

Step Up Virtual Summer Program 2022

Vision

At Step Up Virtual (SUV), our team believes that character and skill development programs set high school students up for future success. According to the OECD, entrepreneurship education is valuable to “achieving more interest, joy, engagement and creativity among students,” as well as a means of economic growth and social impact. **We want to provide students who may not traditionally have access to student development programs with the opportunity to build their career knowledge, leadership, communication skills, and critical thinking.** Our vision at SUV centers on the belief that all students deserve the opportunity to explore their passions, discover new interests, and grow as entrepreneurial leaders, regardless of their background.

Mission

To provide an opportunity for students from low income backgrounds to develop leadership, critical thinking skills, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Goals

1. Introduce students to and educate them on a range of different career paths and academic fields.
2. Empower students to reflect on their personal development goals and gain confidence.
3. Equip students with the necessary professional skills for future scholarship, university, and job applications.
4. Foster entrepreneurial spirit in students so they become stronger leaders and feel empowered to take action on issues important to them.

Program Structure

Students will:

- Complete the entire program remotely online;
- Attend two 2-hour sessions every **Monday, Wednesday, and Friday** through July 2022;
- Participate in **optional social and self development events** every Tuesday and Thursday;
- Hear from a diverse group of **guest speakers** and **career panelists**;
- Attend numerous personal and professional skill development **workshops**; and
- Complete an [Innovation Challenge](#), where they will design a solution to a problem they are passionate about solving (either personal or community level). Students will have the opportunity to showcase their final projects to each other at the end of July.

Program Highlights

Throughout the program, students were guided through one-on-one mentorship sessions. Students are asked to define a SMART personal and program goal. Every week, program assistants would check in on students individually and coach them through achieving their goals (e.g., contributing in every session, making 3 friends by messaging first, acting as an inclusive leader in the innovation challenge, creating a learning channel on Slack, etc.). Thus, every student had a personalized transformation arc over the month.

Student Demographics

- July 2020: 25 students from 12 schools in the Greater Toronto Area and Vancouver across Grades 9-12
- July 2021: 18 students from 12 schools in the Greater Toronto Area, Hamilton, and Manitoba across grades 9-12.
- Most students (except for 3) came from low income backgrounds, as defined by [Canadian LICO thresholds](#)

Feedback

Learning Outcomes

During the month-long program, our team collected feedback after every session to assess engagement and learning outcomes. At our end-of-program surveys in both 2020 and 2021, we found:

- 95% of students said they built friendships and found mentors that will last beyond the program
- 100% of students said they felt more informed about your future career and university options
- 100% of students said they felt more empowered to create an initiative or solve a problem in your community or school

Testimonials

Overall, 100% of our students said that they would recommend the program to a friend. Here are some of the testimonials they left:

"It was an amazing 4 week program with extremely helpful and kind program leaders. I felt very comfortable in the environment and I appreciated how informative and educational each of the sessions were. I also liked the different speakers who gave different perspectives on many different issues/topics. I would definitely participate again if that were an option."

"The only word to describe Step Up Virtual is amazing! With its enticing Innovation Challenge, wonderful guest speakers and supportive leaders, Step Up Virtual motivated me to think about problems in my community and collaborate with others to brainstorm solutions. It opened my eyes to the entrepreneurial side of myself and will continue to inspire me to seek entrepreneurial embarks in the future. This program helped boost my confidence and find great people that I know I can connect and network with. Step Up Virtual was a memorable learning experience that challenged the views I had of myself and my abilities."

"Step Up Virtual has been a fun experience and I learned a lot of things from making an outstanding resume to making a startup business. I have made a lot of friends with ambitious people who have very different experiences from mine and mentors of whom I believe to be brilliant and remarkable human beings. I was able to talk to a lot of people in the program and they listened with an open mind. I'm glad I took the chance to apply to the program since I learned a lot and have become more confident in myself."