In the summer of 2011, Demond Drummer led a small program to teach youth in Englewood how to write HTML and CSS code. When the program ended, he didn’t have the capacity or resources to continue offering the classes. But when a few young men came to him eager to learn, he couldn’t resist pulling out some used laptops. That’s when he decided to launch Englewood Codes. After three successful summers of programming, Drummer wants to take his efforts to scale with a new concept: CoderSpace.

To date, Demond has introduced more than 60 youth between the ages of 11 and 17 to the world of coding through after-school clubs and summer camps. With CoderSpace, he wants to build an organization that has strong institutional partnerships in order to provide project-based learning opportunities, internships, and professional mentors, as well as college and career guidance for youth interested in pursuing technology careers. These activities will advance the group’s mission to develop the next generation of tech leaders by creating learning experiences that are not only engaging, but have a clear path forward.

This summer, Drummer coached a team to build a website for a neighborhood coffee shop in Englewood. “Together we demonstrated that youth on the South Side have the capacity to solve real world business problems with code and deliver direct economic value to their communities,” he said.

“Through my work as an organizer, I became aware of an underserved market of small businesses that have neither the money to hire an experienced developer nor the time to create an online presence themselves,” Drummer added. “After training neighborhood youth to meet this market, I’ve had a number of local small businesses approach me about retaining their talent - and they’re willing to pay the youth.”

Drummer’s five-year plan for CoderSpace is to develop deep relationships with Chicago Public Schools, other coding programs, college-level computer science departments, and technology companies. The goal is to build a broad base of tech talent throughout the city.

Drummer – who recently returned to the University as a Graduate Student-at-Large to complete an M.A. at the Divinity School -- applied to the Community Programs Accelerator for technical assistance on establishing an organizational infrastructure for CoderSpace, everything from developing a sustainable business model and resource stream, to vetting a curriculum and metrics, to filing for incorporation and forming a board of directors.