## **The Cahn Fellows Program**

**Our Mission**

The Cahn Fellows Program seeks to improve large urban public school systems nationally by providing distinguished school leaders with advanced professional development and recognition. Our program is designed to increase leadership skills, retention in education and student outcomes.

**Our History**

The Cahn Fellows Program was founded in 2002 as a result of the vision and generosity of Charles & Jane Cahn. The Cahns wanted to do something to recognize excellence in education with the belief that, in recognizing and supporting excellence, we can help an entire system to rise. The Cahn Fellows Program inducted its first cohort of Cahn Fellows into the program in 2003. It is a program that has been specifically designed to support the growth of exemplary school leaders. The Program enables Fellows to become even more effective principals while leveraging their talents to support aspiring school leaders as they choose an Ally who learns alongside them in the yearlong process of growth.

**Our Core Beliefs**

1. School leadership has an enormous impact on student outcomes.

2. The greatest leverage is with high-performing principals.

3. Our investment in principals and aspiring leaders increases retention and leadership pipelines.

**Our Theory of Action**

If the program-

* engages principals in a collaborative network of peers
* increases their ability to build capacity
* improves teacher effectiveness and school culture

then we will both extend the retention of the strongest principals in schools and school systems and develop a pool of future leaders, ultimately elevating student learning and achievement.

**THE CAHN FELLOWS PROGRAM**

Overview of the Organization: The Cahn Fellows Program is a program at Columbia University’s Teachers College (TC) a graduate school of Education, Health and Psychology. As the nation’s first and largest graduate school of education, TC is globally recognized as the birthplace of new ideas, practices and fields of inquiry in education, psychology and health. TC served over 5,500 Masters and Doctoral level students in 2017-2018 and has over 90,000 alumni worldwide.

**Project Description**

We seek to improve large urban public school systems nationally by providing distinguished school leaders with advanced professional development and recognition. Our program is designed to increase leadership skills, retention in education and student outcomes.

The Cahn Fellows Program is based in New York City and serves educational leaders from New York City, Chicago, Dallas, San Antonio, Atlanta, Denver, Tampa and Miami.

Our purpose is to improve the retention and skills of high performing principals. ***Research shows that distinguished principals who remain in their schools consistently deliver outstanding student outcomes.***

**Problem:** High-performing principals, who create the best schools, receive little effective professional development, recognition, or collegial peer engagement. This results in our cities’ most valuable public education leaders often losing their passion and, too often, prematurely departing from their districts. We need to retain our quality principals *and* build a pipeline of future leaders.

If the program engages principals in a collaborative network of peers and increases their ability to build capacity, improve teacher effectiveness and school culture, then we will both extend the retention of the strongest principals in schools and school systems and develop a pool of future leaders, ultimately elevating student learning and achievement.

**Populations Served: By July of 2019 we will serve** **high performing principals in large urban school districts** in New York City, Denver, Dallas, Chicago, Tampa, Atlanta, Miami and San Antonio. Future expansion efforts being considered include additional East Coast cities and a West Coast program. Each principal selects an **aspiring leader** (Cahn Ally) in their school to join them in our program. We have 64 participants (32 fellows and 32 allies) in our program this fiscal year and expect to expand to 102 in FY 19-20.

Since 2003, we have delivered our program to high performing principals in New York City. In recent years, we have added participation from principals and aspiring leaders in Chicago, Dallas, San Antonio, Denver, Atlanta, Tampa and Miami.  **We expanded our program in order to provide participants with nationwide networking, intercity school visitations and the opportunity to gain perspectives from other school districts in solving challenging issues.**

**Core Program Components and Timeline: The Cahn Fellows Core and Responsive curricula are designed to build leadership skills with instruction in Adult Development, Action Inquiry and current educational topics. Each Fellow/Ally team is assigned an Alumni Advisor who acts as mentor and coach through the research, report writing and project delivery phases. Opportunities for networking with principals and Alumni Advisors across the country creates a career-long opportunity for support and mentorship.**

**The yearlong** intensive schedule of advanced training for leaders begins in **July 2019** and ends with a project presentation in **July 2020**. Throughout the year we provide a sequence of study that challenges our leaders to grow professionally and personally and learn to build capacity. **Our schedule includes:**

* A two-week intensive **Summer Leadership Institute** that introduces principals to our core leadership curriculum begins at Gettysburg and continues with research-based curricula from Teachers College faculty,leadership experts and Cahn Alumni Advisors on adult development, data inquiry, adaptive leadership, design thinking, neuroscience, effective communication, and organizational change. **(July 2019)**
* A **Fall Retreat** that continues to offer advanced professional development delivered by Teachers College faculty and expert speakers on topics such as emotional leadership, ethics, implicit bias and leading in a crisis. During this week-end Fellows and Allies work on developing their project question with support from our Alumni Advisors. **(November 2019)**
* **Four study sessions** throughout the year delivered in Denver, Chicago and New York City that offer a deeper dive into problems of practice and systems change theory. These trips also provide an opportunity for intercity school visitations, to continue work on projects with alumni advisors and additional content delivery. **(October, January, March, May)**
* TC Faculty and Cahn Alumni Advisors team with and support the development and implementation of a **yearlong Cahn Project** in which Fellows and their Ally (aspiring leader) identify a problem of practice at their school. These teams work in close partnership using an **Action Inquiry Cycle** to set goals and develop action steps during each of the study sessions and weekend retreat culminating in a presentation of project outcomes and future goals at our **final conference** in **July 2020**.

**Key Program Staff**

**Lisa A. Sahulka - National Director, TC, Columbia University.** Ms Sahulka joins the Cahn Fellows after a role as COO at The Southern Poverty Law Center. Ms. Sahulka served as CFO for the Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) of Pinellas County, FL. She is a career-long proponent of administrative effectiveness in mission-driven enterprises. During more than 15 years with JWB, she developed infrastructure and processes supporting some 60 external programs serving thousands of children each year. Prior to moving to Florida, she served in positions with CARE, Covenant House, and the Jacob Riis Settlement House. She also served as an adjunct professor at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, FL and served abroad at Casa Alianza in Antigua, Guatemala, and the International English Schools in London. She earned her Masters in Public Administration from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs.

**Barbara McKeon - Program Director, TC, Columbia University.** Dr. McKeon’s career has focused on serving the needs of the most vulnerable populations. She has earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Anthropology from Rutgers University, Masters in Communication Disorders from the University of Vermont, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy from Seton Hall University. She has written and been featured in numerous articles and has spoken extensively both nationally and internationally on topics in education including improving school culture, school turn-around, aspiring leadership, building relational trust and integrating restorative practices. Dr. McKeon developed language intensive programs for various public middle and high schools and has conducted numerous workshops on the developing adolescent. Dr. McKeon has served on several Mayoral and community committees focusing on improving school culture, designing community schools and supporting the educational needs of at-risk and incarcerated youth. Her interests are in equity, transitions that impact students and social-emotional learning. She has held adjunct professorships at Pace, Brooklyn College and the University of Vermont and is a Cahn Fellow. She has been instrumental in developing curriculum for the Cahn Fellow expansion.

**Eleanor Drago Severson - Professor of Education, TC, Columbia University.** Dr. Drago Severson’s research and teaching passions include school leadership, qualitative research methods, and supporting adult development in K-12 schools, ABE/ESOL programs and higher education contexts. She is author of two recent books: Becoming Adult Learners: Principles And Practices For Effective Development (Teachers College Press, 2004) and Helping Teachers Learn: Principal Leadership For Adult Growth And Development (Corwin Press, 2004). Helping Teachers Learn was awarded the Outstanding Staff Development Book of the Year for 2004 by the National Staff Development Council.

**Carolyn Riehl - Associate Professor, Sociology & Education Policy, TC, Columbia University.** Dr. Riehl's research reflects a broad concern for how schools can be organized and administered so that they are lively, humane, equitable, and productive settings for learning and accomplishment for both teachers and students, especially students who traditionally have been poorly served by schooling. She situates her scholarship at the juncture between sociology of education and organizational and administrative studies, the fields in which she pursued graduate training. Her work tries to build bridges across these disciplines and to generate unifying approaches to the problems of knowledge and practice that they raise. She utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods in her empirical work. Her research has clustered around three general themes: studies of school organization; studies of the practice of school administration and leadership; and scholarship on research. An additional theme focusing on issues of diversity and equity stretches across all three clusters.

**Jeffrey Young - Professor of Practice in Education Leadership, TC, Columbia University.** Before joining the faculty at TC, Dr. Young served as Superintendent of Schools in Cambridge, MA 2009-2016, following terms as Superintendent in Newton, Lexington and Lynnfield, MA. Dr. Young was a member of the Adjunct Faculty at the Boston University School of Education. Among his distinctions, he has been recognized by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents with the President’s Award; Brandeis University with the Levitan Award for Leadership; and the Cambridge NAACP with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award.