

BOLD FUTURES ACADEMY · EIN 33-3751028

IMPACT REPORT · FOUNDED MARCH 2025

YEAR ONE. EVERY NUMBER. ONE AIM.

A complete record of what Bold Futures Academy has built, who we have served, and where we are going next. Written for the board, funders, and partners who help us move.

PREPARED FOR

THE BOARD, FUNDERS, AND PARTNERS OF BFA

PREPARED BY

VANESSA RUTH GAY · FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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SECTION 01 · START HERE

01

What Bold Futures Academy is.

Who we serve, what we run, and how to read the numbers in the rest of this report.

What Bold Futures Academy is.

Bold Futures Academy helps young people understand themselves, build the capabilities every path requires, and learn from real experience, so they can navigate what comes next with clarity and readiness. College, a trade, a job, or a business of their own. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Rockland, Massachusetts, established in March 2025 and built on mentorship work that started before the organization existed.

The word we use for what we teach is readiness, and we mean more by it than most people do. Not only work readiness. Readiness to go to college and know why you chose it. Readiness to go to vocational school. Readiness for whatever comes after high school when it is not college at all. And readiness after that too, because the hardest transition most young people face is the one out of college or a training program and into a working life nobody prepared them for. Four things sit underneath all of it: understand yourself, build readiness, explore what is possible, and turn experience into opportunity.

Those four are not steps a student finishes in order. The real shape is a loop: learn something about yourself, meet something outside yourself, try it, get feedback, think about what it meant, revise what you believed, and go again. Everything we run is built to turn that loop a few more times before the stakes get high.

The work began with college students. Our founder was volunteering with UConn's Werth Institute and kept meeting the same two people. One was the twenty year old encountering entrepreneurship for the first time, years after the point where it would have changed what she chose to study. The other was the senior a few months from graduating who could not say in plain words what she was good at. The gap was not talent and it was not ambition. They had reached consequential decisions and unfamiliar rooms without enough self-understanding, practice, feedback, relationships, or real experience to draw on. Bold Futures Academy does that work, and does it earlier.

WHO WE SERVE

High school students in grades 10 to 12, through LaunchLab. College students anywhere, through our college programming and the Ignite mentorship pipeline. And young people from middle school upward through the Readiness Workshop Series, delivered as a multi-session series inside a partner's existing programming. Programs are free to students. Partner organizations pay. Section 02 covers all three lines in detail.

How to read the numbers in here.

We are a small organization doing depth over scale work in a sector that mostly does the opposite. That shows up in the numbers, and we would rather explain it once than dress it up. Our first LaunchLab cohort had six students in it. Our fielded surveys are small, and we report them at their real size. Where we describe what changed for students, we are reporting early evidence, participant-reported change, and what facilitators observed. Those are directional signals, not proof that we caused a long-term change in anyone's trajectory. We have not been here long enough for that, and Section 10 explains what we are building so that we can eventually know. We are equally careful about the words we use for our own work: something we built, something we delivered alongside a partner, something we are testing, something we have planned, and something we hope to do in ten years are five different claims, and we keep them separate throughout.

One number needs a note, and it is the same fact seen two ways. More than seventy young people have been reached by this work in total, and a little more than fifty of them since Bold Futures Academy was founded. The rest were reached before the organization existed, through our founder's mentorship and workshops at UConn. When you see the seventy on the next spread and the fifty beside it, they are not two competing counts. Seventy is the whole body of work. Fifty is what the organization itself has delivered. Both are labeled everywhere they appear, because a reader deserves to know which is which.

We also report the ones that do not flatter us. The Hartford workshop in Section 06 is the clearest example. Eight scholars completed reflection surveys, average confidence in describing themselves rose from 3.5 to 4.1 out of five, and four of the eight moved. Two were already at the ceiling. Two did not move at all, and both wrote down why. That second pair is why the Hartford section ends with a design change rather than a victory lap.

WHAT IS IN THIS REPORT

Sections 02 and 03 cover what we run and the problem it answers. Sections 04 through 08 are the evidence: the record so far, the LaunchLab cohort in full, the Hartford data line by line, what our summer interns got out of real work, and what students say in their own words. Section 09 is what we heard when we listened to college students. Section 10 is how we measure whether this works, today and over the next decade. Section 11 is the money and Section 12 is the board and team. Section 13 is the rest of this year, 2027, and the decade ahead. The year-by-year roadmap lives in the Strategic Plan rather than in here.

A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER

We do not round these numbers up. Reporting honestly is how we earn the right to claim depth.

RUTH GAY · FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SECTION 02 · WHAT WE DO

02

What we actually do.

LaunchLab, college programming, and the Readiness Workshop Series. Who each one serves, how a student gets in, and who pays for it.

Three program lines, one aim.

Three lines, three populations, three moments. All three do the same underlying work: help a young person understand themselves, practice what every path requires, and learn from real experience. What changes is the path the student is walking toward and how much time we get with them.

Two of these we run ourselves, alongside a third in-house line that is not a public product: our summer internship, where a small group takes real responsibility for real organizational work. The Readiness Workshop Series is different by design. It is delivered inside somebody else's programming, with a partner who already has the young people and the calendar.

01 · LaunchLab

High school, grades 10 to 12 · Six weeks · BFA flagship. Our entrepreneurship pathway. A six week virtual program in which every student builds a venture from scratch and pitches it at Demo Day. Students earn the title Venture Fellow and leave with a working business plan, a tested prototype, and a pitch they have delivered live to mentor panelists. Spring 2026 was the inaugural cohort. Fall 2026 runs September 12 through October 17 on the theme Entrepreneurship in the Age of AI: The Human Advantage. When a partner wants substantive entrepreneurship education for their students, this is the program we point them to.

02 · College programming, including Ignite

College students anywhere · Mentorship and workshops. Ignite is our college line, built out of continuous mentorship at UConn's Werth Institute for Entrepreneurship that began before the organization did. It is open to college students anywhere, not only students at partner campuses. The work is one to one mentorship and workshop delivery focused on the transition into work: communication, self-advocacy, professional judgment, and structured reflection on internships and first jobs. It is the source of our earliest documented outcomes. Hartford Youth Scholars has agreed to refer eligible students into it. Our mentorship has been anchored largely through UConn, and one of our stated goals for 2027 is to widen where mentors come from so the line does not depend on a single institution.

03 · The Readiness Workshop Series

Middle school upward · A multi-session series · Virtual or onsite. A multi-session experiential series delivered inside a partner's existing programming, on the human capabilities young people are expected to already have and are rarely taught. Partners engage us to own a readiness strand across multiple sessions rather than to fill a slot on a calendar. This is our newest line by name and our oldest by practice: workshop delivery started before LaunchLab and before the organization. We named the Series in August 2026 and rebuilt it around six capabilities in September 2026. Section 06 tells that story.

Inside the Readiness Workshop Series.

Six capabilities in one developmental arc. They are the architecture of every series, not six workshops a partner picks from.

CAPABILITY	THE QUESTION PARTICIPANTS ANSWER	WHAT THEY PRACTICE
01 · Know Yourself	<i>How do I understand myself well enough to make better choices and work well with others?</i>	Strengths, values, identity, working style, patterns, decision-making, and how they tend to show up with other people.
02 · Speak Up	<i>How do I communicate clearly when something is at stake?</i>	Communication, listening, self-advocacy, asking for help, giving and receiving feedback, difficult conversations, disagreement, boundaries, basic negotiation.
03 · How Teams Work	<i>How do I contribute when success depends on other people too?</i>	Teamwork, collaboration, leadership, trust, accountability, role clarity, group decision-making.
04 · Get It Done	<i>How do I keep moving when the work is hard, unclear, boring, or changing?</i>	Motivation, initiative, adaptability, resilience, ownership, priorities, follow-through, navigating ambiguity.
05 · Your Money, Your Choices	<i>How do I make better money decisions as my responsibilities grow?</i>	Tradeoffs, spending, saving, banking, a first paycheck, credit, taxes, benefits, longer-term planning.
06 · Navigate Opportunities	<i>How do I recognize, evaluate, and act on an opportunity?</i>	Recognizing an opportunity, evaluating fit, comparing tradeoffs, identifying missing information, asking good questions, taking a next step.

The internal sequence runs self, to people, to work, to money, to opportunity. A partner can weight a series toward the capabilities their young people need most, and the scenarios are always drawn from the situations those participants are actually navigating. What a partner cannot do is order a single session off a list, because one session opens a door and does not finish the job.

How a series actually runs.

Each series unfolds across multiple sessions of sixty to ninety minutes, built around a coherent developmental arc rather than a set of unrelated topics. Sessions are experiential. Participants work through simulations, scenarios, role-play, case studies, team challenges, and live practice, get feedback, and try the thing again. We do not just teach a subject. We put students inside it.

ADAPTED TO AGE AND CONTEXT

The capability stays stable and the developmental context changes. Speak Up for a middle schooler is asking a teacher for help, a conflict with a friend, a disagreement in a group project, and holding a boundary. For a high schooler it is accountability on a team, a schedule conflict at work, receiving criticism, and advocating for an opportunity. For a college student or emerging adult it is a conversation with a manager, unclear performance feedback, negotiating expectations, and navigating a power difference. Each series is adapted to the age, setting, and real situations participants are navigating.

THE STRONGEST USE CASE: YOUTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

An employer, nonprofit, municipality, or university already running a high school or college internship program owns the meaningful work, the projects, the supervision, the managers, and the industry learning. We own the professional development layer around it: self-awareness, professional communication, feedback, self-advocacy, teamwork, initiative, adaptability, workplace judgment, financial readiness, and structured reflection. Your team provides the work experience. BFA builds the readiness around it.

In that setting the internship itself becomes part of the curriculum. Early on, interns predict how they will work, communicate, and respond to challenge. Midway they use real feedback and learn what they are like as teammates. During paid weeks they decide what to do with money they are actually earning. At the end they name what the experience taught them, what became more or less attractive, what evidence they now have about themselves, and what to explore next. We complement the employer, the supervisor, and HR. We do not replace any of them.

WHAT WE LEARNED THE HARD WAY

Sell the series, not the session. Our own delivery history is the evidence: single hours produce real movement in the room and then stop, and the partners who wanted a series were the ones whose students kept going. The catalogue of individually bookable sessions we published earlier this year has been retired for that reason.

How a student gets in, and who pays.

THE BOLD FUTURES NAVIGATOR

Every applicant completes the Navigator before the program begins, and it does two jobs at once. It gives a student a starting map of themselves, and it gives us an honest baseline to measure against later. It replaced the individual admissions interviews we ran in our first cohorts, and it is now required for both LaunchLab and Ignite.

The Navigator is a starting map, not a verdict. It is not a personality quiz and it does not hand a student a single answer. It reads back what a student's own answers reveal about their experiences, strengths, interests, the way they work, and the problems they are drawn to, and it turns that into a first draft of their personal brand and several directions worth exploring. Each direction comes with a plain reading of why it surfaced, why it might fit, and what might not. Alongside it the student gets people worth talking to, questions to ask them, small experiments to run, and a ninety day plan that starts with one step this week. It is built around a simple idea we want every student to carry: you do not need to decide your whole future right now, you need better evidence about yourself and the possibilities in front of you, and here is how to go and gather it.

We read it as a map, not a score. It shows where a student is starting from, not a ceiling, and the best version of the result is the one a student talks through with a mentor. That is exactly why it is useful to us as well. It tells us who is walking in the door before the first session, so facilitators can plan around real people rather than a roster, and it removed the scheduling barrier that was quietly filtering out the students with the least free time, who were often the students we most wanted to reach.

One thing we have changed our minds about is what the Navigator settles. It does not settle anything. Self-understanding is not a box a student ticks at intake and then carries around unchanged. The Navigator gives a student language and a few honest guesses about themselves, and then the experiences that follow either back those guesses up, complicate them, or overturn them. A student who finishes a program believing something different about themselves than they believed at intake has not drifted off course. That is the point, and it is something we now intend to measure directly.

HOW TO READ A NAVIGATOR RESULT

The Navigator suggests problem areas a student might explore, drawn from the interests they describe. Those are prompts, not statements of what a student wants to solve, so we keep them between the student and their mentor and we never report them as findings. What a student actually wants to build comes from their application answers and from the conversation, and it very often differs from the suggestion. That is not a discrepancy. It is the point.

The funding model, stated plainly.

Programs are free to students. That is a deliberate design choice and it is not going to change, because the young people we most want in the room are the ones for whom a fee is the end of the conversation.

Partner organizations pay. Readiness Workshop sessions run at an average fee of \$500 to \$600 per session depending on length, format, and how much contextualization is involved, and a series is quoted as a series rather than session by session. Schools, youth serving nonprofits, employers running internship programs, and faith communities bring us into their existing programming and cover the cost of delivery. Philanthropic support covers what partner fees do not, which right now is most of LaunchLab and all of the college mentorship.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR FUNDERS

Two revenue lines instead of one. Earned income from series delivery is growing against a fee schedule we can quote, and philanthropy carries the deep, long form programs that no partner budget will ever fully cover. Neither line depends on the other surviving.

WHAT WE BUILD AND WHERE WE PARTNER

We do not try to build every part of a young person's development. We own self-understanding, the Readiness Series, LaunchLab, reflection and evidence standards, and the design of the relationships around a student. We partner where another organization already does something well: career exploration, industry exposure, job shadowing, technical training, credentials, specialized financial education, and the internships and jobs employers already run. Exploration matters enough to us that we would rather connect a student to someone doing it well than build a shallow version ourselves. Partnership is part of the model rather than a gap in it.

WHAT PARTNERS GET, AND WHAT THEY KEEP

A partner keeps ownership of its own program. We bring the curriculum, the facilitation, the experiential practice, the reflection, and the developmental progression, and we shape the arc around the program it sits inside: a summer program, an internship, an after-school block, a school-day enrichment or advisory period, a college student-success program, a workforce program, or a youth-development calendar.

SECTION 03 · THE GAP

03

The gap, in other people's numbers.

Three findings we did not produce, from research we did not fund. They are the reason this organization exists.

What the national research says.

Our own data is small by design. These three findings are not ours, they are large and independent, and they describe the gap our students walk into.

01 · Employers say school is not doing this job

Three in four employers say colleges are not preparing graduates for the workforce. The complaint is rarely about technical skill. It is about judgment, communication, and knowing how work actually works, none of which anyone was assigned to teach.

02 · Young people want to build, and are not shown how

Three in five teenagers say they would rather build something of their own than take a traditional job. Most of them will graduate without a single course that shows them how. The interest is not the missing piece. The instruction is.

03 · Graduates say the education did not fit

Ninety-four percent of graduates say they would change something about their education, most often what they studied. That is a decision made years earlier, usually without anyone helping them work out what they were good at first.

WHAT WE TAKE FROM THIS

The failure is not happening in college. It is happening years earlier, in the absence of anyone helping a fifteen year old understand themselves, practice what every path requires, and learn from something real before the stakes get high. That is the moment BFA works in, and it is why our programs are built around a student's own experience rather than around a curriculum they have to fit themselves into.

Sources. Employer preparation figure: Intelligent.com employer survey, 2024. Teen entrepreneurial intent: Junior Achievement teen entrepreneurship survey. Graduate regret figure: Cengage Graduate Employability Report. Every figure in this section is checked before each edition, and where we cannot point to a source the number does not go in the document.

SECTION 04 · TRACTION

04

How we got here.

The headline numbers, the two institutional partnerships carrying the work, the timeline, and the research that shaped the curriculum.

At a glance.

Bold Futures Academy is a small organization doing depth over scale work. These are the numbers that tell that story honestly.

2025 ESTABLISHED Founded as a 501(c)(3) in March 2025, on the back of mentorship work that began in 2024.	70+ YOUNG PEOPLE REACHED Documented individually. A little more than fifty since founding, the rest through the founder's earlier UConn work.	3 PROGRAM LINES LaunchLab, college programming including Ignite, and the Readiness Workshop Series.
2 ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS UConn Werth Institute, continuous and ongoing, and Hartford Youth Scholars, delivering and building forward.	6 SPRING 2026 COHORT Enrolled. Four engaged meaningfully. Three completed Demo Day.	15 MENTORED ONE TO ONE Individual mentee matches, every one documented with a date. Eleven five-star ratings from four of them.

THE PACE, STATED PLAINLY

Bold Futures Academy is seventeen months old. In that time it has reached more than fifty young people since founding, opened delivery in a second state, run a full six week program end to end, built a series that partners pay for, and carried its first class of summer interns. A second LaunchLab cohort of ten is underway this fall. We are not claiming a decade of outcomes, because we have not had a decade. We are claiming that a very small organization has moved quickly and documented all of it.

Where the seventy come from.

DELIVERY	REACHED	PERIOD
One to one mentorship, Feb 2024 to Jan 2025	6	Before founding
UConn summer speaker series, July 2024	8	Before founding
UConn cohort session, November 2024	~7	Before founding
One to one mentorship, Mar 2025 onward	9	Since founding
Werth Innovators summer internship, 2025	7	Since founding
UConn cohort workshop, November 2025	10	Since founding
Werth Innovators summer internship, 2026	8	Since founding
BFA summer internship program, 2026	8	Since founding
LaunchLab Spring 2026 cohort	6	Since founding
Hartford Youth Scholars workshop, July 2026	8	Since founding
LaunchLab Fall 2026 cohort	10	Since founding

HOW WE COUNT

That is eighty-seven on the page. Three things keep it from being eighty-seven unique people. Roughly six people who sat in an earlier room later became mentees, and are counted once, under mentorship. Two of the eight summer interns were mentees first, through the UConn pipeline, and are counted once, under mentorship rather than a second time under the internship. Five of the eight Hartford scholars carried straight into the Fall LaunchLab cohort, and are counted once, under Hartford rather than a second time under LaunchLab. Together that brings the total to about seventy-four. Not counted at all: two class cohorts we were matched to in 2024 for which no roster survives, and the students we picked up in sessions when their own mentor could not attend. We would rather publish a defensible seventy than a flattering guess.

The active partnerships.

Two institutional relationships carry our college mentorship pipeline and our Connecticut delivery. Both are active and both are producing student outcomes.

ORGANIZATION	STATUS	WHAT IT CARRIES
UConn Werth Institute STORRS, CT	ONGOING	A continuous mentorship relationship that began before BFA existed and became the foundation of the Ignite pipeline. It now runs through five distinct roles: one to one mentor, invited guest speaker, mentor inside the Werth Innovators summer internship, reviewer on student final pitches, and stand-in mentor. Joint focus groups are planned to inform both our high school and college programming.
Hartford Youth Scholars HARTFORD, CT	DELIVERING	On July 15, 2026 we co-facilitated a sixty minute personal branding workshop with HYS program lead Natiel Cooper, as Day 3 of the HYS College Bootcamp at Central Connecticut State University. Eight scholars completed reflection surveys. That was a co-facilitated delivery, a month before we named the Readiness Workshop Series, and it is one of the deliveries the Series was built out of. Conversations about further programming continue, and HYS has agreed to refer eligible students into Ignite.

WHAT WE CLAIM AND WHAT WE DO NOT

We do not run on a single partnership. UConn has carried continuous mentorship since before the organization was incorporated. Hartford Youth Scholars moved from signed to delivered inside one program year. Work that is still being scoped, including middle school sessions with Hartford Youth Scholars, is named as planned rather than counted as complete. We also try not to overstate our own hand in a shared room: co-facilitating a partner's session is not the same as co-designing their program, and we do not describe it that way.

What the UConn relationship actually involves.

Most partnership pages say ongoing and leave it there. This one has five distinct roles behind it, and it is the closest thing we have to a model of what a deep institutional relationship looks like.

ROLE	WHAT IT HAS MEANT IN PRACTICE
One to one mentor	Fifteen documented mentee matches since February 2024, across two successive mentoring platforms, running from a first introduction through a full venture arc. Four of those mentees have rated the mentorship through the university's own platform, eleven times between them. Every rating is five out of five.
Invited guest speaker	Eight students at the summer speaker series in July 2024, a Werth Innovators cohort on campus that November, and a second cohort in November 2025 for a session on pitching and sharpening a business idea. The last of those produced the survey data reported in this section.
Summer program mentor	Three consecutive summer programs, including the Werth Innovators internship for first-year women, mentoring students across the full length of their projects.
Pitch reviewer	Final project presentations reviewed in person on campus in May 2025 and virtually since, giving structured feedback on each student's final pitch.
Stand-in mentor	When a student's assigned mentor cannot make a session, our founder takes them. This is the least visible part of the relationship and probably the largest by headcount.

WHY WE ARE SHOWING YOU THIS

A funder looking at a young organization reasonably asks whether its partnerships are real or aspirational. This one has survived a platform migration, a change of staff contacts, and the founding of an entire nonprofit in the middle of it, and the invitations still come unprompted. That is the standard we are trying to reach with every partner named in this report.

A timeline of building.

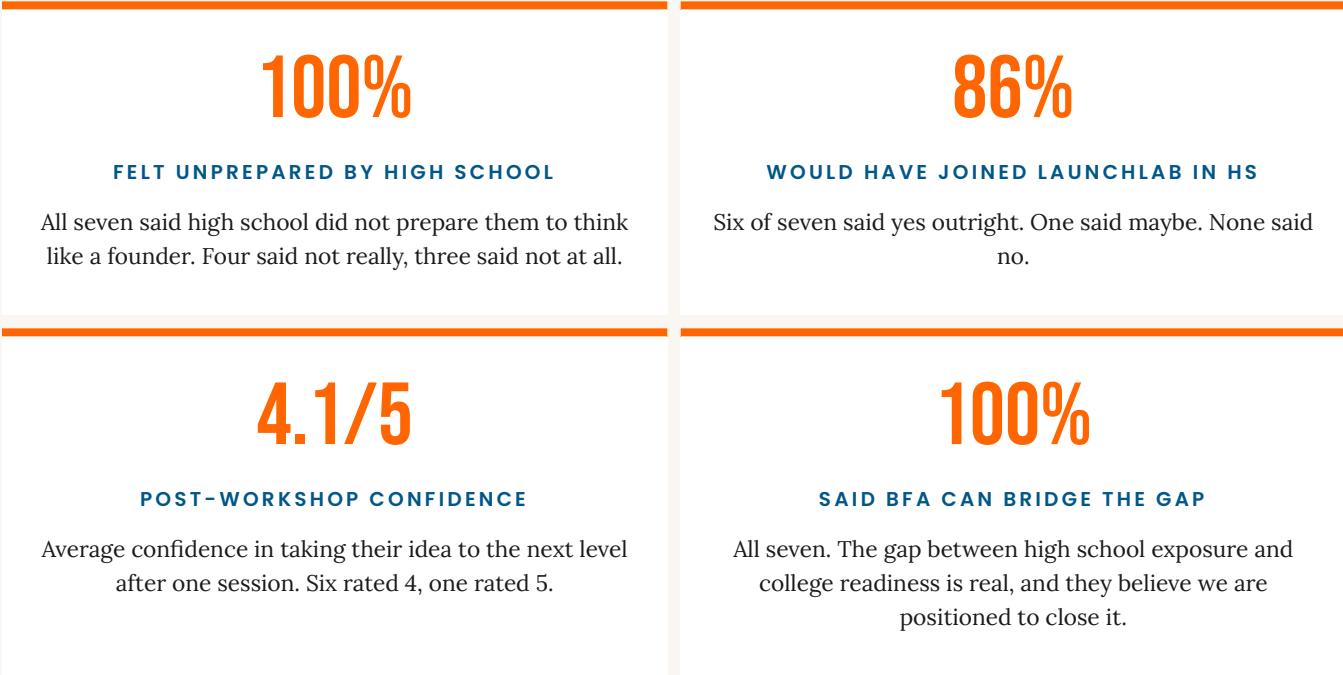
WHEN	WHAT HAPPENED
2023 <i>Before the organization</i>	On September 9, 2023, UConn's Werth Institute for Entrepreneurship invites our founder to join NetWerx as an alumni mentor. She onboards on September 14. Bold Futures Academy does not exist yet. This is the work it was built out of, and the relationship has been continuous ever since.
2024 to 2025 <i>Still before the organization</i>	Three mentees are matched through the Werth Institute's mentoring platform between February and April 2024, followed by two more that autumn and another in January 2025. In July 2024 our founder speaks to eight students at UConn's summer speaker series, and on November 12 she makes her first campus visit to a cohort of Werth Innovators. Ongoing mentorship produces the first documented outcomes: increased confidence, less hesitation, a clearer sense of direction.
Mar 2025 <i>BFA is established</i>	The organization is incorporated and recognized as a 501(c)(3), EIN 33-3751028, based in Rockland, Massachusetts. Everything from this point forward is delivered by the organization rather than by one person volunteering.
Nov 2025 <i>A second UConn workshop</i>	On Friday, November 14, BFA returns to campus to lead a session with the Werth Innovators and fields a feedback survey with all seven participants. All seven say high school did not prepare them to think like an entrepreneur. Six say they would have joined LaunchLab as high school students. All seven say BFA can bridge the gap. This is the data that anchored the LaunchLab curriculum.
Spring 2026 <i>The inaugural cohort</i>	Six high school students enroll for April 18 to May 23. Four engage meaningfully. Three complete Demo Day. The Hartford Youth Scholars partnership is signed.

A timeline of building, continued.

WHEN	WHAT HAPPENED
July 2026 <i>Connecticut delivery opens</i>	BFA co-facilitates a sixty minute personal branding workshop as Day 3 of the Hartford Youth Scholars College Bootcamp at CCSU. Eight scholars from eight different schools complete reflection surveys. One yes and four maybes for LaunchLab Fall 2026 come out of a single hour.
Aug 2026 <i>A third program line is named</i>	Workshop delivery that had been running since before the organization existed is formalized under one name, the Readiness Workshop Series. At this point it is still published as a catalogue of individually bookable sessions.
Sept 2026 <i>The series takes its shape</i>	The catalogue is retired. The line is rebuilt around six capabilities delivered as a multi-session series, adapted from middle school upward, with the professional readiness series for youth internship programs as its priority use case. Entrepreneurship content moves entirely into LaunchLab, where it belongs. A strategic plan for 2027 through 2036 goes to the board for review the following month.
Fall 2026 <i>LaunchLab cohort two</i>	September 12 through October 17, with asynchronous pitch recording, an explicit attendance policy reviewed at orientation, and a strengthened mid-program mentor touchpoint. The partnership pipeline continues to build alongside it.
2027 <i>Two cohorts, and a corporate partner</i>	The planning assumption is one core LaunchLab cohort, with a second only if the Fall 2026 evidence, facilitator capacity, recruitment, funding, and mentor coverage support it. Alongside it, a sponsored college experience if a suitable partner is secured, a first paid multi-session Readiness Series with a partner, a wider mentor pipeline, and the data system that makes long-term follow-up possible. Both the cohort count and the LaunchLab theme are October board decisions.

What the November 2025 UConn research told us.

BFA student feedback survey · n=7 · UConn Werth Institute · Mixed sophomore and junior cohort · Self-reported, post-workshop.



SKILL GAPS THEY NAMED	SHARE NAMING IT
Time management	86%
Identifying real problems	71%
Financial literacy	71%
Pitching	57%
Empathy mapping	43%
Business planning and team collaboration	43%

Asked what they most wanted to be taught, the group named empathy mapping, pitching practice, team collaboration, AI literacy, ethics, and financial literacy. Asked what was standing in their way, they named two things: money and confidence. Five of the seven opted in for ongoing mentorship and have been re-engaged.

What they actually said.

Direct responses from all seven participants, grouped by theme. These are the sentences that shaped the LaunchLab curriculum.

ON THE GAP THEY FELT IN HIGH SCHOOL

- How to come up with ideas, how to be successful in entrepreneurship.
- Design thinking. Having a bright idea isn't always the same as having an execution plan.
- How to network and how to connect with other people.
- More about mindset and purpose.

ON THE SUPPORT THEY WISHED THEY HAD EARLIER

- I wish I had encouragement. Most adults look at me like I'm crazy and it would have been nice to have more support.
- People in similar fields, alumni from my program.
- Mentorship. Most important thing.

ON WHAT BFA CAN DO FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

- Let them know that their big ideas are realistic.
- Give them the confidence to pursue their ideas.
- Understanding that their potential is limitless, and seeing what they are capable of.

IN ONE WORD, THE WORKSHOP WAS

Insightful. Amazing. Insightful. Perspective. Fun. Insightful. Great. Three of the seven independently reached for the same word.

SECTION 05 · LAUNCHLAB

05

LaunchLab, Spring 2026.

Six students enrolled. Four engaged meaningfully. Three completed Demo Day. Here is what happened, and why depth over scale is the case for support.

The honest funnel.

A six week virtual high school program. April 18 to May 23, 2026. Saturdays, 11:30 AM to 3:00 PM ET. Theme: Entrepreneurship in the Age of AI, The Human Advantage.



WHY WE REPORT THIS WAY

We do not round these numbers up. The four students who engaged meaningfully built real ventures, made measurable shifts in how they think, and produced documented work. Reporting honestly is how we earn the right to claim depth, and it is how we work out what Fall 2026 needs to fix.

What the cohort produced.

One founder pitched *NeuroGuard*, an AI safety net for stroke triage. Another pitched *Bridge AI*, a tax documentation tool that helps farms turn surplus produce into deductible donations. Each delivered a seven minute slot: three minutes of pitch, two of peer feedback, two of mentor panelist feedback. Both were grounded in working prototypes, complete business plan notes, and customer hypotheses they had actually tested.

A third founder built *Asian Student Awareness* across the prior weeks and pitched at Demo Day before leaving the program early for legitimate reasons. Her venture exists and her arc is documented. That modified completion path is one Fall 2026 will explicitly design for, through asynchronous pitch recording and makeup options.

From a lack-of-scope, data-less, un-researched idea with an ambiguous solution, to a professional-grade deck and pitch presentable to board members.

VOLUNTEER MENTOR · LAUNCHLAB SPRING 2026 · DEMO DAY OBSERVATION

Student profile 01 of 04.

NeuroGuard · An AI safety net for stroke triage

ONE-WORD ANCHOR	FORMS SUBMITTED	ROLE IN TEAM SIM	OUTCOME
Discernment	Weeks 1 to 5, complete	CEO, Week 4	Full Demo Day pitch

THE VENTURE

NeuroGuard is an AI assisted tool that flags when emergency stroke triage AI may be underweighting a patient's symptoms because of biased or unrepresentative training data, so a clinician can review the case before a time-sensitive decision is made. By Week 5 the founder had repositioned it as a second layer of safety rather than a replacement for clinical judgment, a framing she arrived at through user feedback during the MVP panel.

WHAT SHE DEMONSTRATED

- **Personal experience as method.** Drew on her own observations throughout, never treating the venture as an academic exercise.
- **Mentor feedback as input.** Took panel feedback seriously and visibly narrowed from broad AI bias to one clinical use case.
- **A documented shift.** Began with a profit-first framing of entrepreneurship. By Week 5 she was articulating human-centered design as the moat rather than the constraint.
- **Leadership under pressure.** Stepped into the CEO role during the team simulation and held it.

LaunchLab gave me the chance to turn an idea into something real.

ANONYMOUS FOUNDER · SPRING 2026 · WEEK 6 EXIT REFLECTION

Student profile 02 of 04.

Bridge AI · Tax documentation for surplus farm donations

ONE-WORD ANCHOR	FORMS SUBMITTED	ROLE IN TEAM SIM	OUTCOME
Pivot	Weeks 1 to 5, complete	CTO, Week 4	Full Demo Day pitch

THE VENTURE

Bridge AI moved through three distinct stages: a hardware environmental concept in Week 1, a machine learning platform for food waste reduction in Week 3, and finally a business to business tool that helps farms document surplus produce as tax deductible charitable donations. By Demo Day it had a working prototype and a real customer hypothesis. This founder was the only student present every single week.

WHAT THIS FOUNDER DEMONSTRATED

- **Iteration as identity.** Three pivots in five weeks, each grounded in new feedback or evidence rather than in indecision.
- **An early shift.** Their Week 1 reflection captured a move from a profit-first frame to a learning-first one, credited to guest speaker Conor Twomey.
- **Founder thinking, not user thinking.** Their closing reflection positioned them as the agent using AI rather than the other way round, a distinction many adult founders never make.
- **Consistent attendance.** The only student in the cohort present every week.

Student profile 03 of 04.

Asian Student Awareness · Reducing bullying through cross-cultural learning

ONE-WORD ANCHOR	FORMS SUBMITTED	DEMO DAY	OUTCOME
Purpose	Facilitator observation	Pitched, modified path	Modified completion

THE VENTURE

Asian Student Awareness was built directly out of the founder's own childhood experience of being bullied. The venture focused on reducing bullying through structured cross-cultural learning, with interventions designed to run in school settings where students from minority backgrounds are routinely targeted. By Demo Day she had carried it from a personal memory to a pitched concept.

WHY THIS PROFILE IS BUILT FROM OBSERVATION

This founder did not submit weekly live session forms. Her profile is drawn from facilitator observation across the weeks she was present and from the work she submitted directly. The signal she gave was strong enough that a full profile could be built from observation alone, which says something about how clearly she carried the venture.

WHAT SHE DEMONSTRATED

- **Personal experience as a starting point.** Built the venture out of the most honest source she had.
- **Mission-first framing.** By the end she was describing entrepreneurship as building an idea with purpose to help other people, which is close to a word for word statement of the LaunchLab thesis.
- **She came back to pitch.** Despite an early departure for legitimate reasons, she returned to deliver at Demo Day.

Student profile 04 of 04.

Food insecurity venture · Reducing shame as a barrier to access

ONE-WORD ANCHOR	FORMS SUBMITTED	ATTENDANCE	OUTCOME
Depth	Week 2 only	3 absences, disqualified	Did not complete

THE VENTURE

This student's venture centered on food insecurity, with a focus on lower income households and students who could not reliably afford good food. The distinguishing insight was identifying shame, rather than cost or logistics, as the deeper barrier keeping people from using food resources that already existed. It was the most sophisticated root cause framing in the cohort.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON DATA SOURCES

This student submitted one live session form, from Week 2. The profile is built from that form combined with facilitator observation across the weeks they were present. The depth of that single form was unusually high and the patterns in it are real. The student missed three sessions including Demo Day, which closed their engagement and disqualified them from completion.

WHAT THIS STUDENT DEMONSTRATED

- **Empathy as a working tool.** Approached the process through the people they wanted to serve rather than through the product.
- **Root cause thinking.** Identified shame as the barrier rather than the surface symptom of cost.
- **The non-completion case.** We do not erase students from the record because they did not finish. Including this profile honors what they contributed and gives Fall 2026 a clearer signal on how to support students whose engagement is uneven.

SECTION 06 · HARTFORD

06

One hour in Hartford.

On July 15, 2026 we co-facilitated a sixty minute workshop at Central Connecticut State University. Eight scholars filled out reflection surveys by hand. This is everything they told us, and what we built out of it.

What happened at CCSU.

Day 3 of the Hartford Youth Scholars College Bootcamp · July 15, 2026 · Central Connecticut State University · Co-facilitated with HYS program lead Natiel Cooper.

We co-facilitated the hour with HYS, using our own personal branding material: an Experience Inventory, an Accomplishment Statement builder, and a Mini Pitch with a live feedback loop. It was a single session, delivered a month before the Readiness Workshop Series had a name, and what it covers is now the Know Yourself capability inside the Series. Eight in-person scholars completed reflection surveys. Seven were rising seniors and one a rising junior, drawn from eight different Connecticut schools, a mix of competitive independent schools and Hartford area public and magnet schools.

WHAT WE CAME TO DO, AND WHETHER WE DID IT

The goal for the hour was narrow and we set it in advance: every scholar should be able to name their own value out loud, in specific words, and pitch it. Three of the eight went further and delivered their pitch in front of the whole room, in a session where nobody was required to. At the start of the hour, not one of those three could articulate what they were good at when we asked them directly. Hartford Youth Scholars staff told us afterwards that they had not seen their scholars engage in a workshop like that before.

3.5→4.1

CONFIDENCE DESCRIBING
THEMSELVES

Average self-reported, before and after, out of five.

4 OF 8

REPORTED A CONFIDENCE
INCREASE

Two more were already at five and could not rise.

4.1/5

LIKELIHOOD TO RECOMMEND

Five of eight rated four or five. One rated two.

5 OF 8

INTERESTED IN LAUNCHLAB

One yes and four maybes, out of one hour of programming.

4 OF 8

WANT TO BUILD SOMETHING

Rated themselves four or five on starting a business, project, or movement.

8

SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

Eight scholars, eight different schools, one shared gap.

What the numbers actually say.

The headline average hides the more useful finding. Read the movement scholar by scholar and the hour explains itself.

MOST USEFUL PART OF THE SESSION	SCHOLARS	CONFIDENCE MOVEMENT
Mini Pitch and feedback	3	All three gained. Movements of +2, +1, and +1.
Experience Inventory	2	One gained by 1. One flat, and she wrote that her table did not talk.
Accomplishment Statement	1	Flat at five. Already at the ceiling before the session began.
Presentation and examples	1	Flat at five. Also at the ceiling.
No selection made	1	Flat at three. Named nothing as most useful.

THE SIGNAL

Every scholar who named the Mini Pitch as most useful gained confidence. Of the six scholars who had room to move at all, four moved, an average of 3.0 to 3.8. The two who started at five could not rise. The two who stayed flat with room to grow are the same two who reported that nobody at their table engaged. Confidence movement tracked table engagement rather than exposure to the curriculum. That is a finding about room design, not about whether the hour worked. The hour worked. What we learned is how to make sure the two quiet tables get the same hour the loud ones did.

What this changes for the next collaboration.

01

Add a co-facilitator

With a single facilitator, small group scaffolding was thin. Two scholars asked for individual attention in writing. Trained peer leads are the cheaper alternative.

02

Structure the turn-taking

A silent table is a design failure, not a student failure. Build named turns into the Mini Pitch sprint so no scholar can be skipped.

03

Lead with the Mini Pitch

It produced every confidence gain in the room. In a sixty minute session it should be the anchor, not the closer.

04

Sell the series, not the session

One hour opened the door and did not finish the job. This is the lesson that reshaped the whole program line into a multi-session series.

THE DESIGN CHANGE THAT CAME OUT OF THIS

The fourth item is the one that changed the organization. A single hour can move a room and still leave the work unfinished, and the capabilities we teach are not learnable in one sitting. When we named the Series in August we still published it as a list of bookable sessions. By September we had retired that list and rebuilt the line as a multi-session arc across six capabilities, so a partner engages us to own a strand of their students' development rather than to fill one slot. Hartford is where we learned it, in practice, with real students in the room.

What they want solved.

Every scholar was asked to name one problem in their school, community, or daily life that they wish someone would solve. Their answers are the mission-fit evidence.

Three of eight named some form of representation or equity: the absence of people of color at their school, the absence of diversity among teachers, and equality stated plainly as a one word answer. Others named pollution and litter in their streets, aging facilities, and campus access. Five of eight identified themselves as the kind of person who likes understanding people and their problems, which is the empathy-first disposition the human advantage thesis is built on.

My experiences can be small, they don't have to be big.

12TH GRADER · HARTFORD YOUTH SCHOLARS WORKSHOP

Always say what makes you different.

12TH GRADER · HARTFORD YOUTH SCHOLARS WORKSHOP

THE ANSWER WE ARE NOT EDITING OUT

One scholar wrote that the problem she wants solved is her own school. That it does not try to help students with the future, that it would be nice if it showed even a little that it cared, and that it is annoying to have to figure everything out by yourself. She rated her confidence three before and three after, and marked not right now for LaunchLab. She is the student this organization exists for, and one hour did not reach her. That is the most useful sentence in the dataset.

Three workshops, two partners, two years.

The Readiness Workshop Series did not start in Hartford. Our workshop practice predates the Series by two years and started at UConn, with pitching workshops run in 2024 and again in November 2025, both of them working sessions where students sharpened a real business idea and made the case for it out loud. Hartford was the third workshop, not the first, and it came a month before the Series had a name. What Hartford gave us was not the curriculum. It was the lesson about shape: that an hour is the wrong unit, and that what a partner should be buying is a strand of their students' development rather than a slot on their calendar. We rebuilt the line around that in September.

WHEN	PARTNER	WORKSHOP
2024	UConn Werth Institute	Pitching and strengthening a business idea. Delivered before BFA was incorporated.
November 2025	UConn Werth Institute	Pitching, second consecutive year. Feedback survey fielded with all seven participants.
July 2026	Hartford Youth Scholars	Personal branding, co-facilitated with HYS, one month before the Series was named. Reflection surveys from all eight scholars.

PIPELINE AND PARTNERSHIP VALUE FROM THE JULY SESSION

- **Recruitment.** One yes and four maybes for LaunchLab Fall 2026 out of a single hour, with no recruitment spend. Four of the five supplied student or guardian contact details. The fifth is reachable through HYS.
- **Partnership.** This session established BFA as a repeatable programming partner rather than a one-time guest, and HYS has agreed to refer eligible students into Ignite.
- **Product.** The session produced a fee-bearing program line we can now quote to any partner in the country.

SECTION 07 · THE INTERNS

07

What the summer interns got.

Eight young adults spent the summer inside a BFA work environment. Five of the eight told us what it did for them. Reported at its real size.

What the summer interns got out of it.

Eight young adults interned with us over the summer, across operations, communications, partnerships, and program development, and their work was not filing. They took the spring cohort's feedback and turned it into specific changes to the program. When it was over we asked them to reflect, and five of the eight answered. Five of eight is a small and self-selected group, so we treat what follows as an early read and not a verdict, and we report it at its real size.

4.8/5 OVERALL EXPERIENCE Averaged across the five who answered. Four rated it five, one rated it four.	4.8/5 FELT SUPPORTED Support from mentors and from the executive director, averaged across the five.	9.6/10 WOULD RECOMMEND Likelihood to recommend a BFA internship to a friend.
4.2/5 CLEARER SENSE OF THEIR PATH How much the internship clarified the future they want. Real spread underneath the average.	4.2/5 MORE ABLE TO BUILD OR LEAD How much more capable they felt of building or leading something of their own.	5 OF 8 RESPONDED The base for every figure on this page. We do not imply five speak for all eight.

WHAT MATTERS MORE THAN THE RATINGS

It is what they said they can now do that they could not before, because it came from real work rather than a lecture. One is much better at working without solid instructions, which she had struggled with. One built live automations that now run our intake across three different tools. One learned to shape curriculum for an audience and to use AI to make her work clearer and more accessible. One got sharply better at running interviews and pulling the real insight out of them. These are capabilities shown through ownership, which is the whole point of the way we run the program.

What they said would make it stronger.

They were honest about it, and their answers pointed one direction. Not more teaching, but more structure around the work: knowing their role sooner, clearer communication when a project pivots, more chances to connect across pods so the work feels less siloed, and a steadier coaching rhythm. We are building all four into the fall.

WHAT THEY ASKED FOR	WHAT WE ARE DOING ABOUT IT
Clearer role framing early	A short written brief for every intern role, so nobody has to guess what their work is for.
Better communication during a pivot	A simple pivot protocol, so when a project changes direction the reason and the new scope are stated plainly.
More cross-pod connection	Built-in time to meet across pods, so the work does not feel siloed.
A steadier coaching cadence	A regular one to one check in for each intern, which is the thing more than one of them named by name.

I loved learning how to cater curriculum towards an audience in an innovative way.

ANONYMOUS SUMMER INTERN · 2026 · SHARED WITH PERMISSION

Quotations on this page are shared under each intern's documented permission. Interns who asked to remain anonymous, or whose responses were kept internal, are represented here only in the aggregate figures.

SECTION 08 · IN THEIR WORDS

08

Every voice.

Every quote we have, from college mentees, LaunchLab founders, Hartford scholars, and the mentors who watched them work. Gathered in one place.

Every voice, in one place.

Everything students, alumni, interns, and mentors have said about this work, gathered from four years and five different settings. Shared with permission, with names withheld. Nothing has been invented.

IGNITE AND COLLEGE MENTORSHIP · UCONN WERTH INSTITUTE

She helped me embrace my own entrepreneurial ideas, sparking newfound confidence. Her encouragement empowered me to overcome my hesitations and pursue new ventures.

ANONYMOUS MENTEE · IGNITE · UCONN WERTH INSTITUTE

Working with Ruth honestly felt so natural. I loved how our values aligned and how easy it was to brainstorm with her. I always left our chats feeling inspired and encouraged.

ANONYMOUS MENTEE · IGNITE · UCONN WERTH INSTITUTE

From our very first meeting, she was intentional, kind, and genuinely cared about helping me grow. She supported me through every stage of my project, starting with ideation.

ANONYMOUS MENTEE · IGNITE · UCONN WERTH INSTITUTE

Her guidance set me on the right path for my final two years of undergraduate studies and played a key role in helping me secure internships and build meaningful relationships.

ANONYMOUS MENTEE · IGNITE · UCONN WERTH INSTITUTE

LaunchLab, workshops, and the interns.

LAUNCHLAB · SPRING 2026 COHORT

Before LaunchLab, I thought entrepreneurship was strictly building a business. Now I think entrepreneurship is building an idea with purpose to help other people.

ANONYMOUS FOUNDER · LAUNCHLAB SPRING 2026

It gives students real hands-on experience building a venture, not just learning about entrepreneurship in a classroom. You meet amazing people, gain confidence, and leave with skills you can use in any future career.

ANONYMOUS FOUNDER · LAUNCHLAB SPRING 2026

THE UCONN WORKSHOP · NOVEMBER 2025

I wish I had encouragement. Most adults look at me like I'm crazy and it would have been nice to have more support.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT · ON WHAT HE NEEDED IN HIGH SCHOOL

Mentorship. Most important thing.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT · ON THE SUPPORT HE WISHED HE HAD EARLIER

HARTFORD YOUTH SCHOLARS WORKSHOP · JULY 2026

My experiences can be small, they don't have to be big.

12TH GRADER · HARTFORD YOUTH SCHOLARS WORKSHOP

The summer internship, 2026.

Four of the five interns who completed the reflection survey gave us permission to share their words. The fifth asked that their responses stay internal, and they do.

This summer was impactful, a bit challenging, and incredibly rewarding. I loved meeting so many new people with such diverse and interesting stories and skill sets.

ANONYMOUS SUMMER INTERN · 2026 · SHARED WITH PERMISSION

This summer was such a rewarding learning experience. Not only did I learn from my team and my role, but I was also able to learn from Ruth.

ANONYMOUS SUMMER INTERN · 2026 · SHARED WITH PERMISSION

I am much better at being able to work without solid instructions, as I struggled with this in the past.

ANONYMOUS SUMMER INTERN · 2026 · SHARED WITH PERMISSION

This summer helped shape how I will work on education policy and curriculum in the future.

ANONYMOUS SUMMER INTERN · 2026 · SHARED WITH PERMISSION

Every quote in this section is shared under the speaker's documented permission. Names are withheld throughout, including where a student gave us permission to use theirs, so that the section reads consistently and no student is identified by comparison with another.

What happens after.

The honest limit of this report is that we are too young to show ten year outcomes. What we can show is what has already happened to students who came through the mentorship line first, because some of them have kept going.

FROM MENTEE, TO COLLEAGUE, TO THEIR OWN VENTURES

Two of the college students first met through the UConn mentorship pipeline went on to intern with Bold Futures Academy this summer. One of them has asked to come back as a co-facilitator for the Fall 2026 LaunchLab cohort, which means a student who was being mentored two years ago will be standing at the front of the room teaching high schoolers this September. Both of them are building. One launched her own podcast, out of the venture work she and our founder had been doing together, and has since invited her on as a guest. The other started her own YouTube channel, then built a wellness platform and published a wellness journal aimed at helping people track and improve their mental health. It is a real product, on sale, and our founder is a customer.

THIS IS THE PATHWAY WORKING, IN MINIATURE

One student, mentored two years ago, is about to teach the next cohort. That is the exact arc this organization is built to produce, from mentee to capable adult to someone who turns around and builds for the people behind them. It is two people, named here in outline rather than as a statistic, because two is what we honestly have. In two years this should be a table. Right now it is a promising start, and we are going to describe it as one.

11

RATINGS RECEIVED

Submitted through UConn's platform between October 2024 and November 2025.

5/5

EVERY ONE OF THEM

No rating below five has ever been given.

4

MENTEES RATING

Four distinct students, one of whom rated the mentorship seven separate times.

SECTION 09 · WHAT WE HEARD

09

What we learned by listening.

One thing we did this year was not a program, it was listening. It shaped how we are building 2027, and we keep it separate from our impact numbers on purpose.

What we learned by listening in 2026.

Our college interns interviewed a small group of college students, most of them from our UConn pipeline, about what would make a real six week experience worth their time. A few of the people interviewed were also our own interns, so this is a small and connected group, and we read it as direction rather than proof. Even so, the same needs kept coming up.

WHAT COLLEGE STUDENTS TOLD US THEY WANT

- **A mentor who genuinely shows up, and stays.** This was the strongest and most consistent thing they said. The failure they named most was the mentor who is warm at the start and gone by the end.
- **Real work, with something real to show for it.** A business plan, a prototype, product samples, or something they can talk about in an interview. For a few, the proof was less an object than a clearer sense of direction and the skills they walked away with.
- **Honest critique and a light hand on accountability.** They wanted to be told plainly what to fix, and checked on with a quick message rather than another meeting.
- **The return named up front.** Whether that is pay, a real relationship, or a credible next step, they were clear that an unpaid, low-value six weeks loses to an ordinary job.
- **Room to explore, or room to go deep.** Some wanted to go deeper on an interest they already had. Others needed repeated chances to find one. The same program has to serve both.

I wish someone built a bridge of connections for me. Connections is super important when it comes to finding a job, and I hate admitting it, but it is.

COLLEGE STUDENT · 2026 EMPATHY INTERVIEW

WHY THIS IS IN THE REPORT AT ALL

None of this is a 2026 result, and we have kept it out of our impact numbers. It is here because it is the reason our 2027 plan looks the way it does. When you read Section 13 and see a college experience built around real work with real people and a real next step, this is the listening that shaped it. It is also the reason the Readiness Workshop Series is aimed squarely at organizations already running internship programs, where the work already exists and only the readiness layer is missing. What these interviews are is directional. A small, connected group told us something consistent, and we are treating it as a reason to test something rather than as a finding.

SECTION 10 · HOW WE MEASURE

10

How we measure whether this works.

*Eight things a young person should be able to show,
what we can evidence today, and the system we are
building so that in ten years we will actually know.*

Level one: what we can measure now.

We report against eight things a young person should be able to show. Some we can already evidence. Some we cannot yet. We kept these eight rather than swapping in a new framework, so next year's report can be compared against this one. What changed is that each is now tied to a source of evidence, and Direction now includes what a student revises, not only what they grow more confident about.

WHAT WE MEASURE	WHAT IT MEANS, AND WHERE THE EVIDENCE COMES FROM	2026 EVIDENCE
Direction	A clearer sense of strengths, interests, and next steps, and whether a student revises what they believed after new experience.	WELL EVIDENCED
Agency	Confidence, initiative, and ownership, ideally calibrated: knowing what you can do and what you still do not.	WELL EVIDENCED
Adaptability	How they handle a pivot or a setback, across a program.	WELL EVIDENCED
Collaboration	How they work with and learn from other people, in team simulations and live work.	WELL EVIDENCED
Capability	Communication, teamwork, initiative, judgment, and self-advocacy shown through actual work rather than self-report alone.	WELL EVIDENCED
Evidence	The artifacts they can point to, and whether they can explain their own contribution.	WELL EVIDENCED
Relationships	The mentors and professional connections they build, and whether those relationships persist past the program.	STILL THIN
Opportunity	Referrals, interviews, paid work, internships, education milestones, continued leadership.	STILL THIN

WHAT IS THIN, SAID PLAINLY

Relationships and opportunity are the two we cannot yet show at any scale. What we have is two mentees who became interns and are now building their own ventures, one of them returning to teach this fall. Two people is what we honestly have, so we are calling it a promising start. In two years this should be a table.

Level two: what we intend to learn over time.

BFA is too young to claim ten-year outcomes. It is not too young to build the system that will eventually let us know.

Attendance is not the question. Neither is satisfaction. Over the next decade we want to answer harder ones: how a student's understanding of themselves changes, and what they revise once experience contradicts it. Whether the capabilities they practice with us show up somewhere we are not in the room. Whether their experiences become more consequential over time. Whether the relationships last, and whether they open actual doors. Whether students move into paid work, internships, jobs, further education, or ventures of their own. And eventually, whether the people who came through turn around and mentor, teach, refer, hire, fund, or create opportunities for the ones behind them.

Answering any of that requires infrastructure we do not have yet, so we are building it in the order below rather than promising it at once.

PHASE	WHAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE
2027	A durable student ID, a Navigator baseline, common constructs across programs, evidence collected inside programs rather than bolted on, exit conversations, follow-up at three, six, and twelve months, a purposeful interview sample, a multi-year case cohort, and data and AI governance.
2028	Comparison across cohorts and across partners. Whether relationships persist. Whether stated intentions turn into action. Sharper instruments, because the first year's will not be right.
2029	Integrated alumni tracking and an Experience and Evidence Ladder, with a student's decisions, relationships, opportunities, and artifacts linked over time rather than sitting in separate files.
2030 to 2031	Sector-level learning, and evaluation of economic access: whether paid opportunity changes who participates, who persists, and who accepts what comes next.
2032 to 2033	A formal research and evaluation function, shared data standards with partners, longitudinal functions inside an opportunity exchange, and a first published Future Readiness Outlook.
2034 to 2036	Replication evaluation, cross-region quality assurance, multi-region longitudinal case cohorts, and mature research and standards infrastructure.

Each phase is gated. We move to the next one when delivery quality, student evidence, partner repeat intent, and staff capacity say we can, not because the calendar advanced. The gates are in the 2027 to 2036 Strategic Plan.

SECTION 11 · MONEY

11

Where the money comes from.

The approved FY2026 operating budget, what it is spent on, what is not secured yet, and who has been carrying the costs so far.

The FY2026 operating budget.

Approved by the board for the current year. It is a small budget and a deliberately flat one, and we would rather show it than describe it.

PROJECTED REVENUE

SOURCE	FY2026
Individual donations	\$18,000
Grants and foundations	\$25,000
Corporate sponsorships	\$10,000
Gifts in kind	\$10,000
Total	\$63,000

WHERE IT GOES

ALLOCATION	FY2026	SHARE
Program	\$32,660	51.7%
General and administrative	\$17,714	28.1%
Marketing and fundraising	\$11,760	18.6%
Total expenses	\$63,134	100%

The largest single line is the founder and executive director stipend at \$18,000, most of which is allocated to program delivery. After that come facilitator stipends, program space, student workbooks and materials, food for in-person sessions, liability insurance, compliance filings, and the software the organization runs on. A \$1,000 contingency reserve sits at the bottom.

TWO THINGS TO READ CAREFULLY

The budget balances to within \$134, which means there is no cushion. And \$25,000 of the \$63,000 is grants and foundations, which is projected rather than secured. A reader should treat that line as the gap we are working to close this year, not as income already in hand.

How this actually gets funded.

Three things, and only one of them is cash.

DONATED PROFESSIONAL WORK

This is the largest and least visible line, and it is the reason a budget this small has produced this much. One board member handles all of our accounting and bookkeeping pro bono through her own firm. Our board chair covered the incorporation and startup filings out of pocket. Board members sit on the admissions committee, serve as program managers, come in as guest speakers, mentor students, and carry outreach and partnership development. Volunteer designers make our flyers. Eight interns spent the summer rebuilding operations, program delivery, and our college partnerships. None of that is on an invoice. All of it is real.

GIVING, WHICH IS EARLY BUT MOVING

Our Givebutter campaign has raised over \$1,000, and across our wider network we have raised over \$1,500 since it launched. The goal for the year is \$12,000, and the board is running a give or get effort to reach it. Eight of our eleven board members have given personally. That is a small dollar figure and we are not going to dress it up, but the participation rate is the number a funder should look at, because it says the people closest to this organization are backing it with their own money.

THE FOUNDER

The rest has come from our founder. Our books record roughly \$18,700 of spending since 2024, of which over \$10,300 is money she put in personally, carried as a loan to the organization. It covers the website, the design work, the software, program printing, recruitment advertising, insurance, and a virtual assistant from September 2025 through April 2026.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR A FUNDER

A gift here does not top up an endowment. It replaces money currently coming out of one person's pocket, and it buys the second facilitator, the printed workbooks, and the program space that let us serve more than ten students at a time. It also solves a problem that goodwill cannot. Volunteers rotate, and every time one moves on, the institutional knowledge leaves with them. What we are raising for is the ability to hold a small team in place long enough to stop starting over.

SECTION 12 · THE TEAM

12

Who runs this.

A working board with four standing committees, a facilitation team that has grown with every cohort, and an intern program that carries real deliverables.

The board and the team.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Eleven directors and advisors covering education, finance, law, marketing, community development, and entrepreneurship. Donald Dea chairs the board. Arlene Powers serves as secretary and Jessica Haberer, who works in nonprofit finance, serves as treasurer. Mohammad Sarhan advises on curriculum, Raj Shankaran on corporate partnerships, Kevin Lederer on venture and strategy, Sade Reese on marketing, and Brianna Thomas on fundraising. Ruth Gay serves as board president and executive director.

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY, SPLIT TWO WAYS

Two directors carry community advocacy, and they work different segments of it. Mercy Yalartai builds relationships with other nonprofits and looks for places where organizations doing similar work can do it together instead of separately. Christopher Hendricks builds relationships with partners and with foundations, and contributes directly to our grant work. Both also carry school outreach and school partnerships, which is how most of our students find us. Neither of those roles is advisory. They are the outreach function of a small organization, being done by directors rather than by staff we cannot yet afford.

FOUR STANDING COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE	REMIT
Executive	Governance, leadership direction, and organizational strategy.
Development	Fundraising, grants, donor engagement, and financial sustainability.
Marketing and outreach	Brand, partnerships, and recruitment.
Program	Curriculum quality, student experience, and program evaluation.

Who delivers the programs.

The Spring 2026 pilot was co-facilitated, and our program manager helped design that first curriculum. For Fall 2026 the facilitation team has grown, with co-facilitators each leading their own segment of a Saturday session, supported by volunteer mentors and Demo Day panelists drawn from working founders and professionals. Marketing and design are handled in house.

THE INTERN PROGRAM

Eight interns worked across operations, communications, partnerships, and program development in summer 2026. Their work was not fling. They took the feedback from the Spring cohort and turned it into specific, measurable changes to the program, and they rebuilt the curriculum materials around what the data actually said. Several of the design changes described earlier in this report came out of that work, and Section 07 reports what the interns themselves got out of it.

WHY THIS SECTION IS HERE

A young organization built around one founder is a real risk, and funders are right to ask about it. Our answer is that the delivery team, the board committees, and the intern pipeline have all grown faster than the student count has, which is the order we wanted them to grow in.

SECTION 13 · WHAT IS NEXT

13

Where we go next.

The rest of this year, 2027 as a proof year, the four pillars we are building the decade on, and the four ways to move a real piece of it forward.

What the next twelve months hold.

FALL 2026 · LAUNCHLAB COHORT TWO

September 12 to October 17, 2026 · *The Human Advantage*

Changes from Spring 2026 include asynchronous pitch recording, an explicit attendance policy reviewed at orientation, and a strengthened mid-program mentor touchpoint. Every applicant completes the Navigator, and the five Hartford leads from July are in this cycle. Recruitment has gone considerably better than it did for the pilot.



Compared with the pilot, which enrolled six, that is close to three applications per seat. It is the clearest signal we have that demand is not the constraint.

THE FALL COHORT IS THE PRE AND POST WE HAVE BEEN BUILDING TOWARD

Every applicant completes the Navigator before the program begins. It is an intake measure and not an outcome, and that is exactly what makes it useful. The Navigator is the before. The weekly forms, facilitator observation, and the exit reflections are the after, and the same six muscles are re-rated at the end. That gives us a genuine pre and post on the same students, months apart, which is the design we intend to report against from here.

Who is walking in the door.

Fourteen of the seventeen Fall 2026 applicants had completed the Navigator as of early August. Here is how they rated themselves across the six entrepreneurial muscles, before anyone had taught them anything.

MUSCLE	AVERAGE	RATED THEMSELVES STRONG
Ideation	42.6%	1 of 14
Empathy	45.9%	2 of 14
Prototyping	47.4%	3 of 14
Pitching	49.5%	4 of 14
Teamwork	51.4%	7 of 14
Mindset	54.7%	9 of 14

THE SIGNAL

They arrive with the will and not the method. Mindset is the highest muscle in the group and ideation is the lowest, and only one of the fourteen rates idea generation as a strength. Nine of the fourteen name either ideation or prototyping as their single weakest muscle. These are young people who believe they can build something and do not yet know how to find an idea or make one real. That is the gap, in their own words, before we have said anything to them.

WHAT WE WILL REPORT IN OCTOBER

The blocks below are placeholders. When the cohort finishes on October 17, this is exactly what we will collect and drop into the report, at its real size, including any student who does not complete.

- [October update: Fall 2026 LaunchLab outcomes] Cohort of ten. Attendance and completion, Demo Day pitches delivered, and the students who did not complete, reported the same honest way the Spring funnel is.
- [October update: Fall 2026 pre and post] The six entrepreneurial muscles, re-rated by the same students at the end, with the movement per muscle. Reported as the group, never an individual.
- [October update: in their own words, and mentor observations] Exit reflections and student quotes under documented permission, founders credited as Anonymous Founder, plus what mentors and guest speakers saw across the six weeks.

The rest of 2026.

After the Fall cohort closes on October 17 there may be little further program delivery this calendar year. That is deliberate. The rest of the year goes into the evidence, relationships, and infrastructure that 2027 depends on.

WORKSTREAM	WHAT WE ARE DOING BEFORE JANUARY
Program and impact	Finish Fall LaunchLab well. Complete post-program measurement and the facilitator debrief. Decide what the 2026 evidence changes about 2027, including the theme and the cohort count. Document the Readiness Series architecture so it is teachable to someone other than its author.
Development and relationships	Build the grant calendar and donor pipeline. Giving Tuesday and year-end giving. Outreach for a 2027 sponsored cohort or challenge. Local relationship building through business expos, chambers, nonprofits, employers, and funders. Reconnect where a relationship has gone quiet.
Operations and governance	The 2027 budget and operating plan. Data ownership, student ID, consent, retention, and follow-up fields. A partner CRM. Clear committee priorities. Fewer relationships that live only with the founder.
Marketing and outreach	Get the website, this report, and the strategic plan telling one story. Capture the 2026 evidence and stories while they are fresh. Prepare a concise 2027 partnership one-pager and follow-up materials for expos and relationship meetings.
Evidence and learning	Finalize the 2026 data into one source of truth. Preserve the raw qualitative material, not only the summaries. Set the longitudinal follow-up fields. Define minimum measures across the Navigator, Readiness, LaunchLab, mentorship, internships, and opportunity conversion.

2027 is a proof year.

The question is not whether we can serve more students. It is whether we can reliably move one student from not knowing what they are good at, through readiness and real work, into evidence they can show, a relationship that lasts, and a credible next step. Nobody has walked that whole path with us yet.

WHAT WE ARE COMMITTING TO

- **Prove the sequence end to end** with a group small enough that we can see every student in it.
- **Pilot at least one paid or sponsored multi-session Readiness Series** with a partner, ideally inside an internship, workforce, or college context.
- **Run LaunchLab at a volume we can support well.** One core cohort is the planning assumption. A second is conditional, not automatic.
- **Broaden the mentorship pipeline beyond UConn** through alumni, employers, partner organizations, professional associations, and near-peer recruitment.
- **Keep the summer internship as an in-house authentic-work pathway**, with the four things our 2026 interns asked for: clearer roles, written project briefs, honest communication when a project pivots, and steadier coaching.
- **Build the minimum longitudinal data system before expanding volume**, not after.
- **Use the Roundtables and relationship meetings as the development engine** rather than running a separate cold outreach effort.
- **Diversify revenue** across unrestricted giving, grants, board giving, sponsorship, and Readiness contracts.
- **Stay put geographically.** Expansion is not a proof-year activity.

THREE THINGS THAT ARE DECISIONS, NOT PLANS

The LaunchLab 2027 theme has not been chosen. The cohort count defaults to one and a second has to earn its place against Fall 2026 completion and evidence, facilitator capacity, recruitment, funding, and mentor coverage, and it should test a real question rather than add headcount. And the sponsored college experience happens if a suitable partner is secured, which is not yet the case. All three go to the board in October. We would rather show you an open decision than a decided-looking sentence.

The decade ahead.

The board is reviewing a 2027 to 2036 strategic plan alongside this report. It organizes the next ten years around four pillars rather than around a growing list of programs. The short version is below; the year-by-year roadmap, including the gates between stages, lives in the plan itself.

01

Program and impact

Prove and deepen the pathway: self-understanding, readiness, exploration, authentic experience, relationships, opportunity, and eventually alumni who build for the people behind them. Protect quality over volume.

02

Development and relationships

Build diversified funding and the relationships that produce grants, donors, sponsors, partners, mentors, opportunity hosts, introductions, and long-term institutional support.

03

Operations and governance

Build the staff, board, finance, risk, data governance, safeguarding, quality assurance, succession, and reserves needed to carry this responsibly. Most of this does not exist yet, and we are naming it because that is the honest starting point.

04

Marketing and outreach

Build the clarity, recruitment, partner awareness, thought leadership, referral networks, and public trust that bring the right students, families, partners, employers, and funders into the ecosystem.

Evidence, learning, and research run through all four rather than sitting inside one. Program asks whether students change. Development asks whether the evidence justifies the investment. Operations protects the quality and privacy of the data. Marketing communicates what we found without overstating it. Across all four, the discipline is the same: measure what changes.

WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO BECOME

Not a bigger version of what we are now. The organization that sits between prepared young people and the places that have real problems, real mentors, and real jobs, and makes the distance between them shorter. We would build the preparation, the standards, and the relationships, and connect to the opportunities that already exist rather than trying to recreate them. That is the same principle that governs how we run today: build what is core to readiness, partner where someone else can take a student further.

The Roundtable Series.

Starting this fall, we are opening a monthly table. Ninety minutes, about ten seats, and a mix of people who all touch the same problem from different sides. Parents, students, educators, nonprofit leaders, and people from the corporate world, with young people in the conversation rather than seated in the audience.

The first question we are taking up is who is actually responsible for workforce readiness. It is a real disagreement, and everyone at the table holds a piece of the answer. We are starting virtual and moving to in person later.

This is not a fourth program and we do not want it read as one. It is how we intend to build relationships from here. We would rather sit down with people around a problem we both care about than send a cold ask to someone who has never heard of us. Nobody is put on the spot in the room and nobody is sold to. If there is an invitation, it comes afterward and privately, and it is matched to what that person actually said they cared about.

WHY WE ARE TELLING FUNDERS ABOUT THIS

It answers a fair question about an organization our size, which is how we know what young people need. We ask them, we work alongside them, and now we are putting them at a table with the adults who make decisions about their futures. What comes out of those conversations feeds our series and our curriculum, so the roundtables are not separate from the programs. They are where a good part of the next version of them will come from.

HOW WE WILL JUDGE WHETHER IT IS WORKING

Not by how many people came. A full room that produces nothing is a nice evening. We are tracking whether relationships actually progress: introductions made, mentors recruited, partner conversations opened, co-hosts gained, funders and donors engaged, opportunities created for students, people who come back a second time, and what we learned about the field that we could not have learned from our own students. Those go in a CRM, and we keep them separate from student outcome data on purpose.

The discipline we are holding ourselves to.

The next two years are for proof, not size. Until one student has walked the whole path with us and come out the other side with evidence they can show and a relationship that lasts, growing would just multiply something unproven.

That has a cost and we accept it. It means turning down volume we could probably fill. It means a second LaunchLab cohort has to argue for itself. It means we spend part of this year building data infrastructure instead of running another program, which is not the kind of thing that photographs well. We think it is the right order, and the strategic plan the board is reviewing is built on stage gates rather than a growth curve for exactly that reason.

WHAT THAT MEANS FOR THIS REPORT

You should expect the next few editions of this document to stay small and get more specific rather than getting bigger. If our numbers jump before the pathway is proven, that is a reason to ask us harder questions, not a reason to celebrate.

READING THIS ALONGSIDE THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This report is the record of what happened and what we learned from it. The 2027 to 2036 Strategic Plan is where the reasoning, the year-by-year roadmap, the stage gates, and the board decisions live. Where the two documents describe the same thing, the plan is the current source of truth on strategy and this report is the source of truth on what has actually occurred.

Come build with us.

There are four ways to partner with Bold Futures Academy in the year ahead. Each one moves a real piece of the work forward.

01

Give

Fund a student or a cohort. Tiers run from \$100 for program supplies to \$2,500 to sponsor five students through a full LaunchLab program, and \$10,000 or more for Core Partner recognition. Monthly giving starts at \$10.

02

Partner

Bring a readiness series to your young people, or add the professional development layer to an internship program you already run. Schools, youth-serving nonprofits, employers, colleges, and faith communities build it into their existing programming. Quoted as a series.

03

Volunteer

Give your skill rather than your money. Volunteer mentors, guest speakers, and Demo Day panelists are the highest leverage gift outside of capital, and companies can send employees as a group. A few hours across six weeks.

04

Refer

Send us a student, a board candidate, or a funder you know would care. Our growth depends on warm referrals from people who already understand the work, and most of what we have was built that way.

HOW TO REACH US, AND HOW TO GIVE

TO DO THIS

GO HERE

Give online	givebutter.com/boldfuturesacademy , one time or monthly
Give by check	Bold Futures Academy Foundation, 153 Turner Road, Rockland, MA 02370
Talk it through	Book thirty minutes at calendly.com/ruth-tryfairy/30min
Anything else	admin@boldfuturesacademy.org · boldfuturesacademy.org

Bold Futures Academy Foundation · EIN 33-3751028 · A 501(c)(3) nonprofit. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law, and donors giving \$250 or more receive a receipt automatically.

A note from our founder.

Bold Futures Academy began as an act of faith. I kept watching young people be handed a future that was changing faster than anything they had been taught to meet it with, and I recognized the pattern. Every time technology leaps, the people without the new skills get left behind. I was not willing to watch that happen to a generation I believe in.

This is also me giving something back. I would not have had the confidence to build a corporate career, or to start ventures of my own, without people who spoke into my life at every stage of it, from childhood right through my career. They gave me room to try, to get it wrong, and to keep going. That is why mentorship sits inside everything we run, and why I want students in the habit of seeking wisdom from people who have already walked the road.

What I want for these students is simple. Know what you are worth and say it out loud. See the root of a hard problem instead of the symptom. Speak for yourself and for your generation in any room you walk into. Be led by your ethics and not only by what pays. And know that whatever you build, somebody is behind you.

If any of that sounds like work you want a hand in, the pages before this one show you exactly where we are and what it would move. I would be glad to hear from you.

Vanessa Ruth Gay

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR · BOLD FUTURES ACADEMY

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BOLD FUTURES ACADEMY.

*Preparing young people for their futures, whatever path
they choose.*