

A LOOK AT NFTE'S START IT UP! POSTSECONDARY PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2023, NFTE's Research Team initiated an exploratory study of its Start It Up! program, a suite of curriculum and enhanced services that help postsecondary education and workforce development organizations deliver engaging entrepreneurship education and effective skill-building programming. This study was designed to better understand how postsecondary and other partners are implementing the curriculum, who it serves, and what benefits and barriers there are to the programs. Questions the study sought to answer include:

- What are the types of organizations that use Start It Up!?
- What are the characteristics of students participating in the program?
- What is the perceived value of the program to the implementing organization?
- What is the perceived value of the program to participating students?



WHAT IS THE START IT UP! PROGRAM?

A digital curriculum housed on the Canvas Learning Management System platform, the Start it Up! course is designed to help students develop an entrepreneurial mindset, learn about key business concepts such as marketing a business, promotional channels, and financing a startup, as they use their own business ideas to create a valid business opportunity.

METHODS

A mixed-methods study was conducted in the spring of 2023. Seven in-depth interviews with partner organization staff implementing the Start It Up! curriculum were executed from March-April 2023, and a student survey was administered in April 2023. Descriptive statistics were run for the student survey. Interviews were transcribed and coded using an inductive approach to generate overall themes across the qualitative data.

**FIND MORE ABOUT
START IT UP!**

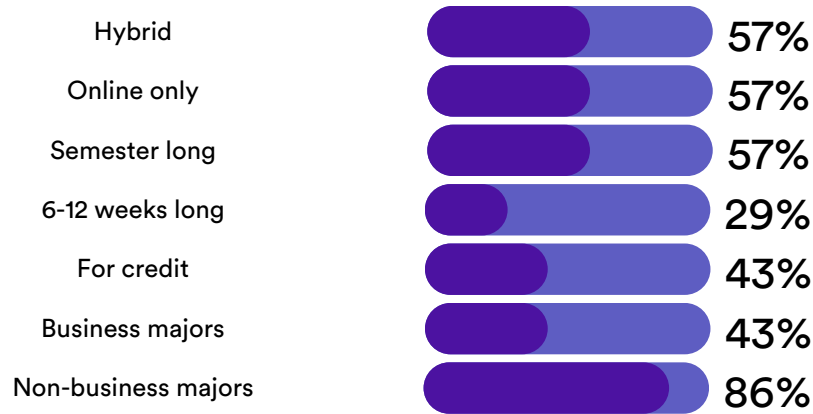
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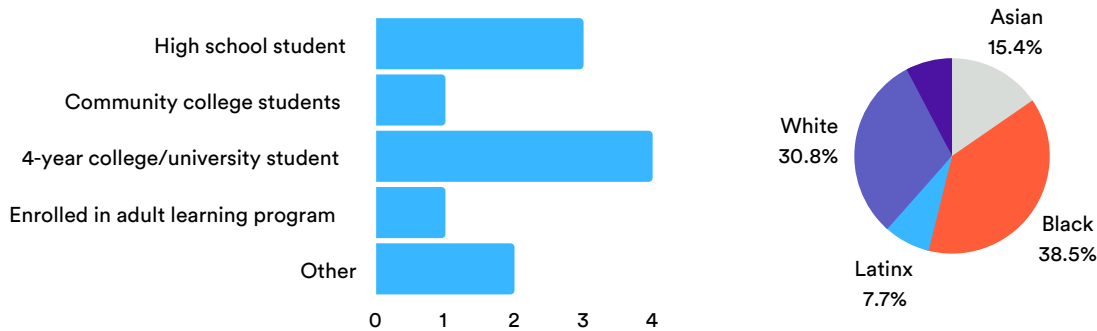
FINDINGS

1 START IT UP! SERVES DIVERSE AUDIENCES AND IMPLEMENTATIONS

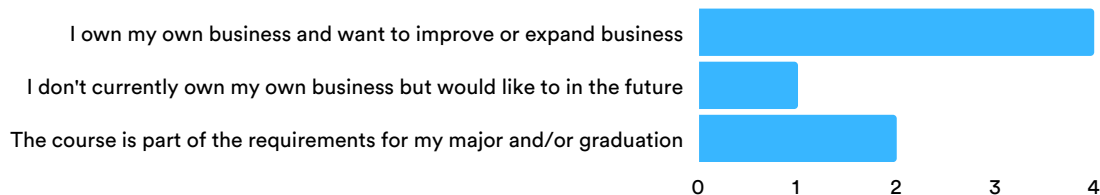
Start It Up! has been used with organizations ranging from workforce development organizations to high schools to community colleges to four-year universities. It has been used successfully in hybrid and online settings with varying implementation timelines and with different course types.



Student characteristics varied widely as well. Survey results (N=11) indicated that 36% of respondents were four-year university students while 27% were high school students and Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino were the racial categories that were most represented (46% and 36%, respectively). All respondents were between 16 and 23, with 20 and 22 years old being the most common age.



Almost half of the respondents (46%) reported being self-employed at the time of the survey, with most of the employment being part-time (60%). Survey data indicated that half of the respondents were motivated to enroll in Start It Up! because they own their own business and wanted to improve or expand that business.



2 PARTNERS CITE START IT UP!'S FLEXIBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY AS KEY STRENGTHS

Implementing organizations cited the flexibility to pick and choose relevant resources among Start It Up!'s comprehensive package of tools and resources as one of the greatest strengths of the curriculum. In fact, the theme of flexibility was the most frequently referenced, emerging 23 times across the various interviews. It is also accessible to students of lower literacy and numeracy levels.



Partners explained:



"I like NFTE because it's flexible; it allows me to scale it up, scale it down. It's written at the right language for my students in Las Vegas. And ... it's not something where it's so rigid. ... I can adapt to make changes to it. ... I can pick and choose what I want people to use. ... It's a palette of information."

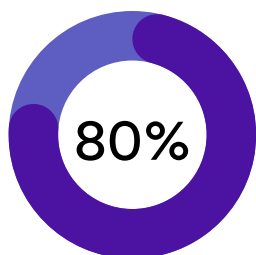
—College of Southern Nevada

"And the thing that I liked the most about the platform was because you guys have the information already embedded there. So if I want them to look at a particular video, it's there. If I want them to go to a site to find additional resources, like a purchase order system, it's there. And you guys are constantly building those things out." —YWCA

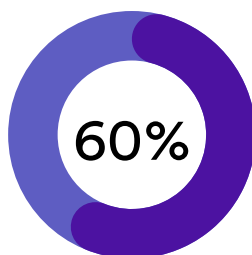


3 STUDENTS REPORTED HIGH LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH THE PROGRAM

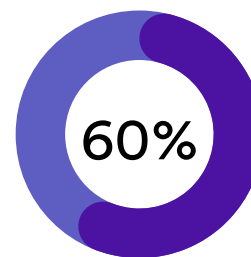
Of students surveyed, 70% reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with the program. Specifically, students cited the top three benefits of the course as:



Learned foundational knowledge about entrepreneurship



Connected with peers that were like-minded



Increased motivation to start or expand own business

Implementing partners noted the impact of the program on their students:

"I have had some students say that it really has been eye-opening for them to see what it takes to start a business."

—Polk State College

"I was lucky enough to get an intro to business, as well as this entrepreneurial class. And they loved it, and they sucked it up. So they asked for it again in the winter semester. And now they're asking for it again in the summer."

—Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology

CONCLUSION

Partners and students expressed positive experiences with the Start It Up! curriculum and its associated resources. What was impressive was the breadth of implementation styles and audiences the curriculum was able to accommodate. From high school students seeking college-level material to adult learners with low literacy and numeracy skills to 4-year university business majors looking to complete the capstone for their degree, Start It Up! was able to address diverse student needs and motivations. Partners appreciated Start It Up! being a one-stop shop for many useful resources while also being flexible enough to personalize and pick and choose depending on the priorities of the program.

Contact getstarted@nfte.com for a full version of the report or if you wish to adopt Start It Up!