

## **2019-2020 U Got Brains Champion Schools Program**

### **Faculty Advisor Survey Report**

The Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey (BIANJ) is a recipient of a New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety (NJDHTS) Comprehensive Traffic Safety Grant. In 2010, to address the issue of teen driving safety, BIANJ created the *U Got Brains Champion Schools Program*. This statewide peer-to-peer program challenges teams of students, guided by a faculty advisor, to create a teen safe driving campaign in their school and community. The Champion Schools Program has been a part of the BIANJ Comprehensive Traffic Safety Grant since 2010 and has grown every year both in the number of participating schools as well as the number of corporate and non-profit sponsors.

In 2014, the fourth year of the program, BIANJ partnered with The Research Institute at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) to create a faculty advisor survey to help evaluate the effectiveness of the Champion Schools Program. CHOP conducted a series of telephone interviews with the advisors to evaluate the 2013-2014 program from their perspective. CHOP then analyzed the results of the survey and created a report of their findings.

For the 2019-2020 program, BIANJ used an amended version of the original faculty advisor survey to evaluate the effectiveness of this year's program from the perspective of the faculty advisors. BIANJ staff posted the survey online, tallied the results and wrote the following summary report of their findings: *\*(Complete tally results are included with this summary report)*

The 2019-2020 school year was the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the *U Got Brains Champion Schools Program*. 63 high schools (public, private and technical) from 19 counties participated in the program. As a prerequisite for being chosen, schools signed a participation agreement which stated that they would participate, to the best of their ability, in a survey of the Champion Schools Program. BIANJ Champion Schools technical support staff informed the faculty advisors of the survey at their technical support visits, in emails to the faculty advisors and during technical support conference calls. The online faculty advisor survey was posted in May, and emails went out to the faculty advisors in May and June reminding them to complete the survey.

Responses were received from faculty advisors of 30 participating schools (48%). A total of 32 faculty advisors responded to the survey-Robbinsville HS and Lindenwold each had 2 faculty advisors respond. Bogota HS, Woodbridge HS, Indian Hills HS, Matawan HS, Camden Academy Charter HS, Nottingham HS, Bound Brook HS, Immaculate Heart Academy, West Orange HS, Westwood HS, Pequannock HS, Princeton HS, Rae Kushner Yeshiva HS, Red Bank Catholic HS, Red Bank Regional HS, Lawrence HS, Lenape Regional HS District, Kittatinny HS, JP Stevens HS, Bridgewater Regional HS, Palisades Park Jr./Sr. HS, Cedar Grove HS, Clearview Regional HS, Colts Neck HS, Columbia HS, Delaware Valley Regional HS, Somerville HS, and Jackson Liberty HS each had one response from a faculty advisor. The survey consisted of 17 questions. A copy of the survey along with tally results from the respondents is attached.

**Questions #1** asked for the name of their high school. 32 advisors answered this question.

**Question #2** of the survey asked the participants "***to respond to the ease or difficulty a series of activities based on a scale from 1-7, with 1 being very hard and 7 being very easy***". 32 advisors answered this question.

In response to the question, "***communicating with the students about the project was...***" a little over half of the advisors (53%) found that was either "easy" or "very easy", while 1 advisor (3%) found communicating with the students to be either "hard" or "very hard".

In response to the question, "***getting support from school administrators was...***" a majority also stated that was either "easy" or "very easy" (63%), while 0 advisors or 0% stated that getting support from school administrators was either "very hard" or "hard".

Schools seemed to have a more difficult time getting their communities involved, with only 16% of respondents stating that “**getting the community involved**” was either “easy” or “very easy” while 2 respondents (6%) stated that it was either “hard” or “very hard” to get support from the community.

Schools seemed to have an easier time managing their project finances, with a majority of respondents (66%) answering that it was either “easy” or “very easy” to “**manage the program’s finances**” while 1 advisor or 3% found that managing the finances was “very hard”.

Only 41% of respondents thought that it was either “easy” or “very easy” to “**find time to meet with student team members**”, while 0 advisors (0%) thought that it was either “hard” or “very hard” to find the time to meet with students.

The results were similar for the question that asked about “**getting student team members to take a leadership role**”, with only 38% of respondents stating that it was either “easy” or “very easy” while 1 respondent or 3% stating that it was “hard”.

Respondents seemed to have a similar time “**planning the program**”, with only 41% of the respondents stating that it was either “easy” or “very easy” to plan the program and 0 respondents, 0%, stating that it was either “hard” or “very hard” to plan for the program.

A large majority of the respondents (72%) thought that it was either “easy” or “very easy” to “**advise the students**”, with 0 respondents (0%) thought that it was “very hard”.

**Question #3** asked the participants to “**describe any advantages or ‘good things’ associated with having a Champion School Project at their school**”. 32 respondents answered this question.

Comments varied, but many respondents stated that having the opportunity to get students involved, getting the message out, and saving lives were advantages of the project. Several advisors stated that their projects brought their communities together and caused a heightened awareness about the issue of teen safe driving in both their schools and towns. Other respondents talked about how the program fostered student leadership and empowerment from the students involved and how it allowed the students to care for and help fellow students. Many advisors talked about the advantages of peer-to-peer learning that allow the students to work together as a team where they create and control the project while the teacher guides and assists them. “*Students educating each other can have a big impact*”. Several respondents talked about how the program gave them the opportunity to work together on an extremely important topic with students they do not normally get to teach. One advisor stated, “*Advantages associated with participating in the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program at our school are that it helps us as a club promote the importance of being both a safe driver and passenger to our school and larger community, and it allows our club members to take on leadership roles within the club itself. Students find they have a shared passion for this subject, and as a result truly enjoy working together to create a worthwhile project with many of them stepping up to lead the work individually*”. Another advisor commented that the program provides students with a different type of school assignment, one that lasts over a longer period than most assignments and it provides students with new types of responsibilities. Certain students find their voice and their talents and become different students because of new confidence and self-esteem. Several advisors commented on the program allowed students to brainstorm together and come up with creative ways to get their safety messages out. One first year advisor said, “*This was our first year participating and 11 eager sophomore students were willing to try this. I got to work with a wonderful group of students, learn what their talents were and their strong desire to put forward the best campaign they could. They were not limiting themselves*”.

*One student reached out to The Ellen DeGeneres Show to start the process of promoting the campaign. Another student was unable to locate a seat belt emoji, so she was planning to try and get one created". Advisors commented on how once the program is established in a school it quickly becomes very popular with students, especially with sophomores as they look forward to getting their permits and licenses. Many advisors commented on how the program allowed them to spread their safety messages out to their school and communities. One advisor stated, "One of the best things about being a part of this program is the ability to relay up to date information to the community regarding teen driver safety. The safer we all can keep our students the better! In addition, it gets the students involved in something positive and sustainable in the school and community". Another advisor commented, "We have been able to bring a wide variety of driving safety awareness programs to the school. Programs have varied from school-wide assemblies, to grade level initiatives, school-wide challenges, evening parent-student programs, and the shared activities with other schools in the county". Other respondents talked about the support they received from their local police and community organizations and from the Brain Injury Alliance of NJ. "The support we receive each year helps us promote and cultivate an environment that supports the safety and wellbeing of our students. We are proud to align ourselves with U Got Brains and it keeps us sending the right message!"*

**Question #4** asked the participants to "**describe any disadvantages or 'bad things' associated with having a Champion School Project at their school**". 32 advisors responded to this question. Seven (22%) of the respondents said that there were no disadvantages to having a project at school; in fact, one respondent replied that "*None-The program administration is conducted with the latitude to allow for student creativity. We have had very differing projects from one year to the next and have always received support!*" Eleven of the respondents (34%) stated that not having enough time to meet with students was a disadvantage. One advisor stated "*Time... I always need more hours in the day*". By far, the biggest disadvantage to the program this year was the disruption of the school year due to COVID-19. Most schools had major disruptions in the events and activities they had planned to host. Some schools were not able to complete their campaigns. One advisor commented, "*Covid-19 and schools closing cancelled all of the original activities we had scheduled for this project*". Another advisor stated, "*I have a wonderful group of seniors who are leaving and do not get to showcase what they did this year. Heart-breaking*"! However, many advisors also commented on how proud they were of their students who managed to carry-on with their campaigns despite COVID-19. One respondent commented, "*This year I thought it would be the pandemic, but many students agreed to move forward with the project and came up with great ideas!*"

**Question #5** asked the participants "**what kinds of things made it easier for you to have the program at your school?**" 32 advisors responded to the question. According to the advisor responses, support seemed to be the biggest factor in helping to implement their programs. Almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  (47%) of the respondents stated that support for the program from their administration and other faculty members made it easier for them to have the program. A quarter (25%) of the respondents cited the support that they received from the staff of BIANJ and commented on how easy it was to communicate with them. Advisors also mentioned support from the community and local police departments. Several advisors mentioned that the stipend given by BIANJ helped to defray the costs of their campaign and allowed them to purchase resources and materials. Some respondents commented on the fact that they have access to technology or worked with the technology staff at school to help implement their program. Several advisors commented that their students were great, and they made it easier to implement their program. A few advisors reported that having a regular meeting time during class hours and the ability to work the program into their regular lesson plans helped to implement their program. Schools who had participated in earlier years noted that they were now familiar with the program and it was easier

to get the project completed. One advisor commented, “*Our students are very interested in raising awareness about safe driving! We had several students this year who really took charge and organized and executed their ideas!*”

**Question #6** asked participants “***what kinds of things made it harder for you to have the program at your school?***” 32 advisors answered the question. 19% of the advisors answered that there was nothing that made it harder to have the program at their school. However, 34% of the advisors stated that COVID-19 and the disruption to the school schedules that it brought was by far the biggest challenge that they had to overcome in implementing and completing their campaigns. Lack of time was another factor noted by the advisors. Some commented that students and teachers are so busy, and time is so limited that it is hard to schedule meetings. One advisor noted, “*Finding ways to incorporate a bilingual aspect to the project when delivering our message to the community*”.

**Question #7** asked, “***What aspects of the program worked really well and why?***” 31 advisors answered this question and 1 did not answer. Several respondents remarked on how well the program was run and structured. They commented that the general guidelines and informational forms were very helpful and having a timeline for the program was helpful. They liked having categories of topics to choose from and the flexibility that the program offered. Many of the respondents commented on how having freedom of choice for the topics and having the program led by the students made the program easier. Teamwork by their students was also listed as helping the program to run well. Advisors noted that the technical support visits by BIANJ staff really helped the students understand the program and allowed them to brainstorm ideas for their projects while the ongoing support from BIANJ staff helped to answer any questions from the students. Advisors also cited the JerseyDrives website that housed the application, mid-term, and final report forms and how easy it was to apply for and report on their projects. The stipend and speakers provided by the program were also factors that helped to make the program run well. Other advisors remarked on the successful involvement of the students even after school closing and commented that using Google classroom allowed their students to stay connected. Some advisors remarked that they liked participating in the weekly social media posts hosted by BIANJ and used them as part of their campaign.

**Question #8** asked participants, “***What aspects of the program did not work so well and why?***” 31 advisors answered the question and 1 did not respond. 16% of respondents said that all aspects of the program went well and did not have any problems. Once again, the pandemic and resulting closing of schools was listed as the biggest factor in the program not working well-26% of advisors listed that as the top reason their program did not work so well. Advisors also commented that there was not enough time in the day, that it was difficult to find the time to schedule meetings due to too many other activities that students were involved in. Other respondents commented on the difficulty they had with the student team members following up on and executing their great ideas and stepping up into leadership roles. One first year advisor said that being new to the program made it hard and suggested a beginner’s checklist.

**Question #9** asked participants, “***How did you get student members to participate in the program?***” 32 advisors answered the question. Advisors employed a variety of strategies to get students to participate in the program. A quarter of the respondents (25%) said that their students recruited the members. They set up display tables to promote their program at lunch and after school; they promoted the program on morning announcements, in Google Classroom, with flyers, emails, posters, and sign-in sheets; and they spread the program by word of mouth. Other advisors said that all they had to do was ask-the students were really excited to be a part of the program because the topic was relevant to them

and they wanted to help keep their friends and themselves safer on the roads. They also wanted to be a part of a good cause. Other advisors said that students volunteered. Some schools offered incentives to students who joined their team. Some advisors talked about building on the success of the previous year's project. It encouraged students to come back. Many of the advisors stated that recruitment was helped by making it a school-wide project involving many subjects-they collaborated with various other classes including Media/TV, Art, Civics, Graphic Design, English, Physical Education and Health. Advisors also promoted the program in the Driver Education classes and some made the campaign part of the curriculum or a class project. Some schools partnered with SADD students and advisors.

**Question #10** asked participants “**to rate your response to each statement using a scale from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree** (32 advisors answered these questions; 0 skips)

In response to the question, “**student team members worked cohesively together**”, most of the respondents (66%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement while 1 respondent (3%) “disagreed”.

Eighteen of the advisors (56%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement that “**student leaders held regular meetings that I attended**”, while 3 respondents (9%) either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with that statement.

A majority of the respondents (59%) also either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement that “**students had all the materials and resources that they needed**” while one of the advisors (3%) “disagreed” with that statement.

In response to the question, “**I had enough time to advise the students**”, 44% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement while 2 advisors (6%) either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

In response to the question, “**I felt supported by my school's administration**”, 66% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, while 0% of the advisors either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

In response to the question, “**I felt supported by BIANJ staff**”, an overwhelming majority (91%) of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, while 0 advisors (0%) either “agreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

Most of the respondents (53%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “**I felt supported by my fellow teachers**”, while 1 of respondents (3%) “disagreed”.

This year, due to the pandemic, only a quarter of the respondents (25%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “**The program activities went as I had planned**”, while 16% either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statement.

In response to the question, “**I collaborated on the mid-year report with my students**”, 53% of respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, while 6% “strongly disagreed”.

Half of respondents (50%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “**I collaborated on the final report with my students**”, while 28% either “agreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

63% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “***Student team members were engaged with the program***”, while 0 respondents (0%) either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

Only 28% of respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “***The community was engaged with the program***”, while 9% either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

A larger number of respondents (47%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement that “***The student body was engaged with the program***”, while 1 respondent (3%) “disagreed”.

A large majority of the respondents (81%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “***My interactions with student team members were positive***”, while 0% either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

Results were mixed with responses to the statement, “***Being an advisor helps my career***”, with 59% of respondents either “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” with the statement, while 13% either “disagreed” or strongly “disagreed”.

A majority of respondents (78%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “***Overall, I'm happy with my advising experience this year***”, while 0 respondents (0%) either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

**Question #11, “What would make things better next year?”** Twenty-nine advisors (91%) answered the question while 3 advisors (9%) did not answer. 10% of the advisors that responded to the question stated that the program runs well now and does not need to be improved. Once again, the issue of the disruption of the school year and the pandemic was listed by 34% of the advisors as the main challenge facing the teams. Several advisors echoed similar sentiments as the advisor who responded, “***KEEP THE SCHOOLS OPEN***!!! Once again, the issue of time is key-with advisors stating that they wish they had applied earlier, had more time to get students involved, to organize and plan the campaign, to hold meetings and to plan for community events. Other advisors stated that getting more involvement and commitment from students would help to make things better. One first-year advisor stated that she will be better prepared next year because now she has experience with the program. Some advisors had advice for BIANJ to make the program better including: starting the application process earlier, increasing the stipend amount, creating a certificate template to the advisors that they could customize and give to their students for participating in the program, or creating midterm and final reports in Word or Google Docs so that multiple students can work on them.

**Question #12** was a set of questions that asked respondents “***about how unhelpful or helpful certain resources are. Please rate each resource on a scale from (1) Extremely Unhelpful to (7) Extremely Helpful. If you did not use the resource, please select 'Did Not Use'***”. (32 advisors answered the questions, 0 skips)

In response to the question, “***my interactions with the BIANJ staff were...***” a large majority of the respondents (78%) stated that they were either “very helpful or extremely helpful”; 1 participants (3%) responded “unhelpful”.

In response to the question, “***the technical assistance visit (where a representative from the Champion School Program presented information) was...***” a majority of the respondents (59%) stated that the visit was either “very helpful or extremely helpful”; 1 respondent (3%) replied that the visit was “unhelpful”, while 8 respondents (25%) responded “did not use”. \*

\* (Technical visits were made to all participating schools)

In response to the question, “***The technical assistance calls were...***” 16% stated the calls were either “very helpful” or “extremely helpful”, 0 respondents (0%) found the calls to be either “unhelpful” or “extremely unhelpful”, while 69% responded, “did not use”.

In response to the question, “***JerseyDrives.com was...***” 59% stated that the website was either “very helpful” “or “extremely helpful”, 1 of the respondents (3%) found the website to be “extremely unhelpful”, while 9% responded, “did not use”.

In response to the question, “***The JerseyDrives app was...***” 31% stated that the app was either “very helpful” or “extremely helpful”, 1 of the respondents (3%) found the website to be either “very unhelpful”, while 34% responded, “did not use”.

**Question #13** asked, “***How often did you visit the U Got Brains website to access the “Tools for Schools?”***” 6% stated they accessed the website “0 times”, 28% responded “1-2 times”, 41% responded “3-5 times”, and 25% responded “6+ times”.

**Question #14** asked, “***About how often did the student team members meet?***” 0% responded that they met “0 times”, 0% responded “1 time”, 3% responded “2-3 times”, 13% responded “4 times”, and 84% responded “5+ times”.

**Question #15** asked, “***How often did the student team members meet with you?***” 0% responded “0 times”, 3% responded “1 time”, 6% responded “2-3 times”, 16% responded “4 times”, and 75% responded “5+ times”.

**Question #16** asked, “***In general, do you think students are safer drivers because of your project of the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program? Please rate your response from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree.***” 78% responded either “agree” or “strongly agree”; 0% responded either “disagree” or “strongly disagree”.

**Question #17** asked, “***In general, do you think students are safer passengers because of your project of the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program? Please rate your response from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree.***” 78% responded either “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement; 0% responded either “disagree” or “strongly disagree”.

#### **General Conclusions from the Faculty Advisor Survey Evaluations:**

##### **Advantages of the Champion Schools Program**

- A large majority of the faculty advisors think that their students are safer drivers and safer passengers because of their U Got Brains Champion Schools Project.
- Champion Schools Program brings the school and local community together around the issue of teen driving safety.
- Champion Schools Program offers the opportunity to discuss and promote safe driving practices.

- Champion Schools Program helps to get the message out and heighten awareness of teen driving safety.
- Champion Schools Program helps to bring about a change in both student and community behavior when it came to teen driving safety.
- Champion Schools Program is a student-centered and student driven peer-to-peer program.
- Students are given the opportunity to speak as advocates for teen driving safety.
- Students experience a sense of pride that comes from accomplishing something important.

### **Aspects of the Program that Worked Well**

- Returning school advisors commented that it was easier to get students involved with their project because they knew the Champion Schools Program
- Cash stipend made it easier to fund the program
- Faculty advisors who felt supported by their administration, parents and local community stated that this support helped their project go well.
- Faculty advisors overwhelmingly felt supported by BIANJ technical support staff.
- Most faculty advisors felt that they were happy with their advising experience.

### **Challenges of the Champion Schools Program**

- The disruption of the school schedule due to the pandemic was the biggest challenge to the program this year.
- Finding the time to meet with students and plan for the program was challenging for many schools.
- Finding the time to fit the program into the existing school calendar was challenging for some schools. Many students were involved in multiple activities.
- Lack of student involvement and getting students to follow-up on ideas was challenging for some schools.
- Getting the community involved was challenging for some schools.
- New Champion Schools struggle with the process of the program more than schools who are returning Champion Schools (although the process seems to be easier with each returning year).

Overall, the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program was found to be an effective tool to engage students to help raise awareness in their schools and communities about teen driving safety and to help change both teen driver and teen passenger behaviors. Feedback from the participating faculty advisors and students will help the Brain Injury Alliance of NJ to continually improve the *U Got Brains Champion Schools Program* and allows us to offer a proven, effective statewide peer-to-peer teen driving safety program. By partnering with the NJ Division of Highway Safety and our corporate sponsors, we can continue to help keep our roadways safer for New Jersey's newest drivers and their passengers.