

College Unbound and Hip-Hop Education Center Launch Bachelor's Degree for Hip-Hop Educators and Cultural Leaders

College Unbound and Hip-Hop Education Center Launch National Bachelor's Degree Cohort for Hip-Hop Educators and Cultural Leaders

PROVIDENCE, RI, UNITED STATES, April 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [College Unbound](#), in partnership with the [Hip-Hop Education Center](#) (HHEC) today announced the launch of a national cohort designed specifically for Hip-Hop educators, cultural leaders, and teaching artists working toward their Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership & Change.



The hybrid degree program supports adult learners in translating their lived experience into academic credit while building the leadership skills needed to expand Hip-Hop-based education across schools, community spaces, and cultural institutions nationwide. Rooted in a student-driven model, College Unbound integrates action research, project-based learning, and real-world application. Through its credit-for-experience approach, students can complete their degree in less time and at a lower cost than traditional programs, while applying their work directly to their communities.

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Martha Diaz, Founder and President of the Hip-Hop Education Center

“From their origins, College Unbound and Hip-Hop have always both centered people pushed to the margins,

valued experience as expertise, and treated learning as communal, political, and creative,” said Adam Bush, President of College Unbound. “This cohort, in partnership with the Hip-Hop Education Center speaks also to our shared ethic of collective improvisation. We will learn,

adapt, and build together and, in doing so, honor the voices of elders, remix the systems we teach within, and continue to teach toward liberation.”

Hip-Hop education continues to grow as a powerful approach to culturally responsive teaching, creative expression, and critical engagement.

This program equips participants with the tools to bring Hip-Hop pedagogy into K-12 classrooms, higher education, and community-based learning environments.



Participants in the Hip-Hop cohort will:

- Learn alongside a national network of educators, artists, and organizers
- Earn academic credit for professional and lived experience
- Develop expertise in Hip-Hop pedagogy, literacy, entrepreneurship, and cultural curation
- Complete a capstone project applying Hip-Hop education frameworks in real-world settings.

Graduates will earn a Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership & Change from College Unbound, preparing them for leadership roles across education, nonprofit organizations, and cultural sectors.

“Hip-Hop education is about honoring the wisdom of our communities while equipping learners with the tools to transform systems,” said Martha Diaz, Founder and President of the Hip-Hop Education Center. “This program builds on decades of work in the field and creates a pathway for the next generation of educators and cultural leaders.”

This initiative is supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education’s Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program, which expands pathways for educators working toward their degrees. The inaugural cohort includes 10 participants, artists, educators, and cultural practitioners from across the country, supported by a network of leading Hip-Hop scholars and educators. Martha Diaz serves as the Lab Faculty, with Anjel “Aashari X” Newmann as Educator-in-Residence and Anthony Vieira as CU Alumni Mentor.

Inaugural Student Cohort

Asante Amin is a multidisciplinary artist and educator who has created original works for institutions like Carnegie Hall and Apollo Theater. Through his work with Soul Science Lab, he blends music, culture, and leadership to build sustainable models that support artists and creative communities.

Easy A.D., co-founder of the The Legendary Cold Crush Brothers, created the I Am Hip Hop book series to share authentic Hip-Hop history with students and families. The series highlights

pioneers from the culture's four founding elements and brings their legacy into the classroom for the next generation.

GrandMixer DXT, known as the world's first "Turntablist," transformed the turntable into a recognized musical instrument in the 1980s. He collaborated with Herbie Hancock on the Grammy-winning "Rockit," developed innovative restoration techniques like Forensic Editing, and has been honored for his lasting impact on Hip-Hop and music history.

Jasmine "DJ Bella J" Coan is a DJ, entrepreneur, and Hip-Hop educator working to elevate DJing within schools and communities. She is the founder of On The One, DJ Center and creator of More Than The Mix, a curriculum that blends leadership, creativity, community engagement, and career readiness to position DJs as educators and cultural leaders.

Marlon Richardson aka UnLearn The World is a chart-topping Hip-Hop artist, award-winning educator, and cultural strategist who blends music with social impact and education. Known for powerful performances alongside artists like Rakim and Talib Kweli, his work explores mental health, spirituality, and social justice. He also serves as Executive Director of Hip Hop For Change, using Hip-Hop education to empower emerging artists and leaders.

Otis L. Sharp Jr., known as DJ O Sharp, is a Columbus-based DJ, educator, and community arts advocate with over 30 years of experience. He serves as Creative Director at Arts Impact Middle School and teaches Hip-Hop Studies at The Ohio State University, blending culture, education, and community through music and mentorship.

PRiZM, born in the Bronx and raised by Hip-Hop pioneers, is a respected Hip-Hop cultural specialist and advocate with over 30 years of experience. A practitioner of all nine core elements of Hip-Hop, he uses culture, music, and identity to inspire and empower audiences worldwide through speaking, workshops, and youth mentorship.

Sebastien "Seb" Elkouby is a longtime Hip-Hop educator who created Global Awareness through Hip-Hop Culture, a high school course connecting Hip-Hop and social justice. Taught across Los Angeles for over 20 years, the class was officially recognized in 2020 by California's Career Technical Education Arts, Media, and Design division.

DJ Verseti, also known as International Verseti, is a New York City-based DJ, entrepreneur, and entertainment executive from Queens with Colombian and French roots. A member of the Universal Zulu Nation, she transitioned from a decade in the restaurant industry to a multifaceted career spanning music, film, and business. She is also a life coach, speaker, and strategist dedicated to using her talents to uplift communities and inspire positive change.

Whitney Taber is a music industry executive with over 17 years of experience and former Vice President of The Record Plant. She now serves as Director of Partnerships & Business Development at Girls Make Beats and leads Pretty Funny Productions, creating strategic

partnerships and impactful media that expand creative opportunities.

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