – because that’s all they knew and, even worse, all they thought they were capable of. I also learned that, when given the opportunity to develop self-confidence, and challenged to push themselves, students in low-income areas are just as capable of excellence as privileged youth.

Last summer, as Program Coordinator for the World Bank Summer internship program, I saw a group of 20 DC high school students get pushed to achieve in a way they had never experienced. As you all know, the Bank has high standards. Showing up late, not showing up, or not being accountable for your work are unacceptable behaviors. Although many of the students were finding this out for the first time, their mentors at the Bank were both stern and supportive. The students realized that people at the Bank believed in them and that they could succeed. These challenges and high expectations, combined with the caring and support of mentors, produced an environment where major growth was possible for each student.

Equally as important, our students at the Bank last summer were exposed to a professional environment they had never seen before. Students wore business attire, attended work downtown everyday, and were part of a diverse group of employees with a myriad of backgrounds and experiences. They learned that no matter where you come from, if you work hard enough, you can achieve excellence.

As a Program Coordinator, I can lecture students about the importance of showing up on time, dressing correctly, and taking initiative. Sometimes, they even listen to me. However, the only way they ever really get it - is to *see* it. At the Bank, through the actions of you and your colleagues, the students truly began to take these critical lessons to heart, which has helped them excel after our program and avoid becoming one of those previous statistics.

One of the students who experienced working at the Bank for the last two summers is here with me today. Shanita Conley is a graduate of Bell Multicultural High School and attended Trinity University last fall. This fall, due to her

exceptional grades during her freshman year, Shanita has been accepted to the University of Albany, New York. Shanita has agreed to share some thoughts about her experiences here at the Bank with you this afternoon.

**Shanita Conley, 2006 Program Graduate, 2005 & 2006 World Bank Intern:**

Imagine: living off of only one dollar a day, having an income of less than five hundred dollars a year, not even having clean water to drink or bathe. It's not at all pleasant. Has it ever occurred to us that while we are so caught up in the glamorous things in life, to think of those who don't even have the basics? But these are problems the world faces everyday. Have you ever stopped to notice that at the same time we are buying fancy cars, expensive jewelry etc., that someone is dying of a serious illness, all because they cant afford to pay for medication?

These issues were all brought to my attention during my first internship at The World Bank. The summer of 2005 will go in my time capsule, as one of my life changing experiences. Not only did I get an employment opportunity but it opened my eyes far more to the harsh realities that our world faces today. I was proud to intern at an organization whose mission is a world free of poverty.

After all of the workshops, and job training, I knew that my 2005 summer internship at the World Bank was a grand opportunity. I was very excited to learn that I would be working in the Legal Department. Not only did it go with my career interest of law, but it was also the Legal Division for Africa, a continent that I was eager to learn more about.

My first day at the World Bank was the beginning of a new cultural experience. The staff in the LEGAF department was very diverse, and was happy that I would be a part of the team for the summer. The staff's background ranged from all over the world, just like the many different cultures represented in the World Bank. I actually felt like there was something new to learn everyday. Of course I was a rising high school senior, and was open to any information and advice that came my way. I like to read books, or attend lectures about how to have a successful career. But an early understanding through hands on exposure at the World Bank was a major step in preparing for my future.

The summer of 2005 went by in a flash; before I knew it I was preparing for my senior year of high school. I was confident about my skills learned at the World Bank, I felt like a new person. I carried this attitude with me all the way until graduation, and I walked across the stage with a little something extra. I knew I would be returning to the World Bank for a second summer internship in 2006. I was actually allowed a second chance to what I thought was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I know that my summers at the World Bank were very influential on the person that I am today. I would like to thank the wonderful people at the World Bank for reaching out to the youth at Urban Alliance and throughout DC, and giving us a chance to shine.

**Sean Segal, Director of Alumni Services:**

Shanita's internship experience is only one example of the impact that the Bank and its employees have on DC students. I'd like to leave you with one more example. Urban Alliance continues to work with our students after they complete their internships. One of the opportunities available to our graduates is a summer internship after they finish their first year of college. Yesterday, one of my former Bank students contacted me about this opportunity and, as we spoke on the phone, I remembered a unique experience she had, which embodied what Urban Alliance and the World Bank strive to do with youth.

This student was born and raised in DC. Her whole life, her whole world, had been limited to her neighborhood in Southeast. Then she applied to Urban Alliance and was selected for an internship at the World Bank after her senior year. One day during the summer, I walked with her, Shanita, and some other students from here over to the ESPN Zone. As we passed the White House, we just had to stop and take a picture. This student, despite spending her whole life in DC, commented on the fact that she had never actually seen where the president lives and works. As amazed as I was then, I am proud now. This former intern just completed her first year at Penn State University. She declared international finance as her major, and let me know yesterday that it was her Bank experience that led her to make that decision. Her whole life had been an example of the limitations DC youth faced, and, despite that, she flourished. This is how the opportunity the Bank, and yourselves, provide can make an impact.

On behalf of the 85 students that have worked at the Bank since 2000 as well as the 20 students who will begin working this summer on June 25<sup>th</sup>, I want to say thank you. Thank you for being role models to our young people. Thank you for giving your time and energy to working with DC youth. And thank you for your continued support of Urban Alliance and our mission of ensure that DC youth are ready for a life of self-sufficiency.