Letter from the Founder

“Surge is a superhero camp.”
One of our fellows said that. It is a bold statement, but the energy behind such a statement captures what we aim to be.

Bold.

We want black and brown children in underserved communities to be bold. We want the people leading their educational institutions to be bold. We want boldness because that is what it takes for true change to occur.

When I launched Surge in 2014, I emptied bank accounts and said goodbye to a significant portion of my retirement funds. It was frightening at the time, but changing the face of education leadership was never going to be easy. I had a dream and a purpose. And then I called on my friends, respected education leaders, and suddenly we had a dream and a purpose.

Our first Surge cohort consisted of twelve fellows. It was six months long and we barely have any photos to capture that exciting, chaotic and invigorating period of empowering a small group of passionate young educators, but seeing the leaders who emerged from that group put a bold red stamp of validation on our dream.

Surge was real.

Since then, those twelve fellows have moved onward and upward in their careers, influencing changes in educational institutions, directly impacting the lives of kids who look like them, and publicly thanking Surge for pushing them to where they are. In the past two years, we’ve had two more cohorts, and the Surge Fellowship has more than doubled in size. We’ve seen more and more entry points to serving the underserved and fighting for diversity in institutions whose leadership does not reflect the communities they serve.

This annual report is as much a look ahead as it is a look back. You can peruse our financials, see who our wonderful supporters are and get the gist of what Surge is, but you can also see into the future. You can see the impact on the lives of our fellows and the communities they serve. You can see the growth of our signature program, the Surge Fellowship, and the evolution of the institute. Most of all you can glean the knowledge that we love what we do.

There are big prospects on the horizon for Surge. We are growing. We are changing. We are impacting. And the reason for all of that is simple.

We are bold.

In community,

CARMITA SEMAAN
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT
ABOUT US

Forty-eight percent of K-12 students nationwide, and significantly more in urban areas, are non-white; while only 17 percent of teachers, 6 percent of superintendents, and 11 percent of board members represent these populations. This reveals a glaring disconnect, a dearth of leadership of color at the decision-making tables within education. The Surge Fellowship, Surge Institute’s signature program, addresses this issue by educating, empowering and energizing emerging educational leaders of color.
The Surge Fellowship is the signature program of the Surge Institute and encompasses a combination of case discussions, executive coaching, school/site visits, 360° feedback, reflection, team-building, and “fireside chats” with education leaders, urban superintendents, and policy leaders—all to broaden exposure and accelerate skill and leadership development.

High-profile leaders in education and other industries are faculty members and informal advisers to the network of Surge Fellows. The acquisition of hard skills, entrée to often inaccessible networks, and the deeply rooted connections to their communities position fellows to grow, push, and persist for excellence and equity in public education.

The fellowship ends with a capstone project, which represents an application of the skills developed in the program and allows fellows to use what they’ve learned to provide solutions to real-world issues.

Surge Fellows leave the program having developed competency in organizational management, relationship management, strategic planning and problem solving, navigating complex environments, and expertise in the history and structure of public education. Upon completion, fellows have demonstrated an ability to lead and have tremendous impact on the broad landscape of leadership and education.
How the Surge Fellowship Changed Me

by Marilyn Rhames

I came to the Surge Fellowship feeling professionally stuck. I knew I was full of untapped talent and potential and felt if I didn’t change something significant, I wasn’t going to break through to the next level of impact. Surge not only provided the leadership acceleration curriculum that I desperately needed, but the excellence and care by which they did their work inspired me when no words were being spoken.

Surge breeds self-empowerment and a sense of community. Thanks to the fellowship’s instruction on building negotiation skills, I now understand the value I bring to the table, and I am able to advocate for what I believe in without apology. I also have widened my professional network in ways that put me on a first-name basis with executives and leaders who I otherwise would never have met.

I used to invest lots of time in improving my weakness, but Surge helped me to identify my strengths and encouraged me to lead with them. This paradigm shift has caused me to be more authentic in my pursuits, making me more joyous and productive in my work than ever before.
100% of Alumni report that Surge significantly improved at least one executive skill or ability (e.g. public speaking skills), and most commonly report that Surge improved their change management abilities.

83% of Alumni confirmed their Fellowship experience increased their confidence and ability to articulate and advocate for their point of view.

78% of Alumni report increased credibility and influence within their organization.

74% of Alumni confirm their professional network has substantially increased because of their involvement with Surge.

65% of Alumni indicate they currently serve as a mentor and model to more professionals because of Surge.

87% of Alumni report that because of their experience with Surge, they have changed policies and practices, created system-level change or started a new organization to create change.

75% of 2015 Fellows have either been promoted to a new role, have more responsibility, or have received professional recognition since their affiliation with the Surge Institute.

80% Surge Alumni referred at least one candidate for the fellowship.
Know the Landscape

When he started the Surge Fellowship, Adrian DeLeón was working as a data strategist for the Chicago Public Schools system. He was enjoying the job but dreamed of making an impact beyond one city and one school district. Adrian also wanted to learn to be a better leader – to inspire people to follow his vision. Just several months later, he got all of that, and more.

The Surge Fellowship culminates in a capstone project, and Adrian used his to test a business idea: a system that enhanced the capacity of school principals to use data to drive sustainable change in their schools. He developed the idea and received feedback from peers and staff within the fellowship. Soon afterward, Adrian happened to meet the CEO of an ed tech company. He pitched the CEO his idea – using the presentation and the skills he polished during the fellowship. The executive was intrigued and eventually invited Adrian to join the company to launch and head the Strategy Group within CSC Consulting Group. While the fellowship was transformative in many ways, he particularly appreciated the support of Carmita Semaan, the Founder and President.

“I credit a lot [of the success in my career transition] to Carmita and her commitment. She has made herself available and given me advice along the entire life cycle of my new venture, from pitching the idea to a potential supporter to how to be successful in social entrepreneurship in general. Currently, she is an official business advisor of mine, and I am very lucky to have her by my side.”

As to his influential leadership skills, Adrian feels he has made good progress there, too. The whole fellowship experience, and the ongoing support of an executive coach provided as part of the program, helped him achieve just that. As a testament to how he learned to influence people, Adrian mentions he has been able to navigate the challenges of being an intrapreneur within an existing business as well as holding leadership roles within various boards in education outside of work. He feels that before the fellowship, he would not have had the skills to motivate people to follow his lead on key initiatives within his company, as well as with affiliated organizations.
“As you get higher up on the leadership ladder, it gets harder to be yourself if you don’t know who you are,” Ana Martinez said. “The pressures to acquiesce to the politics get stronger.”

Ana went from being a founding principal at a school to being executive director at a prominent nonprofit. She currently leads midwest regional programs for New Leaders and will also assume responsibility for external relations as of January 2017. The organization provides training and support to school leaders, with the mission to ensure high academic achievement for all children.

Surge helped Ana get a better understanding of her core values and a grasp on her identity in totality. “My Surge experience shook my understanding of myself – the intersection of my values, my intentions, and my life purpose,” Ana said. For years, Ana believed that she needed to omit some of her identity in her work until she learned that her story was both beautiful and powerful. During Surge, she began to embrace all of her identity markers – including that of single mother, child abuse survivor, and immigrant – as strengths as opposed to weaknesses. This new understanding led Ana to ensure that every aspect of her life aligned with her values and the impact she seeks to have in the world.

The Surge Fellowship also broadened Ana’s understanding of the wider context of education and the role of leaders of color. This knowledge, coupled with clarity on her values, gave Ana the courage she needs to make an impact. She said, “Our work today requires us to swim against the current. It calls upon us to be bold and courageous to put the issue of race and poverty on the table when we talk about what is happening in education.” And the fellowship forged during Surge has helped too: “I know that others [Surge Alumni] are fighting the same fight. That builds your courage and lifts you up.”
Donors give us life. Surge thanks our institutional and individual donors for supporting our movement.
Supporters

SURGE PRINCIPALS
$5,000 and above
Supports one year of executive coaching for a fellow

Greg Gunn & Lisette Nieves
Nneka Rimmer
Paula A. Sneed & Lawrence P. Bass
David Vitale

SURGE SCHOLARS
$3,000 - $4,999
Supports tuition for a fellow

Stacy Gibbons
Leslie Kerner
Krista Marks
Michelle & Jonathan Russell

SURGE SHARKS
$1,000-$2,999
Supports key fellowship activities (such as Shark Tank)

Kim & Mark Buckley
Cleveland Harris
Irene Holmen
Marene Jennings
Steve King
Deborah Quazzo
Barbara & Walter Scott
Liz & Preston Smith
Elizabeth Wohlleb

SURGE ADVOCATES
$500-$999
Supports monthly session for a fellow

Maryellen Butke
Sarah Duncan
Wendell Fortson
Tashula Gauthier
Mark Haggarty
Kevin Hall
Scott Lundius
Heather & Kenny Mitchell
Ylonn Parker
Angelique Power
Judith & Alex Toland
Varsha Vig
Doyoung Yong

SURGE COLLABORATORS
$1-$499
Supports 360 assessment for a fellow

Adedayo Aderinto
Angie Alleman
Marelia Ash
Darren Armstrong
Matthew Barnhill
Jocelyn Basley
Polly Baur
Pamela Bender
Sarah Berghorst
Michelle Bess
Swati Bharteey-Buck
Kesner Bienvenu
Joy Bivins
Larry Brannon
Les Browne
Jean-Claude Brizard
Thomas Burnette
Linda Burroughs
Jennifer Burrowes
Fatima Butler
Connie Casson
Savinay Chandrasekhar
Angela & Darryl Cobb
SURGE COLLABORATORS

$1-499
Supports 360 assessment for a fellow

Justin Cohen
Melissa Connelly
Antonia Contro
Florence Culpepper
Jason Cummings
Danielle Davis
Adrian DeLeon
Aarti Dhupelia
Tosha Downey
Julia Dreifuss
Kerry-Ann Dyce
Sasha Dzubay
Jack Elsey
Jeff Epton
April Ervin
Larry Evans
Sue & Tom Fangmann
Kyla Fletcher
Sylvia Flowers
Christopher Goins
Joshua Hale
Akilah Halley
Erica Harris
Michael Harris
Vincent Harris
Yolanda Harris
Monica Haslip
Alex Hernandez
Lynnae Hill
Matt Hill
Darrick Hooker
Jeff & Akeshia Howell
Cedrick Hunter, Jr.
Jennifer Husbands
Gloria Jackson
Marcia R. Jeffries
Keisha Jeremie
Ariel Johnson
Meghan Joniec
Jason Kamras
Robin Kelly

Becca Bracy Knight
Lisa Kornick
Alison Kutler
Gloria Lee
Steve Levine
Tom Levinson
Aaron Lieberman
Brian Madine
Grisel Maldonado
Raina Maldonado
Tyra Mariani
Anne Matz
Stacy McAuliffe
Jeff McCarter
Deborah McGriff
Shereye McLeary
Danielle Merriweather-McDaniels
Julie Milder
Christin Mirabelli
Edwin Mitchell
Stacey D. Mitchell
Michelle Molitor
Candace Moore
Forrest Moore
Nadine Moore
Daphne Morgan
Michael Morgan
Lisa Mullaney
Vivek Murali
Thelma Neal
Lissette Nieves
Nche Onyema
Bianca Paiz
Kara Palamountain
Arlether Paraharm
David Park
Althea Parker
Kali Patrice
Angeliique Power
Tamara Prather
Rebecca Ramirez-Malagon

Kwame Raoul
Mizan Raoul
Marilyn Rhames
Michele Rogers
Shana Rooks
Evan Rudall
Sandra Rush
Khair Sadrud-Din
Mallory Salett
Sheila Saremzadeh
LeShonne Segura
Carmita & George Semaan
Jackie Hanselmann Sergi
Kameelah Shaheed-Diallo
Stacey Shells
Sara Simmons
Kellie Soliday
Andy Smarick
Sherina Smith
Gabriel Speyer
Melinda Spooner
Jackie Statum
Juliana Stratton
TaMikka Sykes
Margaret Vaughan-Goode
Janet Lopez Vilsack
Aaron Walker
Gayle Walker
Mylon Walker
Dafina Ward
Cynthia Weiss
Lakecia Whimper
DeRonda Williams
Pam Williams
Nicole Wilson
Terra Winston
Kira Wisniewski
Julie Woolf
Angel Zinger

*All listed donations occurred on or before June 30, 2016
### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
#### YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUE &amp; SUPPORT</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation grants</td>
<td>$193,438</td>
<td>$2,150,000</td>
<td>$2,343,438</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual contributions</td>
<td>68,294</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>68,294</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program income and other</td>
<td>36,349</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36,349</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest income</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net assets released from restrictions</td>
<td>806,724</td>
<td>(806,724)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue and Support</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,104,851</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,343,276</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,448,127</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENSES</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program services</td>
<td>885,677</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting services:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and general</td>
<td>113,561</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>50,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,049,868</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CHANGE IN NET ASSETS | 54,983 | 1,343,276 | 1,398,259 |
| NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR | 97,025 | 514,576 | 611,601 |
| **NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR** | **$152,008** | **$1,857,852** | **$2,009,860** |

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

#### ASSETS

| Cash | 799,012 |
| Pledges receivable, net | 1,273,333 |
| Deposits | 1,575 |
| **Total assets** | **$2,073,920** |

#### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

| Accrued expenses | 64,060 |
| **Total liabilities** | **64,060** |
| **Net Assets:** | |
| Unrestricted | 152,008 |
| Temporarily restricted | 1,857,852 |
| **Total net assets** | **2,009,860** |
| **Total liabilities and net assets** | **$2,073,920** |

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_These financial statements were abstracted from the Organization’s June 30, 2016 financial statements, which were audited by ICL, LLC. Because the information does not include all the disclosures required by accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, it does not purport to present the Organization’s financial conditions or results of operations. A copy of the audited financial statements will be provided upon request at the Organization’s office._

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**TOTAL REVENUES**
- 96% Foundation Grants
- 3% Individual Contributions
- 1% Program Income

**TOTAL EXPENSES**
- 84% Program Services
- 11% Supporting Services (Management & General)
- 5% Fundraising
Dream Big

Michael Johns and DuJuan Smith have personal stories worthy of a Hollywood film. A childhood spent in violent, drug-ridden communities; overcoming long odds to graduate college; choosing careers in education to make the path easier for others.

Michael is currently Director of Mentors and Volunteers at the Chicago Scholars Foundation. DuJuan is Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Illinois at Chicago. While they are both making a significant contribution in their chosen fields, the Surge experience pushed them to look for opportunities to do more. It became a catalyst for both men to focus on the impact they wanted to make.

During DuJuan’s time as fellow in the inaugural Surge cohort, the pair used the capstone project to start Seven7h Element, a nonprofit dedicated to helping young men who have been impacted by violence in their communities.

“A lot of young men do not have anyone who can show them a different perspective on life,” Michael said. “They mimic what they see, and because they see violence and drugs and abuse, they continue to build their lives in that type of environment. And it does not have to be that way.” He added, “It is important to have someone from a similar background telling you that you can get out.”

Michael and DuJuan feel that they have found a gap in the support infrastructure available to vulnerable young men. DuJuan explained, “There are a lot of excellent programs working with youth of color. But there aren’t many programs that focus on the social and emotional experiences of these young men. We help them process the traumatic experience in a healthy way, and instill a growth mindset in them.”

The Surge Fellowship experience has helped Michael and DuJuan by elevating their leadership skills and giving them training on networking, pitching, financing and other executive skills. The Institute also supported them directly by guiding them through the initial stages of planning, recruitment, and fundraising. The Surge Alumni are currently applying for seed money and are planning to launch the first cohorts in 2017. “The Seven7h Element would not exist without a courageous leader like Carmita and her entire team. [The Surge experience was about] saying to us, ‘You were uniquely born to bring something into this world.’ Let’s talk about what that something is,” DuJuan said.
Surging Forward

October 2014
Founded Surge Institute

April 2015
Launched Surge Fellowship (6-month pilot)

September 2015
Pilot cohort graduated

October 2015
Launched full-year cohort

August 2016
Second cohort graduated

September 2016
Launched third cohort

Fall 2017
Expansion to new city

October 2017
Launch fourth Chicago cohort

2018+
Further national growth

“As a first generation college graduate cultivating a career, Surge closes the gap – providing me with a support network, skills and critical access that I did not realize I was missing.”

- LeShonne Segura
Director of Family and Community Engagement, Northwestern University Settlement Association
Focus Inward

When a renowned nonprofit Melissa Connelly was working for announced an opening to lead the national program team, she did not consider applying. Instead, Melissa shared the job on social media and with her network. Other Surge Fellows were the first to ask why she was not applying for the position herself. “It took the Surge Fellowship to remind me that I was ready for a more senior leadership role,” she said. Melissa applied and beat 200 candidates to get the job.

The nonprofit, OneGoal, works to increase the percentage of students from low-income communities who complete college. Their vision is to give every young person in America a real opportunity to earn a college degree and the life that comes with it. As a first-generation college graduate, Melissa feels deeply committed to this goal.

The organization has recently expanded to several cities from its home base in Chicago. In her new role, Melissa works to ensure that their program performs well in every region. She manages a team responsible for program evaluation and analysis, innovation and design, data systems, and training and support.

Melissa describes her Surge Fellowship experience as life-changing. It gave her both the confidence and the tools to make the next big step in her career.

Melissa is still in touch with the organization and with fellow alumni. She describes how, when she was recently organizing a meeting for her remote team in Chicago, she contacted other Surge Fellows. “Within 24 hours, I had feedback on the theme and free space for three days for twenty people. As a first-generation college graduate myself, and as someone who grew up in a low-income household, not only did I not have that sort of network before, but I did not even understand the value of having such a network. I also saw how it put me on an even playing field with some of my more privileged peers.”
“People invest in people. This is why Surge is important. I’m not a unicorn – There is similar talent of color in our education community, but because they don’t get the attention, they also don’t get access. Now is the time for us to broaden the talent pool and invest in new ideas like Surge.”

– Kaya Henderson, Former Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools