



Paul Lyandres

Paul Lyandres is a young leader with a passion for learning and teaching. In addition to pursuing his studies in business at the Wharton School, he has dedicated his time and energies at the University of Pennsylvania towards successfully launching a non-profit organization committed to providing mentorship for foster youth (with the name of “strive for ____”). Paul has also served on the advisory boards of the Common Knowledge Scholarship Foundation and Pearson Education and as a public speaking advisor through the University’s Communication Within the Curriculum program. Upon graduation Paul will be joining Bessemer Venture Partners as an analyst in their New York Office. His interests include foster care reform, health and wellness, traveling, mentorship, and entrepreneurship.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Strive for _____: Ensuring San Francisco Foster Youth Get Access to High Quality Mentorship

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sue Weber, School of Arts and Sciences, Communication Within the Curriculum

Foster youth need stable and supportive relationships in their lives to help guide them through tough times and open doors they may have not known existed. In 2009, my brother and I set out to ensure that San Francisco Foster Youth have access to quality mentors. This capstone project provides an overview story of the creation of “strive for_____”, San Francisco’s first and only mentorship program exclusively serving foster youth.

This thesis is meant to serve multiple purposes. The first is as an informative guide on what it means to be a foster youth and the importance of mentorship in these youths’ lives. Research on existing services convinced me of the need for team-based mentorship programs and strive for_____ is based on a unique model of teams. The second is as a step by step guide on creating a program for foster youth. The capstone paper surveys the labyrinth of public and private social agencies that need to be navigated, the demands of managing non-profits, and strategies for raising funds. The thesis is broken down chronologically and follows all the major steps involved in building and launching one’s own mentorship program for foster youth.

The last and main reason for the writing of this thesis is as a reflection on the many major takeaways learned from my experiences with strive for_____. The last four years have taught me a number of key life lessons including the importance of passion and persistence as well as the need to always seek out help. Very few people are able to succeed without the support of others and even with support many still fail. Throughout the creation of strive for_____ there were numerous occasions in which these lessons proved to be the only reason that strive for_____ was able to overcome so many failures and launch a successful program for foster youth.