

September 9, 2008

Barr Fellows Program

The Barr Fellows Program honors the contributions of the most gifted and experienced leaders in the Boston area. Over a three-year period that includes a sabbatical, international travel, a series of retreats, and peer learning, these distinguished leaders have an important opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of their organizations and find the inspiration to attain even higher levels of effectiveness, creativity, and innovation.

Barr Fellows - Class of 2009Andy Kendall

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Overview

The Barr Fellows program is designed to focus on leadership. It is intended to honor the contributions of the Boston area's most gifted and experienced nonprofit and public school leaders by giving them an opportunity for replenishment, and by supporting their organizations during this time. These leaders primarily come from nonprofits working within the Barr Foundation's program areas of education, environment and the arts, but the interdisciplinary nature of the problems we seek to address calls for a broader mix and therefore also includes leaders from housing and social services. The growing diversity of our city, especially the increase in immigrant populations, also suggests that effective leaders must develop a global perspective. We have built that learning into our design as well.



There are two components to the Barr Fellows program. The first component is a fellowship awarded to 12 leaders that consists of a three month sabbatical and five retreats over the course of three years. The sabbatical is designed uniquely in that the first two weeks bring the Fellows together as a cohort for deep immersion in an inspirational context.

The second component is designed to support the leaders' organizations. Support to the organization will be both financial and technical so that the leader's absence is a source of organizational development rather than a deficit. By focusing attention on the interim management of the organization, the program can promote organizational development and mentor new leadership.

Through this program, the Foundation expects to increase the collective contribution that both the leaders and their organizations make to their fields and the Boston area over the next decade.

Why

According to a report on Executive Director Tenure in Southern New England, the majority of nonprofit executives are over 50 years old and have over 16 years experience in the sector. Unlike the academic sector, in which seasoned professionals find opportunities for rejuvenation and inspiration on sabbatical, the nonprofit sector highly constrains the ability of most nonprofit leaders to step away from day-to-day operations. As a result, the sector is not leveraging their wisdom and full capacity to contribute. Sabbaticals can create the space and inspiration needed to attain even higher levels of effectiveness, creativity, and innovation.



In addition, leaders tend to remain isolated within their organizations, their fields and their geographies. By bringing a cohort of diverse Fellows together from different fields and connecting them with developing nation leaders, the Barr Fellows program is building both local and international networks.