

Program Description

Mission of *On The Verge*

On The Verge develops and sustains powerful and progressive young leaders who create positive impact locally, nationally and globally. By using a process of rigorous coaching and capacity building, *On The Verge's* intergenerational learning community helps these individuals acquire the personal qualities and professional skills they need to carry out their work now and in the future.

WONDER.

What's This All About?

On the Verge has been created to provide a focused opportunity for motivated young men and women in their mid twenties to early thirties to explore the terrain within which real change can take place. Young adults today are being challenged with unprecedented complexity, cultural upheaval, and global danger. Although traditional academic institutions provide one level of education for the tasks ahead, few directly address the requirements for leadership, community, self as well as worldly knowledge, and the strategic communication skills crucial for making an impact in the world.

The program is developing and providing a large network of caring and experienced adults from the greater Bay Area who will act as mentors and coaches to guide the next generation of change agents and catalysts to launch themselves into the world. The commitment takes place over a one year period with the intention that this kind of consistent engagement will encourage and sustain the incredible energy and idealism that so many young people have but which can too easily be lost without on-going community interaction and support.

In 2003 *On the Verge* piloted the program with its first group of twenty young people who were chosen from a pool of applicants nominated by adults in the community. A network of older adults are helping this learning community to discover just exactly what kinds of experiences and support motivated young women and men need to effectively function in the world of social change. Since 2003 four more groups of 15 young adults each and an additional 15 coaches joined our growing organization. This work is being done in retreat settings, in monthly sessions throughout the Bay Area, and through staying connected across the Internet.

RESPOND.

Where did the impetus for On the Verge come from?

The seeds for this program grew out of a series of important conversations between younger and older professionals working in numerous organizations committed to social change and social service throughout the Greater Bay Area. Younger people wondered why the world seemed so competitive and not collaborative. They found few opportunities for creative problem solving, but rather conformity seemed to rule the day. They asked questions like: What work, what service is really going to have an impact? How can I personally stay vital, hopeful, and passionate when there is so much to be despairing of? They found it quite difficult to find mentors and coaches at work that would have the time and energy to focus on their growth and development as a new comer to the field.

On The Verge

Simultaneously, more experienced, seasoned professionals shared their concerns about recruiting and training young people who would be willing to enter this line of work, be inspired and energized and have the capacity and willingness to stay committed over time. Many of the veterans felt that building an intergenerational network of committed people, working side by side sharing skills, attitudes and knowledge could contribute to the isolation of the younger generation as they grew into their more mature selves and took on roles of leadership in organizations. In response to these urgent concerns, *On the Verge* was conceived.

CREATE.

What Capacities Do We Hope to Build?

To be effective within their communities, young adults need to exercise a whole roster of aptitudes: from the ability to identify problem areas close to their concerns to strategic means of making an impact in a world still unresponsive to the perspectives of younger professionals. Through a model of rigorous coaching, Vergers develop skills in strategic thinking and problem solving, community organizing, effective verbal and written communication, financial management, fund development, relationship building, along with tools for persevering in the face of obstacles. To develop these skills requires training and practice. As these young adults begin to claim their own authority as individuals, struggling with the personal questions about values, beliefs, and the nature of self they will need to do so within the context of real and dramatic experiences. Leadership opportunities both in *On The Verge* and in the world serve as part of the training ground for these young people.

ACT.

How Will This Happen?

On the Verge is accepting applications through September 1, 2006. A pool of applicants will be selected for interviews starting September 3, 2006. This sixth group of Vergers will begin with a 4 day retreat from October 26th through October 29th, 2006. During the year this cohort of Vergers and coaches will become the design team to create a first of its kind intern teacher preparation and credentialing program. The Design Team will reinvent teacher preparation and submit an application for a new and innovative credential program to the commission on teacher credentialing.

BELONG.

How Can You, or Anyone, Become Involved?

We see this as an exciting opportunity for young adults and more experienced adults to collaborate. If you wish to support our effort directly or indirectly please call Diana Gordon (510-599-7786), or visit our website at www.onthevergebayarea.org. There are many levels within which people can get involved. As a nonprofit organization we, of course, would greatly value any financial contributions you or your organization would like to make. But more importantly, this growing community will benefit by having skilled, caring, intelligent facilitators, coaches, and mentors in an ongoing role with Vergers.

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