



STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES

Early Findings from the Evaluation
of Management Leadership for
Tomorrow's Turn Pro Program

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OVERVIEW

A college education can be a critical step toward achieving economic mobility, but there are differences in the benefits that accrue to Black, Hispanic, and White college graduates. At every level of educational attainment, including bachelor's degrees, White workers are more likely than Black or Hispanic workers with the same qualifications to have better-quality jobs and higher median wages. Although many of the causes of racial wage and income gaps are large, structural issues, connecting workers to jobs with wages that match their skills and experiences may help start to close those gaps.

Career preparation programs, particularly those that combine work experience, professional coaching, and social-capital-development efforts (including help building career networks), can help college students to secure good jobs that match their salary expectations and fully compensate them for their skills and experiences.

Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide career services and access to networks that traditionally have been unavailable to Black students and Hispanic students. In 2022, MLT launched the Turn Pro program to expand the organization's offerings and reach more students. Turn Pro partners with three colleges to help recruit juniors and seniors in college. Turn Pro offers these students personalized and professional career coaching, access to group webinars on a variety of career service topics, help building networking skills, and connections to employers for internships and jobs at no cost.

MDRC is conducting a study of the Turn Pro program to evaluate its effects on students' outcomes over time. This report focuses on implementation findings based on an initial round of interviews with students and staff members, observations of the program, program participation data, and student surveys.

Key Findings

- The college partnerships were helpful in reaching prospective Turn Pro students.
- Students highlighted one-on-one career coaching as the most common reason they applied to Turn Pro as well as the most valuable service they received.
- Students reported having strong relationships with their coaches and that their coaches encouraged them to continue engaging in coaching sessions.
- Students' circumstances, goals, and proximity to graduation influenced their level of engagement in Turn Pro services. However, participation rates in coaching sessions were higher than any other service.

Turn Pro services continue up to six months after a student graduates. However, the data and findings for this report focus on students several months before their expected graduation date. Future reports will include comprehensive implementation analysis findings including Turn Pro's effectiveness at helping students find high-quality, high-wage jobs.

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The Authors

INTRODUCTION

The attainment of a college education does not necessarily result in the job-seeking skills and connections needed to break into one’s career of choice and get a high-quality job.¹ Many college graduates (52 percent, in a recent estimate)—especially those who are first-generation students from families with low incomes, and whose majors provide little or no technical training—end up in jobs that do not require or pay salaries commensurate with having earned a bachelor’s degree.² The challenge of obtaining a high quality job in one’s career of choice is particularly difficult for Black and Hispanic/Latino college graduates. Some of this may correspond to a lack of access to social networks, work-based learning, and career counseling supports.³

Colleges aim to help their students by providing a range of services such as résumé reviews, mock interviews, career exploration, and even facilitating connections to employers, but because they are serving an entire college population, it can be hard for these services to be individualized and intensive. A 2022 report found that the student-to-career-service-professional ratio averaged one staff member to 2,263 students among the 587 career services offices at colleges and universities that participated in the survey.⁴

Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) is a national nonprofit organization that has sought to fill this gap and provide young people with tools and opportunities to achieve economic mobility.⁵ It has traditionally served Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American college students with one-on-one career coaching services, group learning opportunities, job search and networking assistance, help obtaining internships, and connections to employer partners.⁶ In addition to continuing its established programs, MLT launched the Turn Pro program in 2022 and is still operating the program as of the publication of this report. MLT is partnering with MDRC to conduct a study of Turn Pro.

The findings presented in this report suggest that partnerships with the participating colleges seem to have been helpful in reaching prospective Turn Pro students and communicating the value of coaching services. The findings also suggest that coaching is one of the biggest draws to applying to Turn Pro as well as the most valued component of the program. Students form strong relationships with their coaches that go beyond career services and

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1. This study defines a high-quality job as “one that pays family-sustaining earnings or a minimum of \$35,000 a year for workers between the ages of 25 to 44 and \$45,000 a year for workers between the ages of 45 to 64” (Carnevale et al. 2019). Other factors that lead to job quality include “workplace safety and health, a voice, scheduling predictability, skills building, and advancement” (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022).
 2. Burning Glass Institute and Strada Institute for the Future of Work (2024); Abel, Deitz, and Su (2014).
 3. Carnevale et al. (2022); Carnevale et al. (2019).
 4. National Association of Colleges and Employers (2022).
 5. Management Leadership for Tomorrow (2024).
 6. Nonexperimental evidence on Career Prep, another MLT program like Turn Pro, suggests that the coaching model can lead to program alumni being more likely to have better first jobs after graduation than a matched comparison group. See Gershenfeld, Lovejoy, Mechede, and Escobar (2018).

help keep them engaged with the program overall. These conclusions are based on Turn Pro service observations and interviews with Turn Pro staff members and students and reflect how students engage with and experience these services.

This report is the second publication from the MLT Turn Pro Study. The first publication introduced the study and the Turn Pro program and its service components.⁷ This report presents early implementation analysis findings. Future reports will include comprehensive implementation analysis findings and will present evidence on Turn Pro's effectiveness at helping students find and enter high-quality, high-wage jobs following graduation.

THE TURN PRO PROGRAM

Turn Pro offers similar career services to MLT's other programs, but it seeks to expand MLT's reach by eliminating the cost to students and offering its services to students with career interests and backgrounds that MLT's other career services programs do not serve. MLT has typically served students with an interest in industries such as consulting, financial services, and corporate management. Turn Pro reduces the amount and type of eligibility screenings and opens its services to students seeking to enter all industries. This allows students with majors and career interests outside of MLT's typical scope to receive similar career services at no cost. Some new majors that Turn Pro serves include education, healthcare, and fine arts.

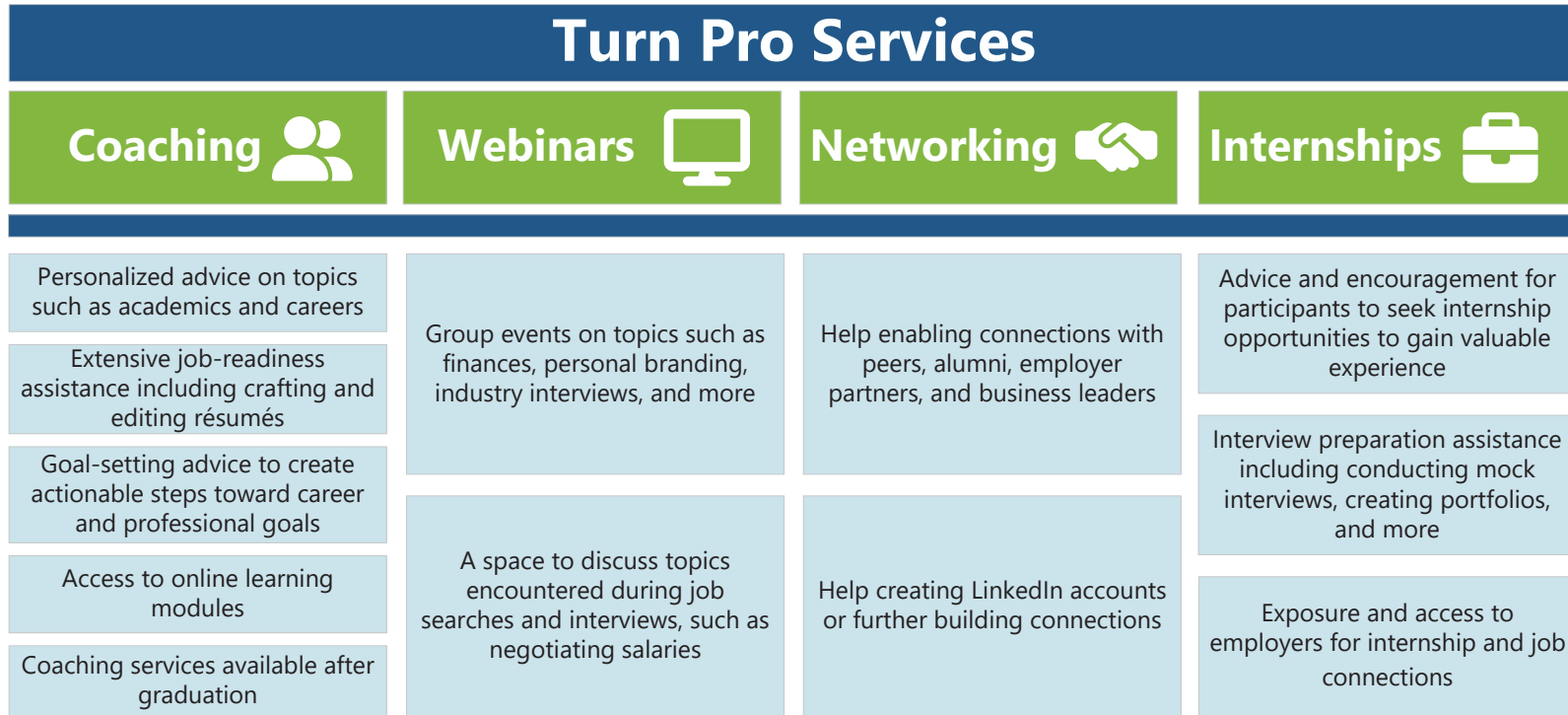
Another component of the Turn Pro program that is different from MLT's other programs is the establishment of formal partnerships with colleges to help recruit students for the program. MLT is partnering with three colleges to offer Turn Pro services to enrolled students.⁸ Program enrollment was open to junior and senior college students that were enrolled and expected to graduate from these universities between December 2022 and May 2025. To be eligible for Turn Pro, students had to have a grade point average of at least 2.0 and express interest in working full time after graduation.⁹ The Turn Pro program eligibility criteria do not exclude students based on their race or ethnicity, but one of the goals of the program is to serve first generation students of color. About 73 percent of the students in the study identify as Black, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American. See Figure 1 for a summary of Turn Pro service components that are offered to students during their junior and senior year of college and for up to six months after graduation.

7. Alonzo, Ciaramella, and Otten (2024).

8. The three colleges that partnered with MLT include one large, private, Historically Black College and University (HBCU); one large, public university in the southwest; and one large, public university in the southeast.

9. Students also had to be at least 18 years old, have United States citizenship or permanent resident status (including DACA—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and TPS—Temporary Protected Status), and not have participated in another MLT program.

Figure 1. Turn Pro Services



For additional details on the Turn Pro service components and on the characteristics of Turn Pro students, see [Supporting Students' Career Building: An Introduction to Turn Pro](#).

THE TURN PRO EVALUATION

The Turn Pro program is being studied using a randomized controlled trial, in which eligible students are randomly assigned to a program group (called the “Turn Pro” group), and are offered Turn Pro services, or to a control group, and are not offered Turn Pro services.¹⁰ In a randomized controlled trial, members of the two study groups have similar characteristics, on average, at the start of the evaluation, so any differences in their outcomes that are observed later can be attributed to the program. The trial will allow the study team to rigorously measure the impacts—or effects—of the Turn Pro program on students’ outcomes, such as skills attainment, employment, and earnings, over time.

To complement the impact analysis, the study team is conducting an implementation analysis to better understand the Turn Pro program services received by participants, to examine how the Turn Pro program is implemented both overall and at each of the three colleges, to determine the extent to which students in the program group use Turn Pro services, and to evaluate the contrast in service use between students in the program and control groups.¹¹

Methods

As part of the implementation analysis for this report, the study team conducted virtual interviews with three Turn Pro coaches using semistructured interview guides to learn more about the services offered by the program. To gain insight into how Turn Pro program services are provided and how students interacted with their coaches, the team viewed recordings of five virtual coaching sessions with five different Turn Pro students. The team also viewed recordings of two group webinars (which are virtual group sessions on a variety of topics led by Turn Pro staff members) on two different topics.

To hear directly from Turn Pro students about their experience participating in Turn Pro, the study team conducted virtual interviews with 20 students using semistructured interview guides. In choosing the Turn Pro students for the interviews, the study team first identified students from each college with different levels of engagement—measured by the number of coaching sessions they had—and then invited a random sample to participate in an interview. In addition to their varying degrees of engagement with Turn Pro, the students had a variety of majors and career interests, and differing experiences while participating in Turn Pro. Each student had at least one coaching session and some had as many as five. Of the 20 students interviewed, 10 identified as White, 7 identified as Black, and 4 identified as

10. Both study groups have access to the career services that are normally available in the absence of the program, such as university career centers.

11. Management Leadership for Tomorrow (2024).

Hispanic/Latino. Eighteen of the students began participating in Turn Pro when they were juniors and two of the students began participating in Turn Pro when they were seniors.¹² Ten of the students are attending or attended a large, public university in the southwest and ten are attending or attended a large, public university in the southeast. The study team was not able to interview students from the third college in time for this publication but intends to include them in the analysis for the final report.

Because the study team only observed and spoke with a small number of students from two of the three partner colleges, the findings from these observations and interviews are only intended to illustrate the range of experiences of some of the Turn Pro students attending those two colleges. These findings should not be viewed as representative of all Turn Pro student experiences. Additionally, because the students were as much as 15 months from their expected graduation at the time of the interviews, the findings in this report do not address services received after graduation, such as help with finding jobs.¹³ Information about students' experiences with internships is also limited due to the timing of the interviews.¹⁴

In addition to the implementation analysis data, this report also presents some findings from Turn Pro program participation data and study survey data (both capturing student outcomes before graduation), when available and appropriate, in order to support the implementation findings.¹⁵

STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH TURN PRO RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

This section briefly summarizes the Turn Pro program's approach to recruitment and enrollment and provides insight into how interviewed students learned about the program and why they chose to apply.

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12. Students who were randomly assigned before March of the year of their final summer are considered juniors and all others are considered seniors.
 13. Interviews occurred between 3.2 months and 15.8 months before a student's graduation. The median number of months before graduation is 11.6 months.
 14. To gain some initial insight into the program services and service delivery practices, the team spoke with a limited number of Turn Pro coaches for this report; however, this report does not focus on findings based on MLT staff members' perspectives and experiences.
 15. The study team is collecting Turn Pro program participation data directly from MLT to capture participation in Turn Pro services. The study team uses these data to describe the Turn Pro program services (as a supplement to the data collected through interviews and program observations) and to document how many students in the program group participated in key Turn Pro services. The study team also fielded a web-based, follow-up survey to Turn Pro participants around the midpoint of the program timeline (for juniors, at the end of the fall semester of their senior year and for seniors, at the beginning of the spring semester of their senior year). The survey focuses on collecting information related to the types of career preparation and employment services students are receiving.

To test whether college partnerships are a viable path to engage students of color and help them achieve professional success, Turn Pro partnered with three colleges to aid with recruitment efforts. Turn Pro staff members collaborated with the colleges to identify and reach out to registered students who were potentially eligible for and could benefit from Turn Pro. For example, the partner colleges emailed students information about the Turn Pro program and helped facilitate connections among Turn Pro staff members, college faculty members, and student-led groups.

- **Most interviewed Turn Pro students learned about the Turn Pro program via emails from their college.**

Interviewed students reported having learned about Turn Pro from emails sent by their college. Thus, the program's goal of leveraging college partnerships to recruit students appears to be successful. In addition, having the college send out emails about Turn Pro also likely only required minimal effort by both parties. Additional ways interviewed students reported learning about Turn Pro are through social media, on-campus events, and college staff members, such as academic advisers.

- **Interviewed students primarily applied to Turn Pro to obtain career coaching services.**

Interviewed students reported being interested in Turn Pro for its assistance with creating or revising résumés, securing internships, developing interviewing skills, and other career and professional development services. As one student described, "I was at a point in my education where I was doing well in school, but I hadn't put as much time into developing my ... résumé or interview skills or stuff like that, so I wanted a bit more experience with that side of the education."

Students reported that other motivating factors included being encouraged by a trusted college staff member to apply and feeling like they had little or nothing to lose because the program could offer them additional career services for free (see Box 1).

The study team asked the interviewed students if they were receiving any career services before applying to Turn Pro, and whether they considered other options. One student responded, "At my school, there's a career adviser that I had appointments with here and there, but it wasn't mandatory to meet with [the adviser] at all. And I just kind of got out of the habit of going to see [the adviser] regularly. I think having a program is something more concrete [and] would help me put more time into it. But other than the school's career program, there were no other external resources that I considered."

Another student said, "I was a part of this scholarship program that they have at [college]. And there are certain requirements that we had to just be involved with certain things on campus. I got an email one day from the [program] director saying that if I went into an academic coaching session, then I would get credit for my scholarship."

BOX 1

Interviewed Students Describe Learning About Turn Pro

“I went to go talk to the career adviser who was also a part of my scholarship, and he ... [said], ‘Okay, I think you should do [Turn Pro]. ... You get a career coach, you get access to these resources.’ And these resources have been amazing for a first-gen student.”

“I received an email about it and ... usually I would skip over those types of emails, but I just happened to read it and [saw] that it was free and [provided] coaching. ... I didn’t really have a plan for what I was doing over the summer, and I [thought] a free coach ... that sounds awesome.”

“I think I was just going to do it because it was like, why not? But I think I was definitely having anxiety about what I was going to do when I graduated. So, her just telling me [that] this is the way to help people secure jobs and strengthen their résumés and stuff like that, it was definitely something where I was like, ‘Okay. Well, I might as well do it.’”

STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES AND ENGAGEMENT WITH TURN PRO SERVICES

This section illustrates how interviewed students described and used Turn Pro services and presents early insight into how Turn Pro staff members delivered those services. This section also highlights the Turn Pro program’s engagement practices and student motivations and circumstances that help explain varied engagement with Turn Pro services.

Overall Program

Initial indicators suggest that Turn Pro services received by Turn Pro students before graduation at the two colleges were consistent. Interviewed students described Turn Pro as offering personalized career coaching and group webinars that helped them with career exploration and goal setting, helped them learn networking skills, and facilitated connections to peers, alumni, employer partners, and business leaders. Students also received tailored job search support to attain summer internships and employment. One Turn Pro Student said, “Turn Pro helps students and ... guides them to achieve their goal ... to help them to gain more experience in the workforce.... It’s helped students to enhance their networking and then their connections, so I would say Turn Pro is ... pretty good to me.”

- **The level of engagement in Turn Pro services overall was influenced by students’ circumstances, goals, and proximity to graduation.**

Information gathered from interviews with staff members and students suggests that engagement varies depending on the Turn Pro service component and students’ needs and circumstances. For example, as students approach graduation, they may be more likely to

engage in services to help them find employment and less likely to be seeking help with obtaining a summer internship. The interviews also suggest that almost all students were at least minimally engaged in Turn Pro services overall and that many students were moderately or heavily engaged.

- **Some interviewed Turn Pro students cited competing priorities, such as coursework and employment, as reasons for not engaging more with Turn Pro services.**

Interviewed students found Turn Pro services valuable but did not have enough time to be actively engaged with the program consistently. Students reported that balancing Turn Pro participation with jobs, coursework, and other college-related activities created challenges. For example, students reported class and work schedule conflicts, inconvenient times for activities, and inconvenient locations for in-person events as factors that limited their participation.

Students with heavy courseloads likely had bigger challenges with engagement. At least one student reported taking 21 credits in a semester. Another student that was taking 18 credits said, “I’m [also] in two student organizations, so sometimes my days could be very jam-packed.”

Interviewed staff members reported that many Turn Pro students were employed. Nine of the students interviewed were or had been employed while attending college. When asked about coaching students that have a job, one coach said, “I talked to my students about ... their job situation because a lot of them work two jobs, and how to [achieve a] work-life balance.” One student that was working reported that “[coaching sessions decreased from 60-90 minutes] to 30 minutes, because ... [I was] trying to meet with [my coach] and trying to manage time with schoolwork and with my two jobs.”

- **Interviewed Turn Pro students found email updates and newsletters helpful in keeping them engaged.**

Interviewed students found Turn Pro emails about opportunities, such as internships and job postings, beneficial. One student said, “I would say the constant communication and updates that they sent through email certainly keeps me invested in the program, as it really feels like they have my best interest in mind.” Students indicated that even if the correspondence was not relevant to them at the time (for example, they were not seeking an internship or employment at the time), it was still a reminder that the program was always available for them in the future.

Coaching

Personalized advice on topics such as academics and careers

Extensive job-readiness assistance including crafting and editing résumés

Goal-setting advice to create actionable steps toward career and professional goals

Access to online learning modules

Coaching services available after graduation

Turn Pro Coaching

Turn Pro coaching is delivered by paid, professional coaches with industry experience. This is exemplified by one of the interviewed coaches who had a Professional Coaching Certificate from the International Coaching Federation and had worked as a communications manager and taught management training courses before becoming a Turn Pro coach.

Turn Pro coaches are expected to hold virtual coaching sessions with each student at least once a month to provide personalized advice and guidance for students' career and professional goals. Turn Pro students are expected to receive help preparing for and applying to internships and jobs through both the coaching sessions and online learning modules. Coaching services are expected to continue up to six months after graduation, to continue providing job search assistance and to help navigate newly obtained employment.

Turn Pro staff members reported that they expected students to spend about one hour per week engaging in Turn Pro services—including meeting with their coach about once a month. During these monthly coaching sessions, coaches said they tailored the services to each student's background and career goals. They reported that coaching included, but was not limited to, helping students explore careers, identify and set career goals, build professional skills, develop and revise résumés, and apply for internships.

Based on interviewed student descriptions of coaching, one of the main focuses of Turn Pro coaching appeared to be on career preparation topics such as résumé and interview preparation and assistance—at least for students about a year before their expected graduation, which is about the time the study team interviewed most students. As indicated in the Turn Pro program participation data, approximately 42 percent of all Turn Pro students had at least one discussion about résumés during a coaching session.¹⁶

- **Interviewed Turn Pro students experienced the program primarily via an assigned coach.**

Interviewed students largely described Turn Pro as providing coaching services, including meetings and communication with their assigned coach and working through action items that come from the coaching sessions. This aligns with Turn Pro staff members' reports that coaching is their primary responsibility.

Each interviewed student was assigned to a Turn Pro coach and scheduled for an initial coaching session to start the coaching relationship and receive program orientation. Interviewed staff members and students described this first session as an introductory meeting to get

16. This rate will increase, as some students are still in college and participating in the Turn Pro program.

to know one another with an initial résumé review. Students reported a range of coaching session frequencies following this initial session, including weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly. A few students mentioned less frequent check-ins, such as once every 45 days, or twice per semester.

In addition to coaching sessions, interviewed students also said they communicated with their coach via text messages and emails between sessions. Students said these communications were usually about scheduling future sessions, to check in about the status of assigned tasks, or to get immediate answers to questions.

- **Similar to the engagement in Turn Pro services overall, the level of engagement in coaching sessions is influenced by Turn Pro students' circumstances, goals, and how close they are to graduation.**

One of the interviewed coaches described changes in engagement as a student's graduation approaches. The coach said, "If [the student is] in school and they're cooking along and it's not the season of looking for a job or it feels like it's way in the future, then they're not as inclined to engage. So, timing. Once they get to the point where, 'Oh, God, I'm going to graduate, I need to work with my coach,' then they get in gear often."

One of the interviewed students described how engagement was stronger when there was a need to achieve a goal. The student had the goal of finding an internship and explained becoming very engaged in attending coaching sessions when the time came to start applying. The student went on to say, "Now that I have an internship, my motivation to go to the [sessions] isn't as high or as much as it once was." Another student described a similar scenario. The student said, "[I engaged] whenever I would have a specific concern, like, 'oh, I'm applying for this internship,' or 'oh, I'm working on my resume,' or 'oh, I'm trying to get this job.' So, it was very targeted."

- **Most interviewed Turn Pro students said meeting over Zoom made it easier to engage in coaching sessions.**

All the interviewed students reported that coaching sessions were conducted over Zoom. However, a few students noted that they participated in one or two in-person coaching sessions when the coach visited the college campus. One student said, "Most of the time when [my coach] comes to visit, I make sure I set something up."

The availability of virtual coaching sessions made it easier for students to remain engaged. Interviewed students reported that they liked meeting with their coaches over Zoom due to their busy schedules. For example, when asked about meeting over Zoom, one student said, "I'm fairly busy, so setting an hour of time to meet on Zoom is way better than having to drive somewhere and meet them in person most of the time. So, I never felt disconnected or anything like that when meeting through Zoom."

- **Interviewed Turn Pro students rated coaches and coaching services positively and reported talking with their coaches about and getting assistance with non-career-related topics.**

Interviewed students and coaches talked about having built strong relationships through coaching. Although coaching was primarily about career services, interviewed students also reported discussing a variety of other topics with their coach, including education goals and academics in general as well as mental health concerns, among other issues.

Students felt that they could reach out to their coaches for help with many different topics. One student stated, “I feel like they just provide really helpful information, and I could reach out to any of the coaches if I needed something.” Another student exemplified the positive relationship that can stem from coaching on specific topics, as well as general support, mentioning, “I’ve really appreciated specifically the résumé help I’ve gotten and just the support I have from my personal coach.” This student added, “I’ve been able to use [the résumé] for my scholarship applications [and] I’m going to use it for my grad school materials. And so, [coaching] has benefited me in every aspect of my life and of my academic life and my relationship with my coach. I know that she cares about me, and I know she’s going to support me no matter what.”

Two students reported getting help with deciding on a graduate degree and graduate school options.¹⁷ One of those students remembered telling the coach, “I know I want to go to grad school, I just didn’t know what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go,” and the coach gave the student an assignment to research options and then offered help deciding on a graduate school. Another student noted how the coach “would pull on her connections” to gather information and opinions about different industries and graduate schools. See Box 2 for examples of students discussing academics with a coach.

Almost all interviewed students reported that they did not get referred to any non-career-related support services, citing very little need for those services. However, the interviewed coaches said that they had referred some Turn Pro students to outside resources such as for mental health services on campus and for housing assistance. One coach said, “There were a number of times when students would say they were anxious or depressed, and I would ... carefully ask, ‘Have you ever talked to somebody about this, a professional? Are you comfortable doing that?’” A different coach talked about discussing non-career-related topics with students and informing them about resources on campus but cautioned about not wanting to cross the line between being a coach and being a counselor regardless of how strong the relationship had become.

17. Although Turn Pro encouraged full-time careers after graduating, some participants were interested in graduate school. It is worth noting that if students attend graduate school instead of entering the workforce, this could have implications for the study outcomes. For example, employment and earnings outcomes for those attending graduate school during the study follow-up period will likely be lower than for those that go directly into the workforce.

BOX 2

Interviewed Students Discuss Academics with Their Coaches

“We usually ... talk about classes for the next semester and see how I feel about my current classes. We talk about ... the major stuff, [such as] how I’m liking my major because both of my majors, they don’t overlap. We talk about ... how [classes are] going and ... how I’m feeling about them. ... She ... assigns me work ... [such as] looking for colleges that I’d want to go to. So, master’s programs and stuff like that.”

“We do discuss academics and mention ... how I could take classes that may help me in the future with either ... my major and minor in criminology. Or also just saying ... [to build] a wider scope of experiences so that will make me look like a more preferential candidate.”

- **Interviewed Turn Pro students valued their ongoing relationship with their coaches.**

Interviewed students appreciated that the program assigned each student to a coach because this allowed for relationship-building and deeper connections that sometimes took coaching beyond career services. One student said that having the same coach again and again was really helpful because the coach can see the student’s growth and can develop a clearer picture of the student’s strengths and weaknesses. One of the interviewed coaches said, “There are ... certainly students [with whom] we’ve developed a great rapport and ... certainly, relationships grow and develop through this process.”

Students reported that their coaches were knowledgeable and that they could count on their coaches continued support given the help they had already received. One student speaking about the coaching relationship said, “Whatever I have, she can make it better. She just has a lot of knowledge and years of experience that I don’t. ... We’ve just built a rapport and a connection that ... goes past just building my career skills. I know that she’s in my corner no matter what.” This was also particularly important for another student who said, “I am first gen, so being able to lean on somebody else’s ... knowledge and somebody else’s ... resources has helped a lot ... because, for me, it’s not as easy to ask a parent for help or ... have somebody in your corner. It’s really helpful [because of] my background.”

- **One in five Turn Pro students experienced a change in their assigned coach.**

Changes to the coaches’ assigned caseload of students were likely a result of coaches being reassigned to work with students from a different college or because a coach was no longer working on the Turn Pro program. Turn Pro program participation data for Turn Pro students who had at least one coaching call indicate that about 22 percent of participants had at least one coach change.¹⁸ At least two of the students that were interviewed reported that their

18. This rate will increase, as some students are still in college and participating in the Turn Pro program.

assigned coach was changed once, and one of these students reported having two coach changes. Based on one of these students' experiences, such changes could be disruptive and lead to reduced engagement. The student said, "I don't want to spend another semester building a relationship with somebody else, then, boom, they're gone, too." Another student offered a different experience with a coach change. That student said, "It wasn't disruptive, it just took a little bit of time to get comfortable with the new coach." The student went on to say that the new coach "was very sweet and very welcoming." The student also "really appreciated" meeting with both coaches at the same time to help with the transition.

- **Interviewed Turn Pro students found coaching valuable even when the coach did not have significant experience with the student's chosen career path.**

Some of the interviewed students reported that they were not paired with a coach that had previous experience in their target field. It is possible that this is a result of Turn Pro being inclusive of more industries and career pathways beyond MLT's other career service programs. Fortunately, interviewed students suggested that this did not devalue the coaching they received, especially if the coach made an effort to learn more about the student's area of study. Moreover, interviewed students reported that the value of coaching is not necessarily connected to whether the coach is knowledgeable about a particular industry or career path. For one student's reflections on this, see Box 3.

BOX 3

Interviewed Student Reflects on Coaching

"I think that in the beginning, it was more general knowledge. ... She was in consulting and so that was a different perspective, but it was also really helpful. ... But I could tell ... she became a lot more knowledgeable about supply chain and finance as ... our meetings went on. There were times when she would bring up stuff about the industry that I didn't know. So, I appreciated that ... she put the effort in to learn more and to figure out if she ... has any connections. She connected me with other [college] students that are supply chain majors. So, I felt like she was putting in the work also just like I was."

Despite having a coach with a different background, another student noted that coaching was still "definitely helpful." The student said, "A lot of [coaching]—other than connections to ... specific people who work in those ... types of companies ... is just kind of general things that I feel ... applies to all kinds of college students." The student went on to provide examples of getting help with résumés and interviewing techniques. The student said, "I don't think any of that specifically, you need engineering expertise to coach someone on." A third student said that if the coach had "the same background, then that would be great, but if she had not, then that would be fine [too]."

Other Turn Pro Services

In addition to coaching sessions, Turn Pro services were expected to include engaging with Canvas resources and online learning modules, attending group webinars, participating in networking opportunities, and exploring opportunities for summer internships.¹⁹

- **Interviewed Turn Pro students reported less participation in Turn Pro activities outside of coaching sessions.**

Interviewed students reported being aware that Turn Pro offered other service components in addition to coaching sessions but many students reported engaging less with these components compared with how often they engaged directly with their coach during coaching sessions. Among the interviewed students that engaged in these other service components, some found them valuable.

Canvas

Communication and resources tool

Online learning modules

Canvas Learning Management System

Interviewed staff members and students described Canvas, an online learning management system, as having resources as well as learning modules covering multiple topics, including résumé writing, interview preparation, and networking. In addition, Canvas was used to share documents or submit assignments to coaches, such as updated résumés.

- **The extent to which Canvas is used by interviewed Turn Pro coaches and students appears to be minimal.**

As one student explained, “In each [Canvas online learning] module, there would be a different focus. I think the first one ... would help you develop personal clarity [when] it comes to your career. So ... some of the questions would be, ‘What motivates you? What gives you satisfaction? What would you say you’re better than 90 percent of people at?’ [The module] for interview skills ... asks you to develop ... answers to questions that followed a template that made it easier to respond to interview questions.” Another student described Canvas as a library of resources with, for example, links to articles about résumé writing. The student also suggested that the coach used Canvas as a guiding tool for the coaching sessions. The student said, “Most of the time we [used] the Canvas ... page assignments, links, and stuff like that as a starting point for our meetings, just to kind of help me get an idea of what was expected of me for any given part.”

19. Turn Pro participants are also expected to receive job search assistance and other services after graduation, which will be covered in the final report.

Almost all interviewed students had used Canvas to some extent but many reported low levels of engagement with the platform, stating that some of its components were not useful. One student said, “There’s a couple things specifically on Canvas ... that I don’t use ... that aren’t valuable to me.” Another student said, “I just didn’t use it that much. I think that if it were set up a little bit differently where things were assigned more directly from the coach, I think I would’ve probably done them, but that’s just me.” This student went on to say, “It seems like more homework.” Similarly, when describing a Canvas assignment, another student said, “I thought that the assignment was a lot more than what I had time to do.” However, a couple of students that accessed Canvas frequently felt it was valuable and helped keep them engaged with Turn Pro. One student said, “I always have it bookmarked.”

Webinars



Group events on topics such as finances, personal branding, industry interviews, and more

A space to discuss topics encountered during job searches and interviews, such as negotiating salaries

Group Webinars

Turn Pro staff members reported offering live group webinars on topics such as networking, personal branding, company-specific information, industry interviews, finances, and how to do well in internships.²⁰

- **Few interviewed Turn Pro students reported attending webinars, but those that did found them valuable.**

Responses from interviewed students reflect the Turn Pro program participation data, which indicates that only about 23 percent of all Turn Pro students attended at least one webinar. Some reasons interviewed students gave for not participating included scheduling conflicts, inconvenient times, or a lack of interest in the topics. Students that worked in the evenings reported this as one barrier to attending the webinars. In addition, at least one student reported not being able to participate in activities that occurred in the evening, such as the webinars, because of evening classes.

However, interviewed students that did attend webinars found them valuable. One student said, “I just negotiated a salary, and I’ve learned how to do that because of one of the [webinars] that they had put on.” See Box 4 for another student perspective on a group webinar.

20. Personal branding refers to the intentional practice of creating a public image that reflects one’s values.

BOX 4

Interviewed Student Reflects on a Group Webinar

“I feel like I gained some really valuable information. [The webinar] was over Zoom and ... it was at a good time that ... I would be able to make it. And then people in different time zones would be able to make it, too. It was about negotiating salary, and they just provided some really good information about ... what to expect whenever you get your first job offer. Both of my parents did not go to college and then did not take the corporate America route, so they have no idea how to negotiate a salary, especially coming out of college. So, that was something that I found really useful. And they offered some really good tips and tricks. I’ve only seen that one and I really liked it. I would definitely attend another one.”

Networking

Help enabling connections with peers, alumni, employer partners, and business leaders

Help creating LinkedIn accounts or further building connections

Networking

Interviewed staff members and students reported that Turn Pro aims to teach participants how to build their professional network and provides various tools to do so. This includes offering webinars on personal branding, as noted above, as well as teaching students how to use LinkedIn.²¹ For example, students reported getting help to create a LinkedIn profile and on using LinkedIn to make connections. In reflecting on LinkedIn networking, one student said, “I ... cold call a potential connection and craft a message to send with the connection invitation.” The student described this as a way to explore companies and to learn about the journey of how workers in a particular industry got to where they are.

Staff members and students also reported that Turn Pro created in-person opportunities to network by hosting on-campus events such as job fairs and tabling events. However, only a few students said they participated in these activities.

- **Whether or not Turn Pro students received networking support appears to have depended on the student’s own interest and initiative.**

Only some of the interviewed students described coaching sessions as including assistance with networking, but these students did not indicate they were seeking help in this area either. Turn Pro program participation data suggest similar levels of networking assistance. The data indicate that networking was only a topic of discussion during coaching sessions for about 20 percent of Turn Pro students.

21. LinkedIn is an online professional networking platform.

One student that did not get help with networking suggested this was because networking help was not requested from the coach. The student said, “I’m very driven toward ... the internships and the interview aspect. ... I think that the mentorship in itself is very guided depending on what the student wants and needs or what the coach sees that they lack or [if] there are areas of growth. So, I think it really just depends on ... [each individual’s] situation.”

Given that Turn Pro services are individualized in this way and given that the students may have been choosing to focus on their academics at the time of the interview, it is possible that more students are likely to seek out networking assistance and engage in networking activities as they approach graduation and begin thinking about searching for a job.

Internships



Advice and encouragement for participants to seek internship opportunities to gain valuable experience

Interview preparation assistance including conducting mock interviews, creating portfolios, and more

Exposure and access to employers for internship and job connections

Summer Internships

Based on interviews with staff members and students, Turn Pro coaches helped students seek out and apply to summer internships as a way to gain more direct work experience and test out a career.

- **Turn Pro primarily promotes summer internships for juniors and offers application support.**

Turn Pro coaches encourage students in their junior year of college to pursue internships for the summer before their senior year and provide advice and assistance throughout the internship application process. As one coach explained, “It’s highly recommended they do an internship just because it looks great on your résumé, it gives you experience into this world that maybe you go in and do it and you find out you don’t like it. So, it’s a good test for, ‘Is this the career I want to be in?’ And they also often lead to full-time offers.”

One student said that the coach researched companies to identify internship opportunities and offered advice about how to engage with the companies. Another student shared that the coach helped in setting goals such as “networking on LinkedIn” for internship opportunities and “applying to 10 internships within the next two weeks.” This same student added, “My Turn Pro coach would send me emails of links to internships that were specifically for [my field], which was really helpful.”

Turn Pro coaches also helped students prepare for internship interviews and provided feedback on how the students could improve. One student that received feedback about less-than-optimal interviewing skills, said, “Practicing [with my coach] was very helpful.”

At least one student fully credited Turn Pro and its services for helping the student apply for and obtain an internship. The student said, “I don’t think I would have gotten the internship without Turn Pro. I wouldn’t have been as proactive at ... working on my resume, making sure to fill that out, and putting ... relevant experiences on there. Like, I think I would have struggled with that if it wasn’t for Turn Pro.”

- **Turn Pro had fewer connections to internships for students in certain majors.**

A few students remarked that some of the internship opportunities presented to them by Turn Pro did not fully match their profile or interest. One student recalled, “I was expecting for them to have more internships ... [for political science majors] instead of having so many purely focused on business and communication.” As a result, the student used an “outside source” to find an internship. Another student remembered getting Turn Pro emails about internships with partners that were not relevant due to the student’s college major and career interests.

One coach reflected, “One of the major problems that we had as coaches, and consequently students had, was if you’re not in ... [certain] majors, we don’t have a lot of offerings from partners of internships and jobs. So, trying to really scramble to help students find opportunities either in internships or in full-time jobs in areas that aren’t typically [the focus of] MLT ... that was challenging. And we needed more job offerings in those areas.” Another coach shared an approach to this challenge saying, “It was helpful to be knowledgeable about what opportunities different university departments offer and what they communicate to students” so that the coach ... [could] also point students to those opportunities or encourage ... students to keep an eye out for those communications.

- **While most Turn Pro students applied for a summer internship, less than half participated in a summer internship.**

Internship participation, as reported in interviews with students, was low overall. Data from a study survey support this finding. Of the 296 Turn Pro students that completed a study survey, about 70 percent reported applying for an internship but only 41 percent reported participating in an internship. In part, this is likely because Turn Pro is focused on helping seniors (who made up 20 percent of the interviewed students) obtain employment after graduation and did not emphasize internships as much (given the timing of when they worked with them).²² However, even among students in their junior year, internship rates were moderately low. Of the 186 juniors that completed a study survey, about 53 percent reported participating in an internship.²³

One reason for low internship participation among juniors could be due to the lack of opportunities for certain majors. In addition, as noted above, Turn Pro may not have offered as many connections to employers in certain fields. Turn Pro coaches suggested another reason could relate to the timing that the student enrolled in Turn Pro. For example, some juniors did not enroll in Turn Pro in time to meet application deadlines for summer internships. Other reasons students reported not applying for or accepting internship offers include conflicts with other programs such as study abroad or feeling that they could not manage participating in an internship and classes at the same time.

22. Students who were randomly assigned before March of the year of their final summer are considered juniors and all others are considered seniors.

23. This rate will increase, as some students are still in college and participating in the Turn Pro program.

Perhaps the biggest reason for low internship participation could be that many Turn pro students worked during college as reported by interviewed staff members and students, and thus applying for internships may not have been a priority or students decided they could not do both. In general, students that work during college may be doing so to sustain themselves and participating in an internship could require quitting or reducing work hours. One coach said, “They couldn’t all do it just because of job obligations.” The coach quoted one student as an example who said, “I can’t afford to take an internship because I’m working this job now, and I have to make this amount of money.”

STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES AND ENGAGEMENT WITH COLLEGE CAREER SERVICES

This section illustrates how the Turn Pro program integrates college career services, how interviewed students used and described college career services, and student motivations and circumstances that help explain engagement with those services.

As part of the Turn Pro program, students are expected to be encouraged to take advantage of any other career services available to them, including the college’s career services.

- **Turn Pro students used college career services as a supplement to Turn Pro—sometimes at the suggestion of their coach.**

Both interview responses and responses to a study survey indicate that Turn Pro students continued to access college career services while enrolled in the program. Of the 296 Turn Pro students that completed the survey, about 79 percent indicated that they used their college’s career services.²⁴ Interviewed students reported that they used their college’s career services before and during their participation in Turn Pro. They said they used these services to secure or explore internships, to build their networks, and to receive one-time support with résumés. The students also said they attended career fairs that were set up by their college. At least one interviewed student reported being referred by a Turn Pro coach to the college’s career services.

Interviewed coaches noted students’ use of these other career services and stated they do sometimes refer students to them as a supplement to Turn Pro, further encouraging students to engage with the program and offering more support for things such as résumés. One coach shared, “[I] refer [students] to the college’s career services center for networking purposes.” The coach described the center as “another arm or avenue to help [students] find a job or internship.” Use of a college’s career services may have varied based on a student’s major. One coach mentioned that “business students generally were more prone to visit the career services center” given that business majors are often heavily encouraged by college

24. This rate will increase, as some students are still in college and participating in the Turn Pro program.

staff members to engage with the career services at their colleges, based on the nature of the major itself and its specialized demands around the job search process.

- **Interviewed Turn Pro students said that compared with Turn Pro, their college’s career services were *less personalized*.**

Even though they felt the college’s career services helped supplement Turn Pro, interviewed students favored Turn Pro, saying that the college’s career services were more generic compared with Turn Pro services. For example, as noted above, interviewed students valued having one assigned coach that they always met with. One student explained, “[Turn Pro has a] personal connection as opposed to [the college’s] career services, [where] it’s a different person almost every time. ... Sometimes it’s the same advice [every time you go] because it’s somebody new every time and it’s the same issue. So, I would have to say that that’s how [Turn Pro] differentiates itself [from other career services].” See Box 5 for more student perspectives on getting résumé help.

BOX 5

Interviewed Students Describe the Résumé Help They Received

One student said that the college career services just provided a “generic template.” Reflecting on the résumé help received from a Turn Pro coach, the student said, “I think Turn Pro made mine more specific to me and more tailored to me.... My résumé was tailored to my strengths ... and what I’m good at and the skills that I present.”

Another student said, “The [college] career services ... felt more synthetic in a way.... They gave me ...a model résumé ... to mimic and a sample cover letter. And they told me ... ‘You want to make it look like this.’ And I said, ‘Oh, okay. I have this experience..’ And they gave me some advice... but it was very difficult to keep up with what they were saying. They felt almost rushed, in a way of speaking.”

- **Interviewed Turn Pro students said their college’s career services offered fewer opportunities to connect with employers than Turn Pro.**

One student said, “[Turn Pro has] a newsletter that goes out, I think, monthly or weekly, ... with the programs, opportunities, talks, all that stuff from their partners. So, I would say they have a lot more connections.” In comparison with what the college offered, a different student said, “[Turn Pro] is a bit more structured than the other program ... I attended. They’re definitely more on the professional side, and a difference between them is that the number of partners that MLT has, and connections within that, it’s vastly different.”

CONCLUSION

The initial implementation analysis suggests that MLT has been effective in enrolling students into the Turn Pro program and providing consistent services across the two colleges.²⁵ Interviewed students reported that career coaching was one of the biggest reasons students applied to Turn Pro; students believed it to be the program's main component and felt it was the most valuable service they received. Interviewed students said they formed strong relationships with their coaches that went beyond other career services they could access at their college and credited the coaching services for keeping them engaged with the program.

While participation rates were lower in other Turn Pro services compared with participation in coaching sessions—according to Turn Pro program data and interviewed staff members and students—the study team expects that some of these rates will increase, as some students are still in college and could still engage in services as they approach graduation.

The analysis also suggests that the career interests of some Turn Pro students did not match with their coaches' experience or with Turn Pro's existing industry and employer connections. While interviewed students said that benefiting from coaching does not require coaches to be experts in the student's target field, MLT's lack of connections to employers could have implications for these students in terms of internships and employment opportunities.

The upcoming final report will include an additional round of interviews with the same students that were interviewed for this report (in order to understand their full experience with the program) and will also draw on interviews with students from the third college. These additional activities and analysis will allow the study team to follow up on the topics covered in this report and offer new insights into participants' experiences with post-graduation services and post-graduation employment, as well as their overall impressions of the program.

Additionally, interviews with several more Turn Pro staff members and a group of Turn Pro employer partners will help the study team provide a fuller picture of the services offered, how the services were provided, and any challenges or lessons learned in operating the Turn Pro program.

25. The study team was not able to interview students from the third college in time for this publication but intends to include them in the analysis for the final report

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