

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The Joy of Adventure



PHILADELPHIA
OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

POBS doesn't do "dull" moments.

This was the friendly bit of wisdom swirling in my mind in October as I dangled off the side of Two Commerce Square during our notorious Building Adventure event, just two months into my new gig as executive director.

Twenty-nine shaky stories later, thankful to be back on solid ground, relief gave way to a powerful feeling of joy – which happens to be the official mantra the POBS crew had chosen for the year.

As you will read in these pages, 2023 was a year full of adventure and joy for POBS and our network of school and community partners. Through the tireless efforts of our incredible staff, we served more than 7,500 young people – facilitating experiences that instill the skills and nurture the bonds that will help them thrive in school and beyond.

With our hallmark day programs and expeditions back in full force, we sought new and innovative ways to deepen our impact: we hosted a range of events to engage and connect Outward Bound alumni; in collaboration with our colleagues at Audubon Mid-Atlantic, we organized two cohorts of our environmental leadership program for local high schoolers; and in partnership with School District of Philadelphia's Office of Culture & Climate, we piloted a team-building program for school Climate Managers.

POBS's remarkable return to form following the pandemic is thanks in no small part to the dedicated and strategic leadership of my predecessor, Meg Wise. During her five-year tenure, POBS made critical investments in staff development and pushed the organization to think critically about its responsibility as a new member of the Strawberry Mansion community. As we forge ahead, we remain grateful to Meg for charting such an ambitious and meaningful course.

So dear reader, as you review the year that was, I hope you too get a sense of the joy and adventure that makes POBS so special. To all of our generous supporters and advocates, thank you for being the spark to our flame!



Justin Ennis

JUSTIN ENNIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2023

by the numbers



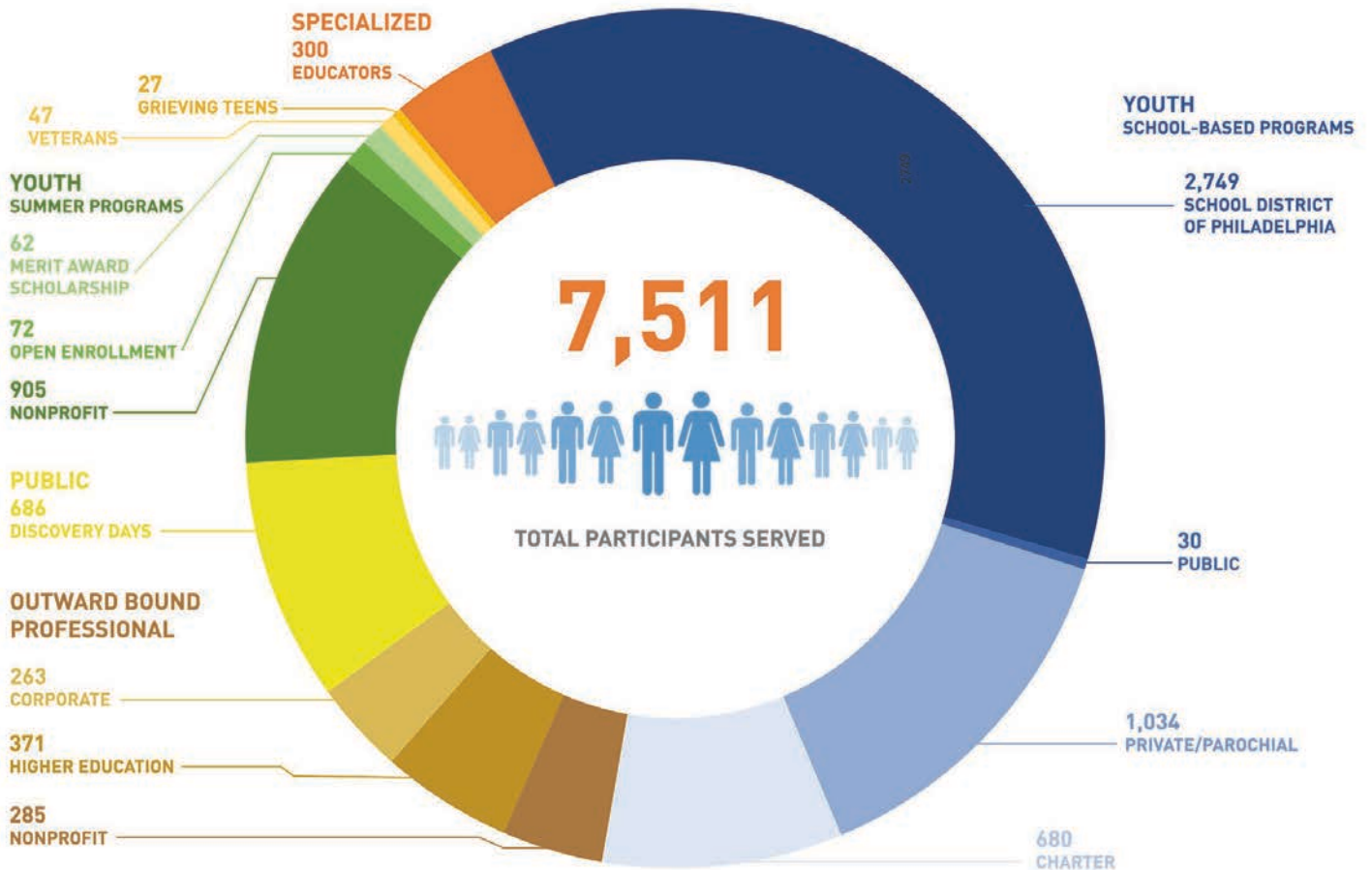
\$885,126

Scholarship & Financial Aid

122



Program Partners



Better Together: Our Partnership with the School District of Philadelphia

Our partnership with the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) began with the birth of the Philadelphia Outward Bound School (POBS) over 30 years ago. Our founders had SDP students in mind as the impetus for starting a local Outward Bound school and that foundation has been fundamental to our partnership to this day.

SDP and POBS are committed to serving the partnership. We exercise a collaborative mindset, recognizing we are greater than the sum of our parts, and we believe in the value of experiential learning opportunities as an effective tool for personal and group development.

Behind these efforts are PEOPLE. Countless dedicated and caring individuals have contributed to the success of this partnership at all levels, some for almost 25 years.



Leaning In - the SDP Office of School Climate and Culture staff connect and support each other while crossing the Team Beam.

Included from SDP are central office leadership staff, the Offices of Student Support Services, Postsecondary Readiness, School Climate and Culture, and Learning Network administrators. Collectively, they support the foundation of the partnership, advocate to extend experiences throughout the district, and guide strategic planning. They also directly participate in program experiences. Their commitment is immeasurable.

School-based educators and administrators deserve special mention as the backbone of the partnership. They are the champions in their schools who coordinate with POBS, students, and families. They serve as chaperones on single day programs and 5-day expedition trips — leaving their families, school, and day-to-day responsibilities behind for a week in the wilderness. Our partnership would not be possible without their deep and consistent commitment.

Through the decades, this partnership has evolved; enduring through challenge and change and flourishing with creativity, strong relationships, targeted program impact, and expansion opportunities.

A few examples of our collaborative work to improve service and support of students and staff include:

- Embracing opportunity and ability to provide more students with well-rounded, integrated, co-curricular

educational experiences. Moving to the Discovery Center in 2018, POBS focused on increasing the number of single-day “Insight” programs serving more schools, students and educators in team-based, ground activities and challenge course climbing experiences.

- Creating the 9th Grade Academy Peer Leadership Program (9GA) to address the unique needs of the middle school to high school transition. The goal is to help students build meaningful relationships that positively impact their desire and willingness to attend school, serve as a peer support, and develop skills that contribute to creating and maintaining a positive school culture.
- Creating the Learning Network 11 Middle School Experience (LN11) and a Community of Practice; jointly working to secure support and external funding to annually deliver a program progression model, including Insight day and expedition programming for 326 middle school students and staff from 8 schools in North Philadelphia.
- Promoting scholarship opportunities to middle and high school students who have engaged in their school-based programs to enroll in longer, summer courses.
- Utilizing research-based outcomes to improve program delivery, consistency, and efficacy.
- Extending programming to include school and Network-based educator programs and SDP office teams. These have included 9GA teams, LN11 staff and its Community of Practice members, and multi-year engagement with the SDP Offices of Prevention and Intervention; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Student Rights and Responsibilities, Professional Learning; and the Office of School Climate and Culture, who have led the discussion for expanding staff learning opportunities.

Our goal is to be the best partner we can be - and we feel that SDP strives to do the same. We celebrate this extraordinary partnership, and look forward to our future. We are better together.



School District of Philadelphia Superintendent Tony Watlington meets Principal Crystal Edwards (William D. Kelley School) and Assistant Principal Alexis Agree (Edison High School), with students from Edison’s 9th Grade Academy at their program day at POBS.

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Xiente #
YEAH Philly #

* 9th Grade Academy
+ Learning Network 11
Community Organization

The Discovery Center Celebrates Fifth Anniversary; Wins “Special Places” Award

The honor from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council recognizes environmental leadership and community impact

DISCOVERY CENTER CELEBRATES FIVE YEARS OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

In 2023, the Philadelphia Outward Bound School and Audubon Mid-Atlantic co-hosted several free public events at The Discovery Center. These events — called “Discovery Days” — included rock climbing, ziplining, birding, and canoeing in the reservoir, and brought out nearly 400 attendees from all around Philadelphia.

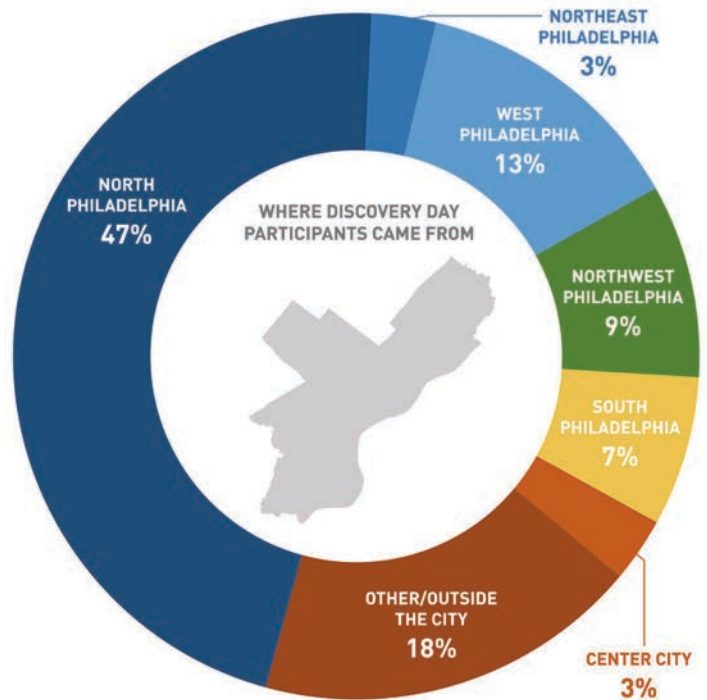
The largest event of the year was **Discovery Fest: A celebration of the 5th Anniversary of The Discovery Center**, which included ziplining, scavenger hunts, challenges on the James McLane Family Challenge Course, and Audubon’s freshwater mussel citizen science program. There were also tables and activities led by the Strawberry Mansion CDC/NAC, Philadelphia Water Department, Philadelphia Parking Authority, Philadelphia Zoo, Habitat for Humanity, Fair Amount Food Forest, Heritage Community Development Corporation, Smith Memorial Playground, Philly Goat Project, and the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia.

PEC HONORS THE CENTER

The 2023 “Special Places” award celebrates the unique history of The Discovery Center’s location at the Strawberry Mansion Reservoir and the collective efforts of the City of Philadelphia, Audubon Mid-Atlantic, the Philadelphia Outward Bound School, and the Strawberry Mansion community to create a space for Philadelphians to discover themselves in nature, practice leadership, and work toward a greener city for birds and people.

“The Discovery Center is a place that more Philadelphians should visit,” said Jennifer Torman, PEC’s Events and Administration Coordinator for the southeast region. “There’s nothing else like it in the city, and the programming that Audubon and Philadelphia Outward Bound School have jointly created is impressive.

Staff, neighborhood leaders, and Strawberry Mansion residents agree, and are proud of the fact that The Discovery Center grew organically from community needs and desires, and was driven by authentic community involvement more than anything else.



The Discovery Center was recognized as a “Special Place” by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council.



ALUMNI TEAM WINS GOLD AT INDEPENDENCE DRAGON BOAT REGATTA

The POBS Dragons were formed in 2022 to engage both POBS and other Outward Bound alumni who live in the Philadelphia area.

Spurred by POBS co-founder Nancy Goldenberg's passion for dragon boating, the team is also open to POBS staff and board members, and is coached by Outward Bound alum



Dave Kunz, who was a member of Team USA for the dragon boat world championship in China 2017.

No experience is required to join the team, whose

membership age range spans some fifty years. Several practices are held on the river each year before the big race day in June when the Independence Dragon Boat Regatta (IDBR) is held.

The Dragons won their first heat in 2022 but did not place in the finals. That changed the next year at the 2023 IDBR when the POBS Dragons came in first place in their division to take home the gold! For more info see pobs.org/alum.



NEW BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEMBERS ELECTED

Several Trustees rotated off the POBS Board over the course of the year. Bob Haas reached his term limit, finishing out his service as Board Chair. Omar Crowder, Jill Herriott, Scott McCallister, Dr. Leroy Nunery, Rachana Patel and Carrie Simons resigned. We are very grateful to each of them for their dedication, their wisdom and all of their contributions toward advancing POBS' mission. Special thanks to Bob Haas for his energetic and effective leadership, his devotion to the POBS crew, and, of course, his sparkling wit.

POBS was thrilled to welcome a new cohort of experienced and passionate trustees in 2023: Andrew Adams (School District of Philadelphia), Nyron Crawford, Ph.D. (Temple University), John D'Anna (Hirtle, Callaghan & Co.), Danielle Merritt, Ed.D. (School District of Philadelphia), Nancy Peterson (Allied Universal), Homer Robinson (Parkera), Bryan Tracy (Haverford Trust Company), and Thomas Young (World Trade Center of Greater Philadelphia). After completing his first two terms in 2022, POBS was also excited to welcome back Mitch Young (Neustar Inc.) to the board.

At the December meeting, the board unanimously voted to elect Matt Norcini (Springside Chestnut Hill Academy) as its new Board Chair.

NEW ED JOINED POBS BOARD EXPEDITION

Executive Director Justin Ennis joined POBS in August and a few weeks later accompanied six members of the POBS Board of Trustees on a 25-mile canoeing expedition down the Delaware Water Gap. He wrote:

With three staff leaders as our guides, each day was structured around activities and challenges designed to stretch our limits and strengthen our bonds as a team – the very same expectations we have for every student who steps foot on a POBS course.

As our individual team roles changed each day, the experience forced us to reconsider how we exist in a group setting and to accept how what we need and what we have to offer might differ greatly from our professional lives.

To learn from my board colleagues whose lives have been forever changed by Outward Bound and see how these seminal experiences continue to guide them through their daily challenges was a gift that has truly enriched my appreciation for the work we do.



Board members bonding Outward Bound style. From left to right: Greg Miraglia, Nancy Peterson, Allison Martin Nguyen, Nyron Crawford, Claire Robertson-Kraft, and Justin Ennis.

BUILDING ADVENTURE

115
RAPPELLERS

1,300
INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS

\$230,000
TOTAL RAISED

On October 20, 2023, POBS took to the air again with its signature peer-to-peer fundraiser, Building Adventure, with 115 participants rappelling down the 315-foot wall of Two Commerce Square in Center City Philadelphia. Rappellers ran the gamut from teenagers to senior citizens to 76ers mascot Franklin and the St. Joe's Hawk.

In total, participants raised over \$230,000 in support of the Philadelphia Outward Bound School's life-changing experiential education programs. POBS owes a huge thank you to our corporate sponsors (see below) and to the staff at Two Commerce Square/Brandywine Realty Trust for their incredible support. Last but not least, a big salute to all of the daredevils who faced down their fears and went over the edge!



WATCH THIS FOX29 *GOOD DAY PHILADELPHIA* SEGMENT ABOUT BUILDING ADVENTURE

<https://youtu.be/FRyM8s1xvVg>





Thank you to our 2023 sponsors!

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**ME
MARINERS**

“Don’t give up, because if you give up you’ll never know what’s on the other side.” - Jayden, 13



STUDENT STORY

MEET JAYDEN

In the summer of 2023, 13-year old Blaine Elementary School student Jayden B. embarked on a 10-day Outward Bound expedition with the GOAL (Get Out and Lead) program. GOAL is a merit scholarship course that is specifically designed for rising 8th grade students and includes backpacking, canoeing, and rock climbing in the Delaware Water Gap.

The opportunity to participate is awarded to Philadelphia area youth who are excited to challenge themselves and discover their leadership potential. On course, students eat, sleep, and work together to have a successful expedition and an unforgettable experience.

Participants take on leadership roles and work in teams to complete the necessary tasks while out on course. They learn to cook, communicate effectively, and support each other while navigating unique challenges.



Jayden taking his turn as crew leader.

“I came out to experience nature,” said Jayden during the course. “There is more to the world than Philly and cell phones, there is actually a whole outdoor world that we never see.”

A 10-day expedition in the wilderness can seem daunting for students, many of whom have not experienced anything like that before.

“It’s really challenging,” said Jayden. “The backpacking was kinda hard, but you get used to the weight on your shoulders. It’s really cool though - the view is the best highlight.”

Course instructor Jennifer Raymond noted that “initially, Jayden struggled with homesickness,”



and added that homesickness is typical for students on course, especially middle school-aged students who may be away from home without their families for the first time. However, with the support of his peers and instructors, Jayden was able to adjust and feel comfortable away from home and enjoy the activities and new skills.

“It really taught me how to speak up, and how to lead a whole team,” he said.

When the course was coming to an end, Jayden was conflicted; he was ready to go home, but he also did not want the course to be over.

“You get used to the weight on your shoulders.”

Since returning, Jayden’s father has shared that “he is like a different kid.” He explained that his son’s time on course has had a profound impact on his self-reliance - he has been waking up early in the morning and been proactive about his responsibilities.

Jayden acknowledged his homesickness and other challenges faced on course, but said “you have to push through. Don’t give up, because if you give up you’ll never know what’s on the other side.”



Jayden and fellow crew members shared quite a few laughs on the trip.

Thank you 2023 Donors!

Multi-Year Grants

Our work in 2023 was supported by multi-year grants, received in prior years, from the following institutions:

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The John Templeton Foundation

William Penn Foundation

\$50,000+

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MEASURING IMPACT

We gather course impact data using the **Outward Bound Outcomes Survey (OBOS)**, which measures self-reported change in key social and emotional skills at the end of an Outward Bound program. Participants complete the survey after their course and reflect on their skills when they started the course compared to after the course in what is called a “retro-pre and post survey.”

The survey is designed and validated by the Partnerships for Education and Resilience (PEAR) and measures 12 key indicators of social and emotional development for young people ages 10-23.



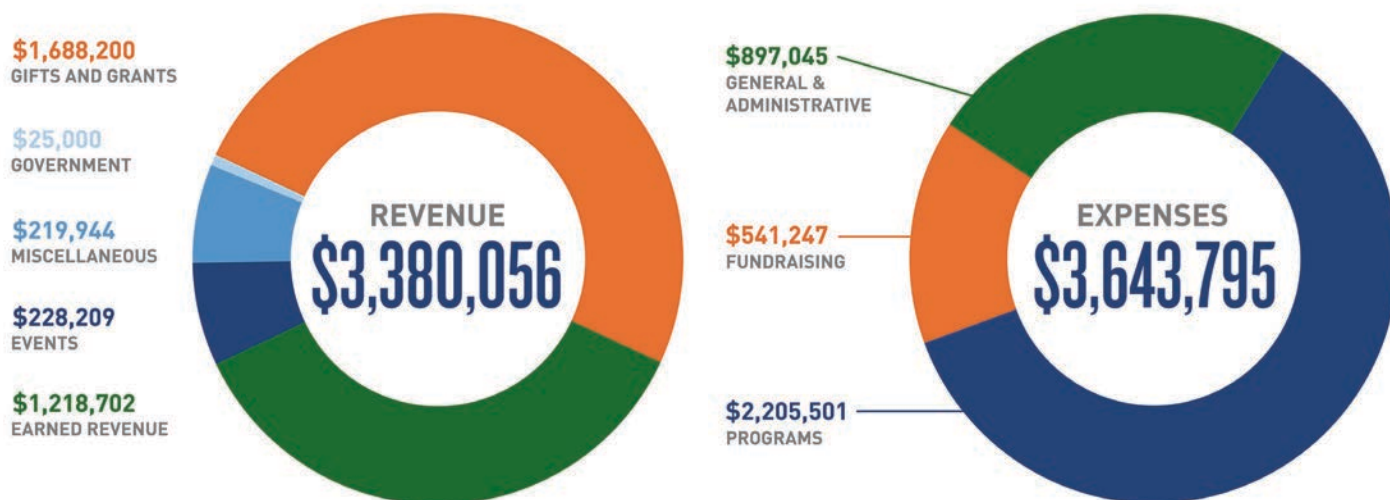
In a survey of 623 POBS students ages 12+ who went on a 5-day or longer expedition in 2021-2023, **82% of students said their POBS experience helped them gain courage to face challenges.**



In a survey of 610 POBS students ages 12-17 who went on a 5-day or longer expedition in 2021-2023, **75% of students reported their experience has helped them work more effectively in group settings.**

This list represents donors giving \$250 or above. We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please contact us at (603) 496-8362 with questions.

2023 Financial Snapshot



Audited statements not available at time of printing. Please email info@pobs.org for a copy of our 2023 audit.

STUDENTS PERFORM SERVICE ON COURSE

A commitment to service is a fundamental pillar of the Outward Bound philosophy. After working with the New York New Jersey Trail Conference (NYNJTC), POBS was able to organize in-field service opportunities for students on youth-leadership expeditions. In 2023, six expedition crews participated in a full day of trail-work in the Delaware Water Gap. NYNJTC staff graciously provided their tools and expertise, and facilitated trail maintenance workshops for the students. We plan to continue this work in 2024 and beyond.



MARTIN GUITAR STAFF ENJOY AN URBAN EXPEDITION WITH OB PRO

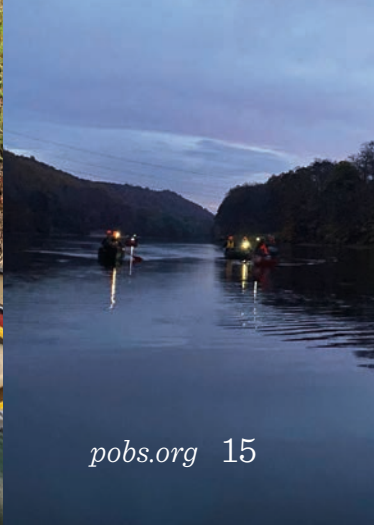


Twelve participants from Martin Guitar’s Nazareth and Navojoa factories spent three days navigating the streets of Philadelphia on an urban expedition - the latest in a long-running series of team-building adventures with POBS’ professional arm, OB Pro.

Chris Martin has long believed in the transformational power of Outward Bound, having experienced it himself as a young man. For the past 25 years, Martin has encouraged staff members from all levels of the organization to participate in courses with OB Pro to work through challenges, build leadership skills, and cohere as a team. “It grows confidence in staff by giving them a chance to lead, which they can use in their careers,” he said.

Highlights of 2023’s course included hiking in Wissahickon Park, sleeping on the observation deck at the Discovery Center, touring Eastern State Penitentiary, and running up the Art Museum Steps.

SOME OF OUR FAVORITE PHOTOS FROM 2023



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Director Education and Partnerships

Ramya Gopalakrishnan
Staffing Manager

Dan K. Hoffman
Communications Specialist

Qiad Jones
Student Services Manager

Kendra Jordan
Associate Director of Logistics and Operations

Kadafi El-Kardah
Associate Director Community Engagement

Red Malleck
Logistic Coordinator

Katie Nelson
Director Program and Safety

Mary Okeke
Donor Relations Manager

Jenn Raymond
Scholarship and Recruitment Manager

Chris Richter
Director Marketing Communications

Lauren Stables
Director Program and Training

FACULTY INSTRUCTORS

Opal Bednarik
Sarah Carminati
Sacha Donovan
Sheetal Shelke

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

Rob Bonner
Ritam Chakraborty
Richard Chieffo
Olive Fine
Braham Gairola
Jeff Ladnier

* As of 12/31/23