

Future bright for The Leadership

By Karen Nitkin
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The Greater Baltimore Committee, founded more than 50 years ago, has been training business, government, academic and nonprofit community leaders since 1983 through its Leadership program. Every year, some 50 participants from an incredible diversity of cultural and career backgrounds take part in the program, discussing with ruthless honesty the problems that plague Baltimore and determining ways to solve them.

The program, according to Dr. Freeman Hrabowski III, a graduate of the first class in 1985, has changed the city for the better and changed its participants as well, making them more open to new ideas and giving them the opportunity to spend time with people they might not otherwise meet.

Jan Houbolt, executive director of The Leadership, said the program has changed incrementally over time and will probably continue to do so, but he doesn't foresee major changes in the future. "The fundamental structure is going to stay the same," he said.

Why tinker with success?

Each year, roughly 100 people apply to be in the program and about half that number is chosen by a selection committee of 15 graduates. About two-thirds are from the business community, and others are leaders in government, academia and the nonprofit

community, Houbolt said.

Through seminars, meetings, weekend retreats and other activities held over the course of a year, the participants — a who's who of the most successful, high-profile people in Maryland — get to know each other in person and learn from each others' strengths and insights.

Combining those myriad perspectives is what makes the program work, and the friendships that are made during the program pay off year after year for both the individuals and the city of Baltimore.

"Our Leadership program is trying to take people who have already been leaders in their own field and raise the bar so they become more effective, more powerful leaders in the community for the greater good," said Houbolt. "We're looking for people who will help weave together the fabric of Baltimore City and the Baltimore region to make it more livable for everyone."

The goal is simple but bold, he said. These are the people who can help the poorest of the poor; who can make sure Baltimore is a city



