

Making a difference

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Trinity Access Programme/Grant Thornton Foundation Course for Higher Education – Young Adults

As a professional services firm, we believe that our greatest asset is our people and by investing in their development, everyone benefits - the firm, staff and clients. Through leveraging the skills developed in the Grant Thornton Academy (our in-house ‘university’) we can also contribute towards making a difference in the wider community. For this reason Grant Thornton became directly involved with the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP). The Trinity Access Programme/Grant Thornton Foundation Course for Higher Education - Young Adults aims to provide professional role models to students and develop their practical skills in the areas of career development, transferable skills and study skills.

“At the heart of our social responsibility strategy is our desire to make a difference in our community. Our involvement with TAP has not only made a difference to the people on the programme, our own people have been inspired by the drive, ability and motivation of the young adults in achieving their goals. We firmly believe that while financial contribution has a part to play in corporate social responsibility, giving wholeheartedly of your time, knowledge and experience is what can bring about the greatest change to people’s lives and the community.”

Paul Raleigh, Managing Partner Grant Thornton

“In the current economic climate the challenge for students from disadvantaged backgrounds is all the greater and the need for support more acute. At the same time there is increasing recognition that we must harness the rich potential and talent across all social groupings if Ireland is to meet the opportunities of the future.”

Vice-Provost and Chief Academic Officer Trinity College Dublin

Trinity Access Programmes

Trinity College has committed to ensuring a significant increase in participation at third level of those who for social, economic and educational reasons have not yet realised their full educational potential. TAP has, since 1993, developed a range of educational projects to engage greater numbers of students from under-represented socio-economic groups in third-level education. The Trinity Access Programme/Grant Thornton Foundation Course for Higher Education – Young Adults is an innovative approach to preparing young adults from low income backgrounds for higher education. Each year students are invited to apply from schools which are located in the inner city and greater Dublin area. The course is aimed at students who can demonstrate, through grades, application and an interview, a flair for a particular subject area that would lead them to degree level study but would not normally progress to higher education without this intervention. Students on the course are all from low income backgrounds and have consistently been observed as the most socio-economically disadvantaged student group with which Trinity Access Programme works. Each year twenty-seven students enrol on the course.



Trinity Access Programme Young Adults meet with Grant Thornton management and staff

Leading by Example

Foundation Course students have few professional role models, particularly those engaged in graduate employment. Grant Thornton is involved in its second of four years of supporting, educating and guiding the young adults participating in the Trinity Access Programme/Grant Thornton Foundation Course for Higher Education – Young Adults through mentoring the students and holding workshops in various topics.

The programme enables students to develop an appreciation of the reality of working in a professional environment. Students get the opportunity to experience the environment first hand, to link directly with people working in graduate careers and to make informed decisions about the career paths they would like to pursue.

All Foundation Course students are paired with a mentor in Grant Thornton who they engage with throughout the academic year to discuss a variety of topics around continuing education and career progression. To further support the students, we deliver a number of workshops in our offices which cover topics such as:

- transferable/life skills and development;
- presentation skills; and
- CV development and interview skills.

Students are offered the opportunity to combine what they have learned in the workshops through interviews held with senior management in the firm and two students are offered an eight week summer placement with the firm to gain further insight into working in a professional environment. Over thirty staff from the firm including member of the Partners, Directors and Managers (PDMs) group and staff are involved in programme development, preparation and mentoring of the programme.



Managing Partner Paul Raleigh talks with some of the students in our boardroom

CLEARR Values

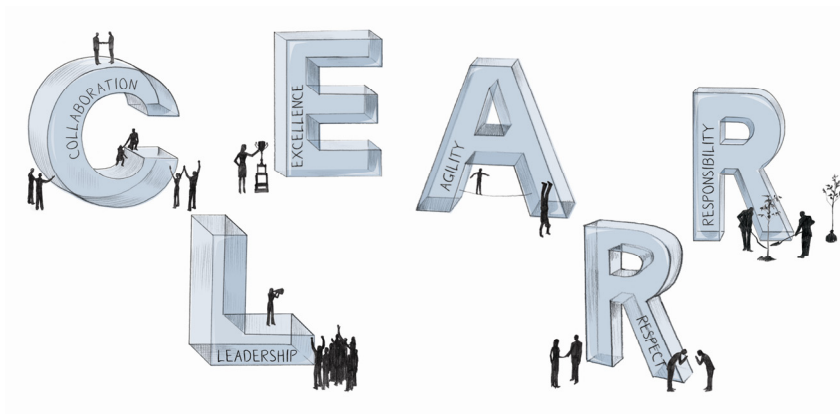
The Trinity Access Programme/Grant Thornton Foundation Course for Higher Education – Young Adults programme supports our firm’s values which are CLEARR (Collaboration, Leadership, Excellence, Agility, Respect and Responsibility) in the following ways:

- collaborating with others to achieve change through learning;
- leading by example for the rest of the business community;
- sharing excellence through the Grant Thornton Academy;
- operating with agility in dealing with the different challenges encountered along the way;
- treating people with respect at all times; and
- through taking responsibility for bridging a gap we see in society in terms of education for all.

We really believe we can add value to society through working with the Trinity Access Programme. The high quality of staff recruited and trained by Grant Thornton means there is an exceptional resource available which can offer dedicated mentoring services to the wider community.

In addition, through living the values, our own people reap the rewards. Our commitment to educational access programmes provides a structured and focused channel through which they can become actively involved in giving ‘something back to the community.’

Grant Thornton’s involvement with this project is a natural extension of the importance placed on the continuous need for a high standard of education and continuing professional development amongst staff in that it targets students in the community who have the ability to benefit from and succeed in higher education. If it was not for this intervention, for a variety of social and economic reasons, they may not get this opportunity and the statistics show us that this group of people are under-represented at third level.



Corporate Social Responsibility

The cornerstone of the firm's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy is the commitment within our own business to education and training. It makes sense to leverage a skill set prevalent throughout the organisation; education and training - to assist the wider community. Grant Thornton's involvement in educational access programmes is a natural extension of the firm's core values in terms of the importance placed on the continuous need for a high standard of education and continuing professional development amongst staff.

Strategy is always about making choices and success in CSR is no different. The high quality of staff recruited by Grant Thornton means there is an exceptional resource available which can offer dedicated mentoring services to the wider community. It is important that as a firm, Grant Thornton can provide a means by which staff feel they are fulfilled on a social level, as well as a career level. The firm's commitment to educational access programmes provides a structured and focused channel through which staff can become actively involved in giving something back to the community. Grant Thornton's CSR strategy is designed to reflect the firm's philosophy, to fulfil a need within the community and to match the available resources of the firm with the objective of the overall project.

Grant Thornton's CSR strategy is aimed predominantly at those areas in which we consistently achieve above average results - education, training and delivering client service. Our policy is based on the belief that the more closely tied a social issue is to the firm's business, the greater the opportunity to leverage our resources and capabilities, and benefit society. It allows for the creation of a symbiotic relationship whereby the success of the company and the success of the community become mutually reinforcing.



Partner Patrick Burke speaking at the programme launch in September 2009



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