



INAUGURAL COHORT • JANUARY 2026

Incredible Messenger University Impact Report Cohort 1

A founding class, a citywide training gap, and a practical path to a New York City CVI academy.



FOUNDING COHORT • JANUARY 2026

Commencement: January 29, 2026

Medgar Evers College • Brooklyn, New York

Prepared by A.T. Mitchell-Mann

Incredible Messenger University

Report prepared September 28, 2026

A MESSAGE FROM A.T. MITCHELL-MANN

Why I founded IMU

A welcome to the inaugural cohort impact report.

**FOUNDER & PRESIDENT**

"I founded IMU because New York needs a deeper, shared training pathway for the people doing this vital work."

A.T. Mitchell-Mann

Incredible Messenger University

Dear Deputy Mayor and City Leaders,

For more than 30 years, I have worked alongside messengers and community leaders who step toward conflict when others step away. I have seen trusted relationships interrupt harm, connect people to support, and help communities imagine something beyond violence. I have also seen the responsibility and risk carried by the people doing this work.

New York City has built a broad Crisis Management System, bringing together more than 20 community violence intervention organizations. Yet our frontline workforce has lacked a common, extensive training pathway. Training has been offered, but it has not been deep or consistent enough to give practitioners shared standards, sustained preparation, and a clear professional path.

This is specialized, high-stakes work. Without the right preparation, a crisis response or intervention can put the worker, the people they serve, and the wider community in jeopardy. Safety is not an add-on; it is foundational. Frontline messengers need the skills to assess risk, de-escalate conflict, respond to crisis, set boundaries, and sustain themselves in demanding roles. Strong preparation can also help workers feel equipped for the realities of the field and may support retention.

I founded Incredible Messenger University to help meet this need. Working with practitioners and organizations across New York, I saw the need for uniform training that honored lived experience while adding rigorous instruction and a shared foundation for community safety work. IMU was created to help close that gap.

This inaugural cohort brought people from different organizations and neighborhoods into one learning community. They arrived with their own experience and practice; they graduated together as a cohort. That unity is an important result in itself—and a starting point for a stronger, better-supported Crisis Management System workforce.

This report presents what Cohort One set out to build, who came together, and the early results we can see. It is also an invitation to work with us to make a durable academy available to the people entrusted with this vital work.

With respect, A.T. Mitchell-Mann

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.T. Mitchell-Mann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS TRAINING MODEL

Preparing trusted messengers

A practice-based academy for community violence intervention and crisis leadership.

In partnership with the Institute of Research for Social Justice in Action and the City University of New York (CUNY), IMU prepares frontline practitioners with shared skills, safety practices, and professional pathways. The inaugural 12-week model was designed for messengers, outreach workers, hospital response teams, and reentry practitioners.

FOUR LEARNING PILLARS

01 Grounding & ethics

Storytelling, movement history and identity; boundaries, ethics, and professional responsibility.

02 Safety & crisis response

Trauma science and emotional regulation; communication, de-escalation, conflict, and crisis response.

03 Specialized field practice

Mentorship, reentry navigation, hospital-based intervention, mediation, and supervised field learning.

04 Leadership & application

Professional identity, coaching, career skills, and a community-centered capstone.

LEARNING THROUGH PRACTICE

Designed to combine classroom learning, crisis scenarios, supervised field practice, coaching, and a community-centered capstone.

CERTIFICATION TRAINING IN THE FIRST 12 WEEKS

- Stop the Bleed
- CPR / First Aid
- Mental Health First Aid
- Peer Support Specialist Certification
- Restorative Justice Circle Keeper Training

CREDENTIALS AND A PATHWAY TO A DEGREE

Through IRSJA's partnership with The Chart Academy, IMU's pathway connects to six certificate programs approved by the Higher Education Licensure Commission (HELC). IMU is also working with CUNY toward a degree pathway that can help practitioners build from credible messengers to formally credentialed community safety professionals.

WHY AN ACADEMY, WHY NOW

A large network needs shared preparation

New York's Crisis Management System (CMS) connects more than 20 community violence intervention organizations. IMU's inaugural cohort brought 13 of those organizations into a shared training experience.

THE TRAINING GAP

New York has a broad CVI network, but no citywide common academy for the workers doing this specialized, high-stakes work. IMU is designed to help build that shared foundation: common skills, stronger safety practice, and a clearer pathway for frontline messengers.

WHAT OTHER CITIES HAVE BUILT

CHICAGO • METROPOLITAN PEACE ACADEMY

The Metropolitan Peace Academy offers role-based training. Metropolitan Family Services states that all participants in its Communities Partnering 4 Peace initiative attend the Academy.



Metropolitan Peace Academy • Chicago

LOS ANGELES • URBAN PEACE ACADEMY

The Urban Peace Institute operates the Urban Peace Academy. Los Angeles' GRYD model has used dedicated training for community intervention workers.



Urban Peace Academy • Los Angeles

References: metropolitanpeaceinitiatives.org/metropolitan-peace-academy/ • urbanpeaceinstitute.org

THE FIRST COHORT

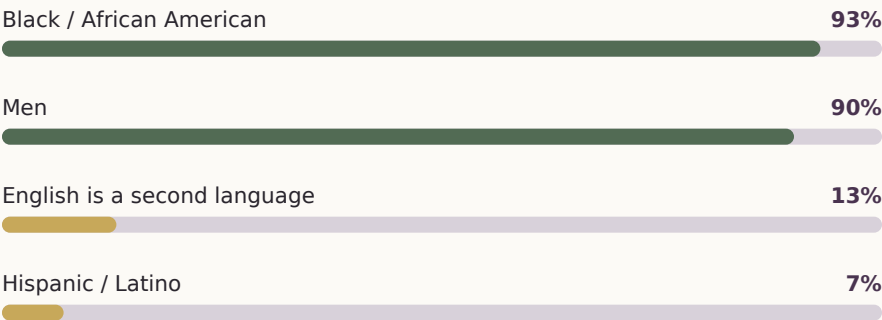
A strong first completion milestone

Thirty-seven people began the program. Thirty-one graduated, representing an 84% completion rate.



COHORT PROFILE

Who took part?



FIVE BOROUGHES REPRESENTED

A citywide cohort with neighborhood roots

Cohort participants represented every borough of New York City.

●
BRONX●
BROOKLYN●
MANHATTAN●
QUEENS●
STATEN ISLAND

The inaugural class connected messengers whose work is rooted across New York City. Their borough representation gives IMU a foundation for learning across neighborhoods, organizations, and local practice.

FROM DISTINCT ORGANIZATIONS TO ONE COHORT

Participants entered with relationships, experience, and approaches shaped by their home organizations. Through shared instruction and a common learning experience, they came together as one IMU cohort—strengthening connection across the city’s community safety network.



Participants learning together during the academy. Photos supplied by IMU.

A COHORT BUILT THROUGH TRUSTED ORGANIZATIONS

Thirteen organizations brought students

Thirteen participating organizations—within a Crisis Management System network of more than 20—brought students to Cohort One.

- Project ECHO
- King of Kings
- True 2 Life
- Lead by Example
- East Harlem SAVE
- Guns Down Life Up
- Institute for Transformative Mentorship
- Man Up, Inc.
- Brownsville Think Tank Matters
- The Drum
- Greater Direction
- Enough Is Enough
- Brownsville In Violence Out

A shared classroom can strengthen a distributed workforce while preserving the local relationships that make community-based intervention possible.



JANUARY 29, 2026

Commencement made the work visible

The founding cohort gathered at Medgar Evers College for the IMU Cohort One Commencement Ceremony.



Graduates and guests at the Cohort One commencement. Photo supplied by IMU.



RECOGNITION

The ceremony program included opening remarks, institutional greetings, graduate reflections, a keynote, and graduation recognition—placing the graduates' achievement within a broader civic and educational setting.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Building a unified CMS workforce

A pathway from lived experience to common training, credentials, education, and career growth.



13 participants met with college recruiters and expressed interest in pursuing college—an early sign that the cohort sees education as part of its next step.

WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO MOVE FORWARD

- Align a shared set of core competencies across the city’s 20+ CMS organizations.
- Connect frontline training to approved credentials, CUNY degree options, and advancement.
- Invest in coaching, continuing education, and follow-up that can strengthen workforce stability.



THE INVITATION

Partner with Incredible Messenger University to build the shared academy and career pathway New York’s community safety workforce needs—from credible to incredible.

Prepared by A.T. Mitchell-Mann