

Office of Educational Opportunity Programs

The Office of Educational Opportunity Programs was created in January of 1992 to organizationally locate the MIT/Wellesley Upward Bound Program, the MIT Educational Talent Search Program (ceased operation in FY1998), and all future programming serving low-income community youth. MIT has operated the Upward Bound Program since 1966 and began operation of the Educational Talent Search Program in September of 1991.

Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search are two of six US Department of Education Special Programs for Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds created under the Higher Education Act of 1965.

The goal of these programs is to provide college admission and preparatory information, academic support, advising, career information, and college and career exploration opportunities to the economically and/or educationally disadvantaged youth of Cambridge and formerly Somerville.

To a large extent, the development of both programs was influenced by the research done by psychologist Kurt Lewin and his associates. Lewin's hypothesis was that ego growth and academic performance were closely related. Moreover, he concluded that a developing ego needs to experience success in a warm and personal, structured environment for greatest development, in both a personal and social sense. Lastly, it was determined that this personal and social growth could be achieved through intervention outside of the institutions of family and school. Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound, through their year-round academic support and advising and cultural experiences, represent just such interventions.

MIT/Wellesley Upward Bound

The MIT/Wellesley Upward Bound Program is a year-round, coeducational, multicultural college preparatory program for high school youth who reside or attend school in Cambridge. Currently in its 37th year, the program serves 75 academically promising young men and women from disadvantaged backgrounds. The goal of Upward Bound is twofold: (1) to motivate client high school youth in such a way that they persist on to postsecondary education; and, at the same time, (2) to provide them with the fundamental skills necessary for success at the collegiate level. The program has two operational phases: the summer program and the school-year program.

The six-week summer program, conducted in residence at Wellesley College, is designed to provide the participants with a rigorous academic experience. Classes are taught by experienced high school teachers and graduate and undergraduate students from MIT, Wellesley College, and other local colleges and universities. Each participant is required to enroll in a mathematics course, an English course, and an elective course: social studies, science, or world languages. (Additionally, due to an agreement with the

Cambridge Public Schools, students may receive summer school credit for up to two failed major courses taken during the preceding school year.)

The school-year program, located at MIT, plays an equally important role in the educational development of participants. Building upon the motivation and enthusiasm developed during the summer, the academic year program is designed to assist and support the participant while in school. To accomplish this task, several programs, staffed primarily by MIT and Wellesley College students when appropriate, have been developed (we continually strive to maintain MIT and Wellesley College students' participation through our continued involvement as a prepracticum site for the Wellesley College Teacher Certification Program and through various outreach efforts).

The Upward Bound office is open for study, on a drop-in basis, four days a week. Tutors are available to assist participants with homework problems in addition to meeting individuals and/or small groups for specific content area tutorials.

The program offers workshops monthly to address more specialized participant needs (e.g., SAT preparation, computers, study skills development, time management, job readiness skills, etc.).

Also, in an effort to help participants cope with the myriad of problems—academic, social, family, and so on—the program offers support in the areas of guidance and college, career, and personal adjustment. The college advising component includes campus visits to many of the local colleges and universities as well as to the historically black institutions and participation in at least two local college fairs. The program hosted its annual College Day Program in July during the summer session at Wellesley College. There were approximately 75 colleges and universities represented, as well as seven visiting Upward Bound programs from the greater Boston area. The career advising component offers exposure to career options through our Career Presentations Program as well as through research on the internet.

Finally, the program provides numerous field trips that have as their purpose the intellectual, social, and cultural development of the participants. Such trips included the Museum of Science, the Omni Theater, dramatic productions, the Museum of Fine Arts, skiing, bowling, and roller-skating.

Seventy-nine percent of the program's graduating seniors have been accepted into postsecondary education institutions. Students from the program's Class of 2004 have enrolled in the following colleges and universities; American International College, Clark Atlanta University, Dean College, Mount Ida College, Newbury College, the New England Institute of Technology, Pine Manor College, Suffolk University, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

Ronald S. Crichlow, Director, Operational Opportunities Program
Evette M. Layne, Director, MIT–Wellesley Upward Bound Program