



# SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY BRAVEN CAREER ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

*San José State University has teamed with Braven, a national nonprofit, in an innovative collaboration to reimagine how to help students persist through college and enter the workforce strong. Their career accelerator experience creates partnerships between the local business community and educational institutions. Their goal is to support underrepresented students in graduating from college, to secure a strong first job or enter a graduate program.*

The problem they're solving is clear: Each year, 1.2 million college enrollees will be first-generation college students or come from low-income backgrounds. Only 25 percent of these students will go on to secure a high-quality job within 12 months of graduation. This discouraging trend is playing out for too many San José State University students, so the university and Braven have partnered to ensure all students maximize their talent and potential.

A national nonprofit, Braven's mission is to empower promising, underrepresented young people—first-generation college students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color—with the skills, confidence, experiences and networks necessary to graduate and transition from college to strong first jobs, which lead to meaningful careers and lives of impact.

Within the SJSU-Braven partnership, Braven offers a two-part experience that targets sophomores or first-semester transfer students; participants become Braven Fellows.

The Braven course is a hybrid online and in person, career-acceleration experience that students take for credit. Fellows complete weekly online modules and assignments to build skills in five professional competencies: operating and managing, problem-solving, working in teams, networking and communicating, and self-driven leading. Volunteer professionals from local companies, called leadership coaches, facilitate the in-person time for five to eight fellows, sharing real-world application and feedback.

Fellows also participate in three special events throughout the one-semester course: a culture- and confidence-building event focused on storytelling; a design-thinking challenge focused on workplace skills and experiences; and a celebration acknowledging their hard work, growth and success. Through the process, fellows develop important professional competencies, form rich relationships with their cohorts and leadership coaches, and express deeper commitment to the university.

## MILESTONES

- Feb 2015**
  - Founding committee convenes to bring Braven to SJSU.
- Aug 2015**
  - First semester of Braven course launches with 60 students
- Jan 2016**
  - Second semester of the Braven course launches with 35 students.
- June 2016**
  - First cohort of SJSU Braven Fellows graduate; 74 percent secure a strong first job within 12 months of graduation.
- Aug 2016**
  - Third semester of the Braven course launches with 90 students; cohorts begin meeting at the Google and Facebook campuses in addition to SJSU.
  - Braven campus club formed by fellows who have completed the course.
- Jan 2017**
  - Fourth semester of the Braven course launches with 105 students.

## MILESTONES

After completing the course, fellows in the post-accelerator program receive additional lighter-touch opportunities to develop leadership and career-readiness skills, engage in an enduring professional network, and stay on track to securing solid internships and jobs. Opportunities include one-on-one, industry-specific mentoring; networking events and skills sessions run by a campus club and led by the fellows; and job connections, shadow days, and site visits to local employer partners.

## QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

From the outset, the program has shown steady increase in participation:

The Braven Accelerator course launched at SJSU with 61 students during fall 2015.

By spring 2018, about 250 fellows complete the accelerator course per year.

The goal is to serve at least 500 students per year by 2020.

Program leadership predicted that 90 percent of the fellows would persist toward graduation, and to date, 96 percent of course completers are still persisting toward college graduation.

Program leadership predicted that 56 percent of Braven bachelor's degree earners would secure a quality outcome within six months of graduating and that 55 percent of fellows still enrolled in college would secure a high quality internship. To date, 76 percent secured at least one high quality internship, and 85 percent of graduates secured a strong first job within 12 months.

## OPPORTUNITIES

SJSU is considering launching a new leadership minor, and the Braven course may serve as the foundational experience for students in that academic program. This would enable Braven and SJSU to increase the number of students who have access to this experience. The program's goal is to serve at least 500 students per year by 2020.

## IMPACT AND BENEFITS

Together, Braven and SJSU are increasing student success. To date, 96 percent of all Braven participants at SJSU are persisting toward college graduation.

Braven is also increasing early career success. As of September 2017, 63 percent of non-graduated fellows completed a career-aligned internship or opportunity within the past year. An additional 13 percent spent the summer focusing on academics (taking classes or study abroad). Lastly, 85 percent of the first cohort of college graduates participating in the program secured a strong job within 12 months of graduation (36 points higher than the average for all college graduates nationally after 12 months of graduation).

Feb  
2017

- LinkedIn and Teach For America become official employer partners.

June  
2017

- Second cohort of SJSU Braven Fellows graduate; at this point, 80 percent of Braven graduates have communicated with the university, and 65 percent of them have secured a strong first job within three months of graduation.

Aug  
2017

- Fifth semester of the Braven course launches with 127 students, the largest cohort to date.

Nov  
2017

- Eighty percent of Braven Fellow graduates have secured a strong job within six months of graduation.

## QUALITY AND COST

The Braven Accelerator at SJSU is a high-quality, low-cost model.

In addition to the outcomes above, many metrics are tracked to ensure high quality teaching and learning is occurring. Eighty-two percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that Braven was one of the most valuable personal or professional development experiences they've ever had.

The Braven course is a hybrid learning experience; it is facilitated both online and in person, which reduces facilitation costs:

- Fellows complete weekly self-paced online modules, allowing thousands of students to internalize the leadership and career content simultaneously.
- Volunteer professionals from local companies, called leadership coaches, facilitate the weekly in-person time leading a team of five to eight students through the semester course. They do so both as a way to give back to others and as a way to build their own leadership and management skills.

## LESSONS LEARNED

In addition to common career skills—such as working in teams, problem-solving, operating and managing—it is important to also ensure students understand their leadership capabilities and believe in themselves and the value they can add to the workplace.

1

Course credit is critical: It allows students the time and space they need to devote to career preparation.

2

Coach-led cohorts of five to eight fellows allow for intimate community building. We can convince professionals to volunteer 60-plus hours per semester to lead cohorts of young people interested in their career path partly because of the immense impact.

3

Nonprofits and colleges can work effectively together to divide work and effectively increase student success while reducing costs.