The Face of Talent is the ad industry’s annual salute to the more than 100 multicultural interns who are screened by 4A’s members, trained by industry executives and presented after their 10-week MAIP internships as the top talent for hire.

“MAIP has brought so many agencies together to make it a successful program,” says Nancy Hill, 4A’s president-CEO. “It has been wonderful to watch this collaboration as MAIP touches so many lives across the country and brings the best and brightest to the industry.”

From a modest beginning in the summer of 1973 with 10 interns at New York agencies, MAIP has grown into the advertising industry’s most robust summer internship program. To date, it has groomed more than 2,500 undergraduate and graduate students, offering work experience, training and connections for life.

While the program is a unique opportunity for talented individuals of multicultural backgrounds, it also provides big benefits to the industry, which puts a lot of time and effort into making the program a success. “What the agencies have gotten out of it is incredible talent,” says Tiffany R. Warren, senior VP-chief diversity officer at Omnicom Group and former manager of diversity initiatives at the 4A’s, including MAIP.

Chris Weil, chairman-CEO of Momentum Worldwide, also sees MAIP as helping the industry meet its broad talent needs. “The advertising business is, more than ever, focused on authentic human connections—which opens up a world of possibilities; and talent revolution is essential for our business to make those possibilities a reality,” says Mr. Weil, current chairman of the 4A’s. “A variety of new perspectives, skills and ideas from a new generation of thinkers and makers will guarantee prosperity and excitement within our business, and MAIP is a vital industry effort working towards this goal.” Momentum is hosting interns in three cities this year.

Sallie Mars, senior VP-director of creative services and chief diversity officer at McCann Worldgroup: “Anytime you talk to recruiters and leaders of agencies, they will tell you we are in a talent war, and we want to make sure [the ad industry is] getting the most qualified people for any position.” McCann, which has been...
involved with MAIP since its start, hosts as many as six interns each year.

Felicia Geiger, senior VP-director of diversity and inclusion at Deutsch, another MAIP supporting agency, echoes the comments of Ms. Mars, who has served as chairwoman of the 4A’s Diversity Steering Committee for almost a decade. “Deutsch has always been mindful of making sure that we have diverse talent. [Through MAIP], we’ve gotten the satisfaction of knowing that we are hiring the best and brightest.”

A number of participating agencies say part of their goal is to offer employment to their interns at the end of the summer or when they graduate. “We see MAIP as a theater for future talent,” says Timothy Cecere, managing partner, chief talent officer and human resources director at GroupM. “It fulfills so many goals of the company. It’s not just giving opportunities to diverse students; it’s a talent stream for us going forward. It’s built into a much larger framework of what we are trying to do as an organization.”

Agency execs emphasize that while they do hope to be able to put new talent into their own pipeline through MAIP—more than 80% of last year’s class who sought work in the industry were hired within six months—it’s even more important to make sure the interns have a good experience and leave with a positive feeling about the advertising industry.

Says Mr. Cecere of GroupM, which brings in about 10 MAIP interns each summer to work at its various media agencies: “We understand that in most cases this is their first impression of working in an advertising agency or a media agency, so we want them to get a positive experience and know what it’s all about. We want to turn them on to the industry [so they want to] work in the industry.”

MAIP’s track record has been impressive. Ms. Hill says that at least once a month she runs into someone who went through MAIP. “When that happens I’m happily reminded just how far-reaching this program is and where the alumni have gone in their careers,” she says.

From Sheldon Levy, a member of the first MAIP class in 1973 who now serves as exec VP-executive producer at Saatchi & Saatchi, to Elena Figueroa, a 1991 intern who is now senior VP-media director at Tapestry, to Vann Graves, a 1994 intern, now exec VP-executive creative director at McCann Worldgroup, former interns are building careers not only at agencies but at media companies and major clients as well.

For Mr. Graves, who interned at BBDO, the program was pivotal in helping him achieve his career goals. “If it were not for MAIP, I would not be living my dream,” he says. “I always wanted to be an art director for an advertising agency from way back when because I loved [the sitcom] ‘Bewitched.’ Darrin [the mortal ad exec who marries the witch Samantha] … was drawing a lot and had a lot of friends. So that sounded like the perfect job.”

A key element of the program is exposing students to the field of advertising and marketing. Jose Fernandez, a 2004 MAIP intern, majored at a school that focused on accounting but wanted to work in an area other than finance. He says MAIP introduced him to an industry that he didn’t even know existed. “It showed me that advertising was a business,” says Mr. Fernandez, who joined Deutsch after his summer internship there. “The overall experience at Deutsch gave me the tools
to be an all-around professional.”
Singleton Beato, exec VP-diversity & inclusion strategy and talent development at the 4A’s, said MAIP gives agencies the talent that will help them create messages to reach the multicultural audiences now served. “You need different perspectives in the room,” she says.
“It’s not a competition [among agencies] when it comes to diversity,” Ms. Mars says. “We feel like we support MAIP, everybody should support MAIP. It’s going to be better for the industry as a whole.”
Eileen Benwitt, chief talent officer at Horizon Media, agrees: “MAIP has been the impetus for the changing face of advertising. We’re proud to be partners with a program that has brought forward diverse talent to our ever-changing industry.”
In fact, agencies are deeply involved with MAIP through every step of the program. Each year, 50 to 55 agency HR and talent professionals screen about 400 applications for MAIP. This leads to 275 semifinalists, who are then interviewed by the agency execs to yield that year’s class of interns.
“This is an elite program that is different from anything offered for budding advertising professionals,” says Carl Desir, manager, diversity programs at the 4A’s. “I can’t even put a value on the face time interns get with agency professionals. MAIP delivers an audience of top executives, a stage to spotlight your talent and tells you, ‘MAIP it happen! This industry supports you. You can do it.’ The entire experience is priceless.”
Agencies say MAIP helps them identify and nurture the diverse talent they need. With that as a goal, a number of agencies hold events such as seminars or panel discussions for all interns in their cities so execs at the host agencies can get a close look at the up-and-coming talent pool and see how the year’s prospects think and interact.
Deutsch hosts all New York MAIP interns at an annual panel discussion titled “Where Are They Now?” Former MAIP interns who are working in the industry talk about their experiences and answer questions such as, “How did you make a transition into an area of the agency that you did not intern in?”
Participation throughout the summer by former program interns shows current interns that MAIP is about much more than the 10 weeks they spend at an agency. “It’s not just the summer internship,” Ms. Geiger says. “It’s a life experience.”
These events at various agencies for all the interns in a particular city allow them to get a sense of the different agency cultures and their approaches to the work—the messages agencies send through the layout of the organization, what they display on walls and how employees interact with one another and communicate. “You get different messages from different environments,” Ms. Beato says. “Last year I had an intern say to me, ‘I went to this one agency, and I knew I was home.’ What was incredible was it really did become the right place for him. The workshops give the interns an opportunity to answer the question, ‘Is this place for me?’ ”

LIFELONG CONNECTIONS
The interns’ involvement with MAIP doesn’t end with their last day on the job. The MAIP Alumni Association was formed in 1996 by 1981 alumnus Marc Strachan, VP-multicultural marketing USA at Diageo-NA, to provide a variety of services, including job postings, professional development, networking events and a nationwide network of alumni contacts.
Says Ms. Hill, “To me, that is the measure of the value MAIP provides to the interns each year: the alumni who get, and stay, involved—and those of us who have the good fortune to work with them.”
At the end of their internships, the participants are flown to New York for The Face of Talent, where they are presented to more than 400 advertising, media and marketing executives from agency and client organizations who will inspire this year’s MAIP class and welcome them into the community.
“Not only is it a great opportunity to celebrate, it gives agencies a chance through the leadership luncheon to look at the power of what can happen when a community comes together around talent and, in this case, multicultural talent,” Ms. Beato says. “I know we have a long way to go as an industry. No one is saying we are done. But I do want our industry to take a second to look at what we have been able to accomplish and build together, and understand that if we continue to do this work together, we will see the change that we want.”

For 40 years, MAIP has been bringing together new thinkers, makers and storytellers from all walks of life. The result? Over 2,400 fresh faces, and an industry forever changed.
Here’s to 40 more.
FERNANDO FERNANDEZ  
Partner, Chief Client Officer  
d expósito & Partners, New York  
MAIP Class of 1985  
Internship Agency: Rosenfeld, Sirowitz & Lawson (now defunct)

“The process was challenging because the odds of getting in via the written submission was a long shot and then the face-to-face interview was intimidating, given the high level of advertising professionals you had to go through—a nail-biter all the way. MAIP gave me a really well-rounded view of the industry and allowed me to hone the natural people skills I did not know I had. It simply brought out the best in me.”

JUSTINE SONG HENNING  
Account Director  
HZDG, Rockville, Md.  
MAIP Class of 1996  
Internship Agency: Hill Holliday

“I was a senior and had no idea what I was going to do when I graduated. MAIP allowed me to intern at one of the top Boston agencies, which then turned into a full-time position. This opportunity opened the door to my career and I never took it for granted—which is why I try my best and give that same opportunity to others whenever I can.”

ERIC PRADO  
Global Account Director  
Energy BBDO, Chicago  
MAIP Class of 1995  
Internship Agency: Porter Novelli

“Being a MAIP intern, I learned to embrace my biculturalism. Instead of trying to fit in, I could bring insights into a growing segment of consumers that were underrepresented in the agency world. I am glad to see that the industry has noticeably changed in the 18 years I have been a part of it. Walking through the office today, I see many cultures represented behind the work and in front of the work.”

CHRISTENA J. PYLE  
Interactive Producer  
Wieden+Kennedy, New York  
MAIP Class of 2007  
Internship Agency: Arnold New York

“I hesitate to call my MAIP summer simply an internship—it was an experience and my greatest opportunity. MAIP introduced me to my mentor and good friend, who left such an indelible mark on me professionally. She reinforced that my differences are my strengths and that I should let them shine through on interviews and on the job. She taught me to be mindful that as I reach up, I should always reach back—an idea that I try to embody now as a producer and president of the MAIP Alumni Association.”

SANEEL RADIA  
Founder, Finch15  
Exec VP-Product Innovation, VivaKi  
Finch15, New York  
MAIP Class of 1999  
Internship Agency: Starcom

“I learned accountability at a level I’d never experienced before. It was incredible how much the company trusted me and how much room they gave me to try things my way, even when my supervisors knew it wasn’t right. I was so grateful for the opportunity to have people helping, guiding … me. Even this many years later I genuinely consider talent development one of the most important things I can bring to a company.”