Nicco Mele owes a lot to the Internet. The new director of the Kennedy School’s Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy grew up across Asia and Africa—the son of two foreign-service officers—and first connected with American culture by checking baseball scores online. When he learned his future mother-in-law “had lived in the same house in South Orange for 35 years or something, [it was] the most exotic thing I’d ever encountered.” After majoring in government at William and Mary, he joined the rapidly expanding online organizing scene at Common Cause; he also worked on Howard Dean’s presidential campaign, and later, on Barack Obama’s 2004 Senate campaign. His wife, Morra, founded Women Online, a marketing organization that has worked with both Hillary Clinton and Obama. But instead of diving deeper into a career in politics, Nicco found satisfaction in a “selfish love of learning” by landing teaching jobs at Johns Hopkins and HKS, thanks to his expertise in the intersection of the Internet and politics. This expertise later drew him west to join the Los Angeles Times as deputy publisher in 2015. As one of the self-proclaimed earliest forecasters of Donald Trump’s success (he says it with sorrow, not schadenfreude), Mele has turned to the Internet once again to connect with the American public in what he calls “an extremely uncertain future” for democracy. The Shorenstein Center will play a critical role in preventing the rise of fake news, he claims, by helping audiences become smarter consumers of information online. The biggest challenge will be innovating to keep both sides of the political aisle engaged. “I’ve always been an entrepreneur. If I weren’t at Shorenstein, I’d still build some kind of business in the media space.”

Most do attend, Howard said, and acquire “some social currency.” The trip to campus is less intimidating than if it immediately preceded matriculation. And FSY students, who have learned their way around campus, can then tell fellow freshmen to “follow me”—an advantage formerly confined to legacies. And, “They have a group.” Howard cited the Posse Foundation’s model of sending students to college together (see “Widening the College Pipeline,” July-August, page 63).

As the students themselves suggested, FSY seems to have been productive. Michael Fitzpatrick, Yale Summer Session’s associate director for academic affairs (and himself a low-income, first-gen student at Cornell), described two gains. First, students from under-resourced high schools are “probably less likely to ask for help.” (As Rachel Gable puts it, they need to know that in college—reversing their prior experience—“studying with others and ‘seeking assistance is a habit of excellence, not a sign of weakness.’”) FSY workshops, briefings with faculty members who describe their own experiences and invite students to office hours, and the classes themselves are structured to convey those messages. Second, the experience is designed to overcome “imposter syndrome”—the hoary admissions-mistake trope that looms larger for students whose material circumstances and preparation can suddenly seem so below the norm. Quinlan visits the FSY cohort to assure them, humorously, “The admissions office doesn’t make mistakes.” Students confirm gains in confidence on both counts.

Academically, FSY is both nascent and evolving. Prior results from ONEXYS showed statistically significant gains in learning, and subsequent gains in students’ grades, according to James Rolf, the mathematics instructor who developed it—hence its adoption by FSY (other colleges are considering using it, too). Further studies will monitor that effect, and determine whether taking the course correlates with students’ concentration choice. Quinlan said freshman-year data show that FSY students do better in writing and quantitative courses than peers who did not have the summer experience, and in their grades overall.

There may also be unquantifiable effects. José López, for example, admitted regrets about becoming a chemistry concentrator, despite feeling comfortable in the field. Recognizing that he was “among the very few