

Nonprofit Offers Year Of College Courses, Job Training For Young People In South Florida

By [JESSICA BAKEMAN](#) · 23 HOURS AGO

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About 80 students are taking college courses, receiving workforce training and preparing for paid internships in the 16th local class of the nonprofit program Year Up.

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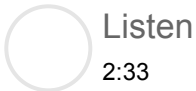
Ada Reyes studied graphic design in her home country of Venezuela, but she had to leave her university because she couldn't afford to continue. Later, she moved to Doral.

"Personally, I never thought I was going to be able to study again," Reyes said.

Now, she's enrolled in courses at Miami Dade College. Because she's not a U.S. citizen, she doesn't qualify for federal financial aid. But her tuition is covered.

Reyes is in the 16th local class of a workforce training program called Year Up. During the first six months of the yearlong program, students in their late teens and early 20s take courses in business and IT at MDC. Many receive federal Pell grants. If not, the nonprofit pays their expenses.

"I found in Year Up that support that I didn't have," Reyes said.

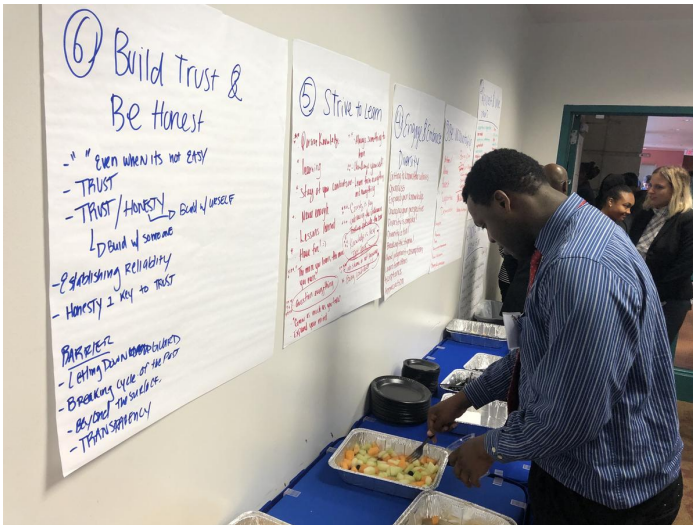


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Students also participate in professional development trainings, where they learn "soft skills" for jobs like giving and receiving feedback, dressing professionally and being on time.



Signs list the values and skills students are learning at a recent orientation for the newest class of Year Up.

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During the second half of the year, students complete paid internships at corporations like American Express and HBO Latin America. Corporate sponsors fund the program, which started 20 years ago in Boston and has been operating in South Florida since 2012. More than 400 students have graduated locally since the program's launch here.

About 37 percent of the local program's last four classes of graduates converted their internships into full-time jobs. The nonprofit's goal is 45 percent.

"If they are not converted, now their résumé looks a lot better, right?" said Leopoldo

Coronado, executive director of Year Up South Florida. "You have 20 to 24 college credits, you have six months job experience with a Fortune 500 company. So it's not that difficult for them to find a nice, real job."

The newest class of about 80 students participated in a four-day orientation last week. At the conclusion, they chanted the name they chose for their group: sharks in suits.

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