



Educational
Policy
Institute

A Blueprint for Success:

Case Studies of Successful
Pre-College Outreach Programs



by
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Ten case studies of
effective student success
programs from around
the United States

supported through a grant from



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**The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily reflect
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The Educational Policy Institute (EPI) is an international organization dedicated to the study of educational opportunity. Our researchers are dedicated to the mission of enhancing our knowledge of critical barriers facing students and families throughout the educational pipeline. In addition, EPI has developed extensive partnerships and collaborative arrangements with other leading research and educational organizations, further supporting our mission and ability to conduct policy-relevant research for practical use.

Formed in 2002 by Dr. Watson Scott Swail, EPI was created to fulfill a need for more rigorous educational research and to create better linkages between research and public policy. Much of the focus of our work is on the perspective of individuals from low-income backgrounds, who are of color, and who have physical and cognitive disabilities. This is because these constituents have the least voice in public policy discussions. As well, because public policy does often target these populations in programs, there is a great need for better research to determine what strategies are most effective in helping lift youth to a better tomorrow.

Please visit www.educationalpolicy.org for additional information.

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Introduction

by DR. WATSON SCOTT SWAIL

President & CEO, Educational Policy Institute/Project Principal Investigator

In 1999, I was fortunate to direct the National Survey of Pre-College Outreach Programs for The College Board. This project resulted in a handbook and several journal articles based on the findings of our work. More than a decade later, I had the opportunity to discuss a retooling of the survey with TG. The thought was that the decade break between the two should provide new and interesting data for analysis. Through a competitive process, we were fortunate to receive funding from TG's Public Benefits Program to conduct a new study of pre-college outreach programs. The results of this new study and the subsequent program directory can be found in the *2012 Handbook of Pre-College Outreach Programs*, available on the EPI website.¹

The TG-funded project included a very important second piece to be completed parallel to the survey project and using information garnered from that instrument. This sub-project was to identify eight programs that showed excellent student outcomes for students, as measured by their academic improvement, high school completion, admission to college, and even their success and completion in college. Starting with 374 programs from the national survey, we were able to filter down the programs to a manageable 54. Because we were most interested in focusing on community-based programs, we excluded federally-sponsored programs, like GEAR Up and TRIO. Other programs were excluded that did not have student monitoring systems and/or data and programs that did not indicate how they evaluated student outcomes. From this group of 54, we short-listed 15 and then conducted a further screening process. In the end, we conducted 10 case studies for this project which are presented in this publication.

This case study project is important for several reasons. While we were able to survey 374 programs, we also know there are literally thousands of similar programs currently in existence in the United States to help at-risk and other, less-prepared students prepare for and succeed in postsecondary education. In speaking to groups and organizations about issues of college access, a main theme in conversation is "Best Practices." Best practices in recruitment, in academic support, in financial aid counseling, in parental involvement, in college application completion, and more. People want to know what works.

¹ See www.educationalpolicy.org/publications.

We all want the answers, especially the “best” practices. Alas, there are no “best” practices. They do not exist. What do exist are effective practices: those that we know from data analysis and review that appear to work exceedingly well in helping students—those who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education—prepare for, apply and matriculate to, and graduate from a postsecondary institution that fits their desires, aspirations, and goals.

Our purpose in this study is to lift some of the veils that seem to cover programs. Programs and institutions are not always willing to share information on themselves. For some reason, these issues are treated like state secrets and no one wants to let the competition (what competition?) know what strategies are being used for the greater good.

Through our in-depth analysis of 10 programs around the country, it is our hope to present information that can help other programs. The trick for readers is to peruse the materials herein and find pieces that may work back in their space. Some will. Some may not.

My experience is that a wide menu of options is ultimately important. We learn differently; we live differently. Therefore, the strategies for success must be similarly varied and broad. There is no “one way” to do academic tutoring, career counseling, or FAFSA training. But there are better and worse strategies for consideration.

These are the nuggets that readers should be taking from this volume, and, ultimately, is the reason we embarked on this journey. Analyzing and compiling information on 10 programs is not easy work and this was not a simple project. But the information garnered from this effort is important to help others in the field.

The hard work, of course, is firmly placed on those who are in the field hoping that this book will provide some help. It is no holy grail, to be sure. But perhaps it will motivate those to do more, do better, or do differently.

Common Themes

In our conversations with program directors and analysis of data and documentation, we found common themes across these exemplary programs. Of course, among the 10 programs there were very specific strategies that fit with specific programs. But overall, there are common elements that tended to cross most, if not all, of the programs. What follows is an illustration of these themes.

Intentionality

Through their mission and goals, the programs all shared a high level of intentionality about what they do. They are focused on trying to achieve success for their students. One director noted the need to focus like a laser on the program goals and operations because the work is difficult at best. Being intentional is a very *intentional* process. It doesn’t just happen. There must be a conscious de-

cision early on in a program's life about how to operate the program in order to maximize the impact with a limited budget parameter. Often, the difference in good and great programs is the level of intentionality that a director, staff, and board have about the outcomes. Hoping that good things will happen and waiting for serendipitous events to intervene is a recipe for status quo. Faith alone is not a hallmark of success in these programs. Intentional strategies are. Good directors prepare for success and put the pieces—and *people*—in place in order to improve the conditions upon where success can breath.

Focus on Students and Student/Parent Efficacy

By far the most referred area of program effectiveness was the ability of these programs to help empower students and “believe” they can succeed. While this is amorphous in some regards, the directors of our case studies all believe it is an essential element of their programs. At Breakthrough Saint Paul, the director noted that “there are no exceptions: college is the expectation of Breakthrough students.” Bridges to a Brighter Future feels they are very successful in “creating a program that promotes a unique family atmosphere beyond that of a typical summer program.” Bridges actively fosters a sense of connection among its students, and incorporates “specific and *intentional* activities” to do this, including the annual “Spring into Bridges” event that brings together new and returning students and their families and a welcome weekend of the summer program that fosters teambuilding and leadership development.

Education is Freedom (EIF) believes in “getting students to college, and working with parents/guardians as partners along the way.” EIF empowers parents and guardians to proactively partner with their students toward college success. The Hispanic College Fund says that they are most successful in “empowering students by equipping them with tangible and intangible tools, which increase hope and lead to resilience.” The HCF helps students build aspirations, expectations, develop a life vision, increase their practical knowledge and skills base, and develop a support network.

Foundation for a College Education (FCE) says they are most successful working with students and parents to “make sure that they have the information and the *confidence* to be effective *advocates* for themselves.” As their director noted, FCE is designed to “empower our clients rather than having them dependent on us.” As with Breakthrough Saint Paul, FCE attributes their success to having college graduation as the goal from the beginning, noting that “all programs were and are developed with this endpoint in mind.”

Data-Driven Practices

Each of these programs reviewed in this project are extraordinarily data-driven. They collect data about their students and their instructors/facilitators which are, in turn, used regularly to inform the decision-making process. Bottom line, for instance, spent considerable funds developing its own database to track students and runs diagnostics on students twice a year. In addition, Bottom Line conducts formal diagnostic tests to determine areas of deficiency. College Bound St. Louis does not

like to use self-reported data from students, and instead gets data direct from a third party, such as ACT, to ensure its accuracy. The executive director of College Bound St. Louis, Lisa Zarin, said that they achieve their goals by being:

an organization driven by research, a commitment to higher education, and a desire to learn and improve... [Our] staff are continuously engaged in studying and sharing knowledge on issues related to education, generational poverty, cultural capital, service learning, behavioral change and technology — as individual contributors and as a team.

College Track conducts a Cycle of Inquiry for all benchmarks to monitor student progress, retention, enrollment goals, and student performance data, such as GPA and ACT scores. Breakthrough Saint Paul uses a logic model to guide their data and assessment practices, and works with Saint Paul Public Schools for student grade and state assessment data. College Bound St. Louis conducts pre- and post-test data based on their curricula module and on financial literacy. They also track community service, attendance, and scholarship funds.

The College Road uses their process data to analyze the efficacy of their services, and also use literacy assessment inventories to measure student progress. Education is Freedom (EIF) sets target goals for their schools and provides weekly and monthly reports to their stakeholders, including higher education institutions, and works to implement strategies based on proven practices.

Program Management

Several programs noted that their program management was a major strength that supported the program goals. At Bottom line, it was noted that their “clarity of purpose, focused programs, and a goal-oriented management team and staff” was an important conduit to success. Bottom line’s process-oriented approach helps students in a direct and indirect manner. Education is Freedom said their commitment to their mission as well as their innovative approaches to fulfilling that mission ultimately strengthened the program. The EIF executive director said that that their team is “committed to meeting the students’ needs and doing whatever we can to prepare them to enter and succeed in college.” To support this, EIF participates in ongoing professional development and shares proven practices as part of staff development. Similarly, College Track attributed their successes “to an incredibly committed and smart Board and staff.”

With data as a tool, programs are focused on continually improving their processes and programs. Because most programs have to be very efficient in their operations, it is important for them to review their operations and be as clean and efficient in delivering services to students and parents. The Partners Program’s John Fanning told us:

There is no one-step-and-its-done approach here. Each year we add a new piece or strategy in order to try to improve the outcomes. This is a ‘continuous improvement’ program loop — make a step forward, evaluate the process, and see how to make it even stronger.

With operating funding always a challenge, it is better to find better uses for funding rather than just trying to raise more. The pockets can be limited in their depth, especially in certain areas of the country, and especially during a downturned economy.

Intrusive

These projects work very intrusively with students. What has been learned over the years is that at-risk students need someone inside their box, so to speak, in order to get them to focus and work toward their goals. This only happens when the strategies and practices are designed specifically to be intrusive in nature. As with intentionality, the intrusive nature must be planned and intentional. Follow-through is required with regard to the needs of students and parents. Keeping lines of communication not only open but regular. We sometimes call these student *touches*: ensuring that students know they must keep focused and that someone “has their back.” Critics of some of these programs prefer a more hands-off manner. But hands-off doesn’t work with these students. If it did, they likely wouldn’t need these services to begin with. Because of this, some programs ensure that they are present in students’ home schools every single day and are a visible force. College Bound, for instance, estimates that it spends 800 hours of work by the time students graduate from high school.

High Expectations

Successful programs have high expectations for everyone involved in the program, from students to staff to board members and advocates. They expect everyone to deliver in order for the program to be successful. The greatest emphasis, of course, is on students. All of the programs reviewed in this study were very clear about the expectation of high quality student work and effort. Motivation was seen as an important aspect of student success, but motivation without high expectations—*especially regarding academic development*—is limited in its utility.

The College Road espouses “creativity and ‘no boundaries’ thinking” as their mantra. Chief Academic Officer Julie Allen noted that “setting [high] expectations was intentional when we developed the program and was at the forefront when we identified the staff members who would lead it.” She said this enables The College Road to “respond to the ever changing environment,” which in turn “contributes to success both in program outcomes and in attracting and sustaining the funding needed to deliver the program.”

College Bound St. Louis excels is combining “high expectations with high levels of support.” Lisa Zarin noted: “Helping students develop a mindset of self-advocacy, resilience and determination is central to success, as is acquiring the academic skills, cultural capital and social supports necessary for thriving in a campus setting.

Bridges to a Brighter Future described that once the program identity is clear and the right people are on board, it is crucial to maintain a program culture of high expectations to ensure an overall high program performance.

Sustainability

Every program has to deal with issues of sustainability. In a perfect world, these programs would put themselves out of business if we, as a society, were able to meet all the needs of the students they serve. Alas, there is more need than there exists support. Attracting funding for program operations is always considered one of the most challenging tasks for directors and boards. And even if those funds are sought and won, sustaining them from year-to-year is equally challenging.

The critical key that most of our case studies point to is the importance of diverse funding portfolios to protect the program and also engage a larger constituency. One of the programs, College Bound St. Louis, told us that they have over 330 separate funders, from governments and philanthropies to individuals. This diversity of approach has helped protect them against any one major funding loss. Most of us have either been directly involved or heard of programs that had great funding from one source, only to see that funding disappear in an instance, putting the program in a reactive mode.

Bridges to a Better Future (BBF) is fortunate to receive half of its funding through a program endowment. Still, they have to find the other 50 percent in the community, most of which comes from foundations, donors, grants, and corporations.

Many programs go directly to the community and solicit private funds from individuals to diversify their revenue stream. Others select influential board of directors to mount an aggressive funding strategy. One director noted that the availability of high-level data on their program was an important “calling card” for philanthropic organizations, providing a trust factor for the benefactor.

Lessons Learned

We asked programs specifically about their “lessons learned” during the process of starting and operating a college outreach program. Here are some of the responses:

Replication

Because these programs have been very successful, several are concerned with the pressures of replication: the pressure to replicate and expand as well as the pressure to do it well without reducing the impact of their current efforts. For instance, The College Road wonders how to scale up without diluting the program or diminishing impact and outcomes, and, in their words, are “actively talking about and struggling with the best ways to expand our capacity to directly serve more children or how we can help other organizations replicate our program.”

Bottom Line is in the process of building an “instruction manual” to assist with replication. One of their goals was to replicate their Boston program in New York City. Because of differences between the two, especially due to differences in the college systems, they have to be cognizant of what ser-

vices are transferable and what are not. In fall 2011, Bottom Line received \$50,000 from the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) to assist with their services in Brooklyn.

College Track has successfully replicated their program from Oakland to include San Francisco, East Palo Alto, New Orleans, and Aurora (Colorado). To do so, they identified a set of criteria for selecting new sites and replicating the model, which include clear expectations among stakeholders and core programs within College Track. They have even created facility selection guidelines for new sites.

Dallas-based Education is Freedom experienced fast growth in recent years, from working with only 3 high schools in 2008-2009 to 23 schools and 6 middle schools in 2011-2012. They were able to do this by carefully documenting the start-up and daily processes of its programs and services while also ensuring that their model was flexible enough to be customized to each school district and each school campus, a process that took some experience to learn. Their program is now very intentional in its growth and expansion in Texas, systematically preserving the core elements of the program.

Because the Hispanic Youth Institute is a national program, they feel that their potential to have a positive impact on college success is great. As with Bottom Line, HYI has prepared manuals to aid replication in new locations. As the program expands, the biggest challenge will be ensuring consistency and quality amongst the various regions. HYI plans to make a considerable investment in operations and infrastructure so that program expansion can be supported adequately.

Planning/Staffing

To run an effective program, planning and staffing issues are critical, especially for smaller programs. Because of its size, The Partners Program lot depends largely on collaboration and partnerships. This enables them to help match students with the services they need that Partners doesn't yet provide. Partners clearly defined their processes and procedures to facilitate program growth and performance. They also noted that an "exemplary and engaged" Board of Directors helps them move forward in ways that are sustainable both financially and programmatically.

Education is Freedom suggests that one must "understand and maintain a laser focus on your core business," while also ensuring alignment with program mission. Bottom line CEO Johnson indicated that they "need to find a way to spend more time planning and less time in the thick of the programs," noting that there is not enough time for staff and management to step back and plan. "The pace is relentless," says Johnson, with "no break from season to season." Bottom Line hopes to increase the size of their staff to help build in more planning time. College Track similarly indicated that they would like to strengthen the staffing structure at their organization. Executive Officer Geraldine Sonobe noted that the culture of College Track is highly entrepreneurial and that they frequently come up with "some incredible solutions for addressing the achievement gap and getting more students to graduate from college." However, College Track also understands that they sometimes do not possess the staffing capacity to implement new ideas as effectively as they want.

The College Road had a strong view of where they were headed, but also knew that the pieces didn't always fit together seamlessly. Their lesson learned was the need for creative force and detail management to deal with outcome data and other things that slowed them down.

Data

Bottom Line learned an important lesson regarding data collection. CEO Johnson explained that “collecting data is expensive—we knew that—but we did not want to cut any corners when it came to data.” As an organization, the staff learned that they must take the time to build a system out in order to do this appropriately. Bottom Line found that there was a financial and time cost to building their system, but it was necessary for the long run.

The College Road CAO Julie Allen explained that is easy to get caught up in building out the program, but staff members needed to be mindful to use data and look at what it shows about program outcomes before incorporating new program elements. “Don't wait to connect the dots,” noted Allen, “you can learn so much from early data and information.”

The Hispanic Youth Institute said they if they had the chance to do things differently, they would enact comprehensive tracking in a formalized system. “We gather longitudinal metrics using surveys, but we lack a formalized system to track individual student progress. Not only do we need to track students better, but we also need to track additional indicators in the community.” They cited the lack of funds as the main reason they did not do so.

The Partners Program strongly encouraged others to ask parents and students what works and what doesn't; pay attention to where students go after they leave your program; and learn what success patterns look like. TPP Director Fanning warned that it can be easy—especially for small organizations—to focus only on program delivery and not on data. He indicated that it is crucial to keep data and program delivery connected. Don't wait until you're “big enough to have a data person.”

Other lessons learned by programs include:

- **Career Readiness.** Several programs cited career readiness as an important consideration going forward. Bottom Line found that their students were completing the program, but were not prepared to work in the real world. “Essentially, students are graduating from college without being credentialed for employment. Education has been watered down and is far from rigorous. Standards need to move higher and more students need to graduate. It is overall a recipe for disaster.” Education is Freedom is hoping that working with corporations would help ensure a dedicated workforce to accept emerging jobs.
- **Counseling.** Breakthrough Saint Paul found that they did not understand how important a professional college counselor was to the success of their students. BSP: A key lesson

learned was the importance of professional college counseling for the students. After hiring counselors, they decided it was best to hire an expert in college counseling and financial aid.

- **Year Round.** Breakthrough Saint Paul also wished they could serve students all year. Executive Director Wingfield indicated that she would like to “serve all of our students, specifically our high school students, year round. Currently, we serve our middle school students year round and our high school students only during the school year. We are in the process of designing a high school summer program.”

Other areas mentioned include better targeting of students and families; starting the process earlier in the education pipeline (middle school vs. high school); identifying and relying on program alumnae; the need to find capable tutors in an affordable manner; and having a clear mission for the program.

The programs presented in this publication exhibit behaviors and practices that help them meet their shared goal of getting students prepared and into college. The lessons learned and other information provided throughout this publication should be a great reference to other programs in the field. To conclude, we found that a statement of essential success components by Education is Freedom Vice President Dr. Tiffany Gurley-Alloway should be useful to all programs.

Elements of an Effective Program

- Strong leadership, an influential board, and having a team with the right skills in the right jobs.
- Goals/target outcomes should set the stage for everything from data collection and analysis to database systems, work processes, and staffing (“when you hire dedicated people, the results will be phenomenal”).
- In order to remain vital, an organization must be viewed as a partner within the school districts it serves.
- Process documentation is essential.
- When needs change, an organization must be fluid enough to change with them.
- Organizations must stay current on technological advances in the industry.
- Never lose site of the competition. Organizations must understand the business, potential partners, and competitors. Further, you must understand what sets your organization apart from others. You must constantly scan the horizon for entering/emerging organizations, and never underestimate their potential impact on your business.

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I — Bottom Line

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Bottom Line is an example of a successful data-driven program that helps high school students apply for, get accepted to, and graduate from college. It uses data to track everything from student participation in program events to SAT scores, where they get accepted to college, and course grades. Student demographic data are relied upon to “hone in on the right population for our services.” Furthermore, college-level data are closely monitored by counselors working with students to ensure timely interventions and provision of services to facilitate student success. The program has evolved to focus beyond college completion to career readiness, providing students with internship opportunities to enhance their preparation for careers after college.

Program Overview

Bottom Line is a privately funded non-profit organization that helps disadvantaged youth get in to college and graduate by providing them with one-on-one guidance and support. The organization was founded with the belief that students need a mentor and a guide during the college application process and during college to succeed. Bottom Line serves low-income and first-generation college students from Boston and Worcester, MA, and has recently opened a new site in New York City.

History & Mission

Bottom Line began as a small operation supporting 25 high school seniors from Boston. In a time when few urban students were pursuing higher education and 1-in-7 low-income students who began attending college would finish, Bottom Line’s founder Dave Borgal helped all 25 students get accepted to college with an 80 percent graduation rate. Since then, Bottom Line has maintained a high level of success.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 1997
- This is a Non-profit Program
- This is a community-based program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during
 - ☐ Regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- Services students in: Boston, Worcester, and NYC
- Urbanicity: Urban area
- Duration of Program: One academic year (HS Seniors). Up to 6 years for college students
- Typical number of years students are in the program: 5
- Primary services are provided at: Community center/agency and on college campuses
- Grade level when students enter the program: 11th or 12th
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 1400
 - 2009-10 = 1600
- Parental Component: No
- **Program Funding Provided By:** Community Organization; Business/Industry; Private Foundation; Individual; College/University; Fundraising
- **Targeted Population:** Low income; First generation to attend college; High school students

Today, Bottom Line functions as an exemplary college retention model and a regional support network for low-income and first-generation urban students. From Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) to Holy Cross and UMass Dartmouth to Bentley University, Bottom Line has helped thousands of students earn their college degrees.

Goals

- 100 percent of high school seniors in the College Access Program are accepted to college
- At least 80 percent of students in the College Success Program complete a degree within 6 years

Program Staff

Bottom Line relies exclusively on full-time staff and some part-time counseling interns. The full-time counselors have a split case load of 35 to 40 high school seniors, and 50 to 55 college students. According to Bottom Line, the counselors hold a challenging position given the diversity of students with which they work, and the number of activities held for each high school and college population. During the academic year, counselors conduct 1 to 2 campus visits per week and also meet with high school seniors at Bottom Line's offices.

Admission & Selection

Students must apply for admission into the program. Bottom Line used to work with students in the 8th and 9th grades. However, since the focus of the program is on college success and ensuring students stay in college and graduate, the organization shifted its focus to provide support in college rather than increasing the college-going pipeline. Thus, students typically apply beginning in the spring of their junior year in high school. The criteria for admissions was originally low income or first generation, but students must now meet both criteria. Additionally, students must be college ready (as defined by a 2.5 GPA or higher).

Program Components

Because Bottom Line works with students that are college-bound, their College Access Program is robust. According to CEO Greg Johnson, the programs are very process-driven and are designed to start late in their high school career. "We want kids that are college bound, whose goal is a four-year school," explained Mr. Johnson. For this reason, Bottom Line provides little academic remediation or enrichment. Bottom Line students participate in the program after school and on the weekends, and the organization's services run independent and separate from the high schools and colleges. Counselors focus on helping students identify a list of institutions that are a good fit for them, and hold many one-on-one meetings with the students. Bottom Line works with 500 high school seniors in their Boston location, 150 students in Worcester, and recently launched its New York City site with capacity for 125 students in year one.

Bottom Line runs two programs for students: College Access and College Success.

College Access Program

Students begin working with Bottom Line during their junior or senior year of high school. At first, Bottom Line counselors meet with students to discuss their interests, aspirations, academic history, and family circumstances. Once students commit to the program, counselors help them navigate every step of the college application process. Counselors typically help students in five main areas of the college application process: college lists, essays, applications, financial aid, and making a college choice. Given that students receive one-on-one guidance in these major areas, the way services are provided to each student varies to suit individual needs. During the meetings, counselors are able to build strong relationships with students, which, in turn, allow them to support students through any obstacles that arise in the application process. When college acceptance and financial aid award letters arrive in the spring, Bottom Line helps each student review their options to select a college that best suits their academic, financial, and personal needs.

College Success Program

Almost all students who complete the College Access Program are accepted at a college or university. After college decisions are made, students who elect to attend a “target school” are invited to join the College Success Program. A target school is one of 19 Massachusetts colleges that a large percentage of Bottom Line students attend. As part of the College Success Program, students participate in transitional programming during the summer before their freshman year in college. Counselors work with students in groups and individually to prepare them for the academic rigor and cultural shock of college. This programming includes several workshops and events, as well as enrollment assistance, financial aid advising, and general problem solving during individual meetings. Students must attend the meetings in order to qualify for the College Success Program.

Once students arrive on campus, Bottom Line becomes a financial aid advocate, academic advisor, career counselor, and mentor. Counselors visit students on campus to offer consistent support in four areas: Degree, Employability, Aid, and Life (DEAL). Assisting students in earning a degree means helping them select a suitable major, monitor their academic progress, develop strategies to improve their performance, and connect with tutors, advisors, and on-campus resources. Bottom Line assists students in renewing financial aid every year, but also helps students year-round to resolve problems with tuition bills, determine how to pay balances, and encourage appropriate decisions that will allow students to avoid excessive debt. Additionally, Bottom Line helps students secure internships and part-time jobs, create and update their resumes, and build a unique brand that will allow them to leave college employable. Lastly, Bottom Line offers parent-like guidance and mentoring. The strong relationships counselors maintain with students enable the organization to offer consistent support and help students through unexpected obstacles, such as illness, pregnancy, debt, a death in the family, academic probation, or transferring to another college. This comprehensive support is provided for up to six years or until a student graduates.

Data-Driven Practices

Bottom Line tracks students' college persistence and graduation rates to understand how each student is progressing towards his or her degree. Data is compared to local, state, and national graduation rates to measure the success of the program services and to measure program outcome against their goal of graduating at least 80 percent of Bottom Line students within six years. To assess each student's progress towards a degree, Bottom Line categorizes each student as "red," "green," or "yellow." These categories allow program staff to focus their time and attention on those who need it the most. In order to obtain information from students in the College Success Program, Bottom Line students must sign a FERPA waiver and another contract that allows the organization to contact their institutions.

The College Access Program tracks information such as household income, high school grades, standardized test scores, and other demographic data. These data elements are used to determine students' eligibility for the program and their general college readiness. Once students are committed to the program, Bottom Line tracks their progress through every step of the college application process. Every spring, college acceptance rates are measured, serving as the primary benchmarks for the College Access Program.

In the College Success Program, staff members track grades, class schedules, intended and declared majors, financial aid awards, enrollment, credits, employment, and the overall well being of students. This information is collected for up to six years while the student is enrolled in college through one-on-one meetings, phone calls, and emails. Counselors are expected to write an entry into the student database after each interaction with a student. Frequent communication with the students allows the counselors to continue to foster a strong relationship with the students, but also allows them to continue to collect information from the students and check in on their general well being. Bottom Line also uses the National Student Clearinghouse to track student progress of students who disengage from the program.

Twice a year, Bottom Line conducts a formal diagnostic to resolve any problems students have in the Degree, Employability, Aid, and Life (DEAL) categories of the College Success Program. Program staff members identify which students are "red" or "yellow" (i.e. struggling) in any of the categories and then intervene by determining the problem and guiding the student through the steps to overcome the obstacle. After a problem is resolved (i.e. the student is removed from academic probation), the student's status returns to "green," indicating that he/she remains on track to graduate. This method allows the staff to provide proactive support to students and measure the effectiveness of Bottom Line's services.

To support these data-driven practices, Bottom Line uses a homegrown web-based database that was designed with support from a local firm. The system was built specifically for the program needs and helps track information such as when students apply online as high school juniors or seniors. The

database is exportable to Excel applications and can be accessed by all counselors. It creates files for each student and follows them through their experience at Bottom Line. One benefit of having a centralized database is the ability to standardize data collection efforts. Everything from the outreach strategies, the process to get into the program, the way data is entered into the system, and the amount of time counselors meet with students is recorded systematically in the database and information is filterable by each of Bottom Line's sites. Currently, Bottom Line is trying to hone in on the data analysis to look at different cross sections of the population they serve to identify changes or trends that can be useful for improving practices or replicating its model in new sites.

College & University Partnerships

Bottom Line does not have formal partnerships with any postsecondary institutions. However, they do have working relationships with many individuals in admissions, financial aid, and other campus resources at colleges throughout Massachusetts. Since the College Success Program provides services to students at specific colleges, Bottom Line tends to build strong relationships with those colleges over time.

Evidence of Success

According to Bottom Line, 74 percent of Boston students who participated in the College Success Program have completed a degree within six years. The organization's college graduation rates are higher than the rates of students in the Boston Public Schools system, whose class of 2003 graduated 41 percent of students from college within six years.

Furthermore, an external evaluation of the College Success Program shows that students who receive Bottom Line's support during college graduate in six years at rates up to 43 percent higher than students who receive support only during the college application process through the College Access Program. This finding illustrates that Bottom Line is achieving its goal of increasing students' chances of earning a college degree.

For the college completion rates of Bottom Line students in recent classes, they are getting close to the 80 percent goal that is based on the rate at which the wealthiest, best supported students typically graduate across the nation.

Sustainability

Bottom Line has a diverse funding stream. Approximately a third of the funds come from local and large foundations that support the organization's growth. There are also corporate sponsorships, which often come from companies that supply employment and internship opportunities for college graduates. Finally, Bottom Line receives contributions from a rapidly growing individual donor base. The organization does not receive federal funds because they run separate from the schools, and the lack of federal monies helps the organization be "independent and flexible," according to the CEO.

Since the beginning, the plan was to create a sustainable structure for the organization. Because the funding streams are diverse, the organization is not reliant on any one source. Local sites also participate in fundraising efforts, and the ability to provide well-documented program results contributes to the financial health of the organization.

Bottom Line's fundraising efforts have remained fairly consistent over time. An annual fundraiser was added about 5 years ago that led to a great deal of individual and corporate sponsorship money, but for the most part, Bottom Line's fundraising approach has remained the same. Some board members are very involved in fundraising, while others are only involved a small amount. Bottom Line requires a financial contribution and asks that each board member raise at least \$15,000 annually.

What We Do Best

CEO Greg Johnson indicated that Bottom Line is most successful in both integrating a process-oriented approach to supporting students' college access and success, and running the programs very efficiently. He attributed these successes to "clarity of purpose, focused programs, and a goal-oriented management team and staff."

Lessons Learned

Since the organization started in 1997, there have been some changes. As more students get closer to completing their degrees, the organization is adapting to address their needs. One of the major components of Bottom Line's program is the career piece and the goal to help students become more career ready by the time they finish college. Thus, the curriculum that targets career readiness and provides students with the skills necessary to be competitive in the workforce has been adapted over time.

In addition to changes in the career component of the services, Bottom Line has also learned some important lessons regarding data collection. Mr. Johnson explained that "collecting data is expensive—we knew that—but we did not want to cut any corners when it came to data." As an organization, the staff learned that if you are going to do it right, you must take the time to build a system out. The downside is the cost and time it requires to build out the system from the beginning. However, the CEO is convinced that given the opportunity, Bottom Line would not change its commitment to using data. Perhaps, he reflected, there could have been greater efforts to budget better if he knew that such a system would cost \$100,000. But in the end, it was worth it.

In terms of replication, Bottom Line is in the process of building an "instruction manual" or "program-in-a-box," figuratively speaking. The curriculum is mostly written out, and since a large portion of the program's process is based on meetings with students, the organization has materials for all meetings. When Bottom Line opened in New York City, the goal was to replicate the program as closely as possible to the Boston site. But certainly, there are some differences that needed to be ac-

counted for in the process, such as the different college systems in New York and Boston. Ideally, described Mr. Johnson, the new site will replicate the types of services and the timeline of support given to students. Because Bottom Line's programs are not school-based, students travel to a central location to receive services. This is a driving force behind the organization's goal to expand to other communities in New York City.

When asked about doing anything differently, given the chance, CEO Johnson indicated that they "need to find a way to spend more time planning and less time in the thick of the programs." He noted that there is not "nearly enough time for our staff and management team to step back and plan." He added that "the pace is relentless" with "no break from season to season." A potential solution to this is to increase the size of the staff so that they can "ensure appropriate time is available to continue to think ahead and innovate."

Regarding challenges Bottom Line will potentially face in the future, Mr. Johnson indicated that "there will be (and is already) a push (by funders and other providers) for us to amend our approach to taking on students for only the college success component of what we do. It will be challenging to figure out how we do that without minimizing the quality of our results and/or cannibalizing our traditional program model." He further noted the scarcity of funding and other resources, challenges that are being exacerbated by the increasing number of service providers in the field. In closing, he offered:

We need to determine our role in the career space as students are completing our college program, but aren't prepared to work in the real world. Essentially, students are graduating from college without being credentialed for employment. Education has been watered down and is far from rigorous. Standards need to move higher and more students need to graduate. It is overall a recipe for disaster.

Table 1. Bottom Line: Students Served by Year and Outcome

Number of students who...										
	Apply to program	Are accepted into Program*	Graduate from HS	Enrolled in college Success Program#	Persist 2nd year	Persist 3rd year	Persist 4th year	College graduates (4 years)	College graduates (5 years)	College graduates (6 years)
1998	35	25	25	25				8	7	2
1999	66	50	50	50				24	8	4
2000	90	83	75	75				36	16	5
2001	135	112	99	99				46	20	8
2002	208	208	200	90				31	18	8
2003	249	208	200	68				21	19	7
2004	224	218	200	67				30	16	4
2005	447	398	383	98				34	27	11
2006	422	390	360	142				61	37	N/A
2007	440	401	360	143			137	87	N/A	N/A
2008	397	381	360	170		160	158	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009	676	500	473	212	209	201	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010	823	685	623	304	291	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2011	1085	704	650	325	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2012	1041(so far)	658 so far	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* The program serves students starting at 12th grade (summer before 12th grade)

Not all program graduates who enroll in college remain with the program while in college and persistence data during college is inconsistent for early program years.

II — Breakthrough Saint Paul

National Breakthrough Collaborative

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Breakthrough Saint Paul (BSP) represents a relatively new program that has developed additional supports for its cohorts of students as they advanced through the K-12 pipeline and then into college. Intentional, data-supported improvements and new programmatic components have been brought online yearly as the program has developed in parallel to the students it serves. By documenting the process, including data collection protocols, student outcomes data, and program implementation details, BSP has been able to develop a guide book for successful program development to support students from middle school through to college. BSP is currently developing a program to support the cohort in college to ensure college graduation.

Program Overview

Breakthrough Saint Paul has a dual mission: 1) It launches low-resourced middle and high school students from the Saint Paul Public Schools on the path to college by helping them succeed in academically rigorous courses, and 2) It attracts a diverse group of talented young people to pursue careers in education. Breakthrough Saint Paul (BSP) accomplishes both of these missions at the same time with a program model of “students teaching students,” which is common to all 34 programs in The Breakthrough Collaborative. At BSP, academically motivated, under-resourced middle and high school students from the Saint Paul Public Schools take classes that are designed and taught by talented and diverse high school and college students (called “aspiring teachers”). A team of professional mentor-teachers and a dedicated staff guide the aspiring teachers and oversee the entire process.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 2005
- This is a Partnership Program
- This is a community-based program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during
 - ☐ Regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- Services students in: Saint Paul Public Schools
- Urbanicity: Urban area
- Duration of Program: 6th through 12th grade
- Typical number of years students are in the program: more than 5 years
- Primary services are provided at: Elementary or secondary schools
- Grade level when students enter the program: 6
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 137
 - 2009-10 = 187
- **Parental Component:** Yes. FAFSA counseling/guidance; Participation in student activities
- **Program Funding Provided By:** State Government; Local School System; Business/Industry; Private Foundation; Individual; College/University; Fundraising
- **Targeted Populaton:** Low income; Gifted/talented students; Historically underrepresented minorities; ESL students; First generation to attend college; Middle school students

History

Breakthrough Saint Paul is a member of the national Breakthrough Collaborative, which was started in 1978 in San Francisco and got a grant in the 1990s to expand nationwide. The expansion process has always been grassroots based, with cities requesting membership – never the national collaborative approaching cities. Saint Paul is the youngest program in the collaborative and just finished its 7th summer. BSP's first cohort of 6th grade students, which is the year that all Breakthrough programs start, just finished high school and is headed to college. Saint Paul started very small, with only 15 students in the first cohort and small second and third cohorts, to ensure all necessary processes and funding were in place. Now there are approximately 60 students per cohort. The plan is to track students through college completion.

Goals

Breakthrough Saint Paul has seven primary goals:

- BSP students are enrolled in honors courses.
- BSP students are passing their honors courses with at least a B-.
- BSP students are proficient on the MCA-II examination.
- BSP students graduate high school in four years.
- BSP students are accepted and enroll in college immediately following their senior year of high school.
- BSP students complete college within 5 years.
- BSP aspiring teachers enter a career in education after college graduation.

Program Staff

The program staffing for BPS recently grew and it now has a full-time executive director, program director, student and family liaison, program coordinator, and volunteer coordinator. Additionally, it has a part-time college counselor and a part-time development officer. Finally, about 50 volunteer tutors work with students weekly.

Admissions & Selection

Breakthrough Saint Paul staff members visit virtually all of the local elementary schools each year and present about the program. Interested 6th grade students from the Saint Paul Public Schools complete an eight-page application that is designed as a mini-version of a college application. The application includes four essays and requires recommendations from two teachers. Approximately 200 students complete the application each year. An admissions committee then scores the applications using an established rubric. To be accepted into the program, students must: 1) Demonstrate motivation (completing the application process and committing to a six-year program as an 11 year old serves as a proxy for motivation), and 2) Exhibit at least two “need factors” from the list of: eligibility for free or reduced lunch; first generation to attend college; primary language in the home oth-

er than English; single-parent household; self-identification as a member of a racial/ethnic group underrepresented in college; attend a school designated as Title 1 under NCLB; and a notable relationship stress (e.g. deployed parent).

The program is not designed to remediate low proficiency, but to assist students who need additional support to get from proficient to excellent. Based on the need factors, the 200 applications are typically reduced to 100 students who are interviewed along with their families. The committee then selects 60 a year based on the student essays and teacher recommendations. Almost all BSP students remain in SPPS schools through junior high and high school, but, for those students that move outside the district, Breakthrough continues to serve them if they can provide transportation and meet ongoing expectations. BSP expects a major commitment from families, as well as students. Parents and guardians must agree to participate in several events annually and to ensure their children attend all activities.

Program Components

Middle School

The program for students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade includes a 6-week summer program, monthly Saturday events throughout the school year, opportunities for college visits, and required tutoring for any courses with less than a B- average. The summer program is a six-week long, non-residential program from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday with an additional two hours of homework nightly. The monthly Saturday events include enrichment workshops, field trips, and college visits. The student/family liaison visits the schools at least monthly and meets with the students at the 15-20 middle schools.

High School

Starting in the 9th grade, all BSP students get a laptop and Comcast provides internet service. This permits much of the high school program to be conducted online. BSP high school students have weekly assignments based on recognized best practices in college enrichment, which differ by grade. For example, in the 9th grade, much of the focus is on developing the organizational and research skills needed to succeed in high school. In the 11th grade, students focus on ACT-SAT preparation. Instead of in-person meetings, BSP high school students Skype every two weeks with an aspiring teacher. The monthly Saturday opportunities continue in person, with half-day programming that varies by grade level to work with students and build community. Likewise, the tutoring continues for any high school student receiving a grade below a B- in any course. Starting in May in 11th grade, BSP students meet one-on-one with a professional college counselor and one-on-one with an essay coach. BSP high school seniors meet in person every two weeks with a college counselor who assists them in narrowing down their college choices, determining a visit schedule, and preparing for college interviews.

Aspiring Teachers

Students apply to be “aspiring teachers” (interns) as college freshmen and are recruited from area colleges. Because BSP is relatively new, none of its graduates are yet eligible to apply to be aspiring teachers. Once BSP students enter college, it is the intention of the program to encourage them to apply, although aspiring teachers may still come from outside the program. Aspiring teachers act as role models for BSP middle and high school students and BSP attempts to recruit a diverse range of students to be aspiring teachers. A goal is to have role models who “look like” the BSP students served. Aspiring teachers get to work with educational professionals to develop and refine curricula for the summer programs and have opportunities to mentor BSP students and be mentored by professional teachers.

Data-Driven Practices

Unlike other programs in the Breakthrough Collaborative, BSP utilizes a logic model to guide program assessment and determine if goals are being met. The logic model specifies the inputs and activities of the program along with the outcome goals for middle and high school and college (aspiring teachers) students. Examples of the outcomes data collected include grades in core and honors classes, ACT/SAT proficiency scores, high school graduation, college enrollment, scholarship amounts and sources, college persistence, and college completion. The Saint Paul Public Schools provide the program with student grade and state assessment (MCA) data. BSP staff meet weekly with high school seniors to determine their college enrollment and scholarship amounts. Alumni surveys are used to track BSP alumni while they are in college. External verification of outcomes is done through evaluation studies with Wilder Research. Students’ grades are checked bi-weekly so that interventions (tutoring) can occur in a timely fashion. Everything else is collected on a yearly basis to guide process improvements, as needed. Every year the staff use the data to modify work plans. BSP staff meet monthly to determine program-wide areas of improvement, and when program gaps are identified, they set up a planning team to organize and implement new ideas.

The CSU/UC Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project (MDTP) instrument is given to middle school students at the beginning and end of the summer program and the data are used to prepare teachers to target specific instruction to students’ needs and to measure improvements. Professional educators work closely with aspiring teachers to implement the lesson plans with students. Other standardized instruments are not as useful, but are occasionally utilized, including the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) that measure whether students are proficient in various subjects. As BSP students tend to be proficient, the data are not very useful in designing instructional interventions. The pre- and post-test data are crucial to constructing effective summer lessons and to measuring the success of the instruction. The national collaborative offered teaching development opportunities to the various programs’ teachers and BSP found these to be valuable in preparing the aspiring teachers and professional educators to engage with BSP students. The data show kids now learn with higher gains in summer than they did in previous years.

External evaluation found that BSP high school students wanted a summer program. Additionally, BSP's internal data showed that students experienced declines in course grades in 9th grade, which then bounced back in 10th grade. So, BSP is undertaking a planning process this year to introduce a summer component for high school students next summer to facilitate the transition from middle to high school and, hopefully, mitigate the impact to student grades.

BSP started with an initial cohort of 6th graders and the program has expanded farther down the K-12 pipeline as the students advanced. As the first cohort goes off to college, BSP intends to monitor BSP college students in the same way as the aspiring teachers have been tracked over the last 6 years, through: surveys; phone calls; email; Facebook, which is the most popular and easiest media; and, annual alumni events. Aspiring teachers have been invited to these get together where everyone can discuss happenings and issues, have fun, and reconnect.

College & University Partnerships

Breakthrough Saint Paul partners with Macalester College for several joint initiatives. Macalester College provides work opportunities to BSP students through its Off-Campus Student Employment (OCSE) program. OCSE is an opportunity for Macalester students to earn financial aid awards (work-study) while gaining experience at a local nonprofit organization or elementary school. The program is designed to create institutional partnerships between Macalester and local community organizations, encouraging Macalester students to serve as bridges between the local organization and Macalester and enabling both to build on the varied resources of the other. Further, BSP receives approximately 8-10 hours per week of assistance from three college students and Macalester pays the students' wages. Additional examples of relationships between BSP and Macalester College include:

- A Macalester biology professor, serves on the BSPI Board of Directors.
- A Macalester alumna of 2008, was BSP's High School Program Coordinator and still participates in the organization as a volunteer.
- Since 2005, BSP has selected over 18 Macalester students to serve as aspiring teachers.
- Dozens of Macalester students tutor BSP students on a weekly basis.
- During the summer of 2007 and 2008 and the 2011 school year, the biology department of Macalester College put together a special on-campus science experience for BSP students.
- During the 2010 school year, Macalester Off Campus Work Study students took all of the 10th grade Breakthrough students on a tour of the campus and arranged for BSP students to participate in a panel discussion with Macalester students.
- During the 2011 school year, Macalester students organized, planned, and guided a college visit for 120 BSP middle school students.
- In February 2008, the Macalester student group "Black Liberation Affairs Committee" hosted a Spoken Word fundraiser for BSP called "Voices Breakthrough."

- BSP was included in a Macalester grant proposal to the National Science Foundation, which was funded and will provide for the salaries of Macalester students who teach as aspiring teachers during the middle school summer program.

Evidence of Success

BSP contracted an external evaluator, Wilder Research, to evaluate the program in 2011. Some of the data about honors courses and grades comes from that third-party report. BSP places a considerable emphasis on honors courses because of the connection to future college success. The majority of BSP students (94 percent of all BSP students and 100 percent of BSP high school students) are enrolling and succeeding in honors courses, with BSP 7th graders passing an average of almost two honors courses annually, 8th graders passing an average of just over two honors classes a school year, and active BSP 9th graders passing an average of about two and a third honors courses a year. Seventy-two percent of BSP 7th and 8th graders averaged a grade of “B-” or higher, while only about half of 9th graders achieved this program threshold. Wilder Research found that BSP students tend to earn more credits in honors classes than their peers in a matched-comparison study. Additionally, BSP students tended to have slightly higher grade-point averages than the matched-comparison students (3.27 vs. 2.98, or B+ vs. B).

To date, all BSP students who remain with the program graduate from high school in four years and, of the first cohort to reach college, all were accepted and enrolled in college immediately after their senior year of high school. In fact, all of the first cohort were accepted to four-year universities. The average yearly scholarship for these students was over \$26k and four students received full scholarships to go to Stanford, Carleton, St. Thomas, and St. Catherine’s.

Sustainability

BSP relies on a diverse revenue stream that draws about a quarter each from the government, individuals, corporations, and foundations. A goal is to reduce reliance on government funding by increasing individual giving. To facilitate fundraising, the Board of Directors monitors the program goals each year, as well as monthly updates on progress and an annual report. Efforts are currently focused on a strategic plan.

The funding base of BSP has grown substantially during our first six years. When BSP began, the program had three major foundations supporting the program and a handful of very committed individual donors. Now, the program receives funding from over 200 individual donors, 18 foundations support the program, and three government sources provide financial support. BSP has a six-month cash reserve. Additionally, Breakthrough Saint Paul has a mix of large and small individual donors. They have over 200 individual donors and are actively engaged in increasing the size of the donor pool, as well as the size of gifts from each donor, which should buffer the organization to some extent from the economic uncertainty. Finally, the number of BSP partners has grown substantially over the five-year history from 2 to 7 and will continue to grow. When the program began, all

in-kind donations were provided by Mounds Park Academy and the Saint Paul Public Schools. BSP now has seven community partners that provide in-kind services to our students.

BSP's Executive Director and Director of Development lead all the fundraising efforts. The board is very engaged with fundraising. The BSP Executive Director indicated that "they give and they get." She added that the Board members understand that fundraising is a crucial part of their job. A challenge, however, is that because BSP is a relatively small program in terms of students served, it has had a difficult time attracting the major corporations in Twin Cities, despite the successful outcomes.

What We Do Best

Executive Director Emily Wingfield indicated that BSP is most successful at building students' belief, starting at 6th grade, that they will attend college. She noted that "there are no exceptions; college is the expectation of Breakthrough students." She attributed this success to "early, sustained intervention with our 'students teaching students model' where young Breakthrough students have diverse, talented role models for six years."

Lessons Learned

BSP has evolved so quickly that many lessons have been learned in a short period of time. Breakthrough started as a summer program for middle school students and BSP was the first program in the collaborative to offer a high school program. As the students have advanced through school, BSP has expanded to continue serving them. Attentiveness to data and being adaptive has developed BSP into a full-fledged year-round program for 6th through 12th grade students and starting this next year, will continue to expand to serve them through college completion.

A key lesson learned was the importance of professional college counseling for the students. At beginning, Executive Director Emily Wingfield noted that she did not "get how important a professional college counselor was" to the preparation of high school students headed to college. She noted that many other programs utilize AmeriCorps/Vista members to provide college counseling for a large number of students. While these counselors are helpful, after close examination of the specific needs of BSP students, it was decided best to hire an expert in college counseling and financial aid. The person selected provides these services to wealthy families in the area. At first we did not understand why families were paying him \$10k to help their kid get into college. Now we get it; this is very valuable information and we want BSP students to have access to these services.

If provided the opportunity to do something different, Executive Director Wingfield indicated that she would like to "serve all of our students, specifically our high school students, year round. Currently, we serve our middle school students year round and our high school students only during the school year. We are in the process of designing a high school summer program."

Table 2. Breakthrough Saint Paul: Students Served by Year and Outcome

Year	Applied	Accepted in 7th Grade	Continued to 8th Grade	Continued to 9th Grade	Continued to 10th Grade	Continued to 11th Grade	Continued to 12th Grade	Enrolled in College
2005-2006	15	15						
2006-2007			15 (2)					
2007-2008				14				
2008-2009					14			
2009-2010						13		
2010-2011							12	
2011-2012								12
2012-2013								

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of that cell's count that are "new" or refreshed student headcounts who entered the program during that cell

III — Bridges to a Brighter Future

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Bridges to a Brighter Future provides an example of a successful program that underwent a very intentional process of identity-building midway through its existence. In addition to developing new programs to meet identified student needs, Bridges strives to be a source of pride-in-membership to its students. To achieve this, the program maintains high expectations for all participants and includes many traditions, chants, and ceremonies for public recognition of student academic success. The program collects both verifiable and self-reported student data to measure student outcomes related to high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion.

Program Overview

Bridges to a Brighter Future (BBF) is a comprehensive college access program for Greenville County high school students “whose potential outdistances their circumstances.” The mission is to break the cycle of poverty and low-educational attainment by equipping students with the tools and support needed to graduate from high school, enroll in post-secondary education, and graduate with a post-secondary degree. BBF accomplishes its mission by engaging students in an intensive seven-year program that begins in ninth grade and ends after college graduation. The program includes a four-week summer residential program at Furman University, year-round monthly support through Bridges Saturday College, and Crossing the Bridge, a transition program to ensure students successfully start and graduate from college. This comprehensive program transforms lives by building academic success, self-confidence, resiliency, leadership, and character.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 1997
- This is a Privately-funded Program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during:
 - ☐ During regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- Services students in: Greenville County School District, Greenville, South Carolina
- Urbanicity: Urban area
- Duration of Program: Full academic year
- Typical number of years students are in the program: more than 5 years
- Primary services are provided at: College campus
- Grade level when students enter the program: 9
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 78
 - 2009-10 = 76
- **Parental Component:** Yes. FAFSA counseling/guidance.
- **Program Funding Provided By:** Business/Industry; Private Foundation; Individual; College/University; Fundraising.
- **Targeted Population:** Low income; Historically underrepresented minorities; ESL students; First generation to attend college ; Dropout, stopout, or at-risk students ; High school students; Academically successful, B average students and students with high need for support.

History

Bridges to a Brighter Future began in 1997 through a gift from a Greenville woman who did not want to see young people's potential uncultivated due to barriers such as family financial circumstances or lack of knowledge, exposure, or encouragement. BBF strives to literally change lives and is one of the distinctive community outreach programs in Greenville County.

In 2009, Bridges to a Brighter Future was recognized as a model program by the National Summer Learning Association through the 2009 Summer Excellence Award, an award that recognizes outstanding summer programs that demonstrate excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for young people between kindergarten and twelfth grade. The BBF model has been replicated at Elon University and serves as a model for success in working with first-generation, low-income high school students.

Goals

- 100 percent retention of students from year one to year three of the program.
- 100 percent of program participants maintain a 3.0 grade point average.
- 100 percent high school graduation or GED.
- 100 percent college or military enrollment.*
- 80 percent attendance rate in Saturday College.
- 100 percent of Bridges graduates enrolling in college will participate in the Crossing the Bridge program.
- 100 percent of Bridges students enrolling in college will graduate from college or earn a post-secondary certification in a trade.

*Each year a small number of Bridges graduates are undocumented citizens. South Carolina has a law preventing them from enrolling in state-funded institutions. Therefore, those students ineligible for college enrollment are not considered in the college enrollment calculation. The program works very hard to find private colleges and scholarships to enable those students to enroll.

Admissions & Selection

Students are nominated in ninth grade by their classroom teachers, guidance counselors, or members of the community. Approximately 125 students are nominated annually. Students must be eligible for free or reduced lunch, have close to a "B" average, and have need for support (i.e., no family support system). All nominated students go through an intensive selection process including an application and interview. About 125 students are interviewed annually. After the interview, 25-30 students are selected each year based on their need for the program. The students selected are those who wouldn't be successful without the support of the program. Income level, family structure (i.e., sin-

gle parents), and racial and ethnic diversity are all considered to ensure that a diverse group of students is selected.

The new rising tenth graders join two classes of continuing rising junior and senior-level students for a total of approximately 80 students. Students may return for two consecutive summers if they maintain a 3.0 grade point average and remain in good standing with the Bridges program and their school.

Program Staff

Bridges to a Brighter Future employs two full-time staff members and a half-time administrative assistant year-round. The summer program uses approximately 15 college student counselors, 10 teachers, and an academic coordinator, all of whom are part-time and seasonal (summer only). The program also relies on volunteers, partnering with many corporations and groups to provide the Saturday College tutoring and help with summer program presentations and trip coordination. The Crossing the Bridge program uses approximately 25 volunteer mentors, called “college buddies,” who are available as a support person for the students.

Programs Components

Summer Program

The four-week summer residential program is held at Furman University in June and July. Students attend the summer program for three consecutive summers beginning in ninth grade. The summer program is transformational, as the classes, activities, workshops, and exposure experiences change student’s attitudes, perspectives, and goals. Students attend core academic and enrichment classes four days a week and visit colleges one day a week. The first-year students participate in a ropes challenge course during the first week to overcome fears and build trust and confidence. Additionally, the program includes academic and personal enrichment components; leadership development courses for returning students; diversity workshops; workshops on topics such as career exploration, etiquette, college planning, college success, healthy decision-making, and personal development; various field trips in Greenville; college campus visits; community service with local non-profit agencies; weekend night social activities; and various evening opportunities for structured physical activities (i.e., swimming and tennis lessons, dance, etc.).

Saturday College

Saturday College provides year-round academic and personal reinforcement and support to enhance the impact of the four-week summer program. It is designed to: further increase students’ academic and personal success; keep students focused on the academic and personal goals they have set for themselves; and, identify student challenges as they develop, in order to provide opportunities for intervention before problems magnify and become insurmountable. One Saturday a month during the academic year (i.e., nine sessions from September through May), students come to Furman Uni-

versity for four hours to receive tutoring, mentoring, academic success and college planning workshops, emotional support and networking with Bridges classmates and staff, and lunch. Students receive a \$20 stipend for each Saturday College they attend to assist with transportation costs and missed work.

Crossing the Bridge

The summer after students graduate from high school, they participate in a week-long summer program that kicks-off Crossing the Bridge. The summer program is designed to support the transition from high school to college enrollment. Starting with the students entering college fall 2011, Crossing the Bridge is a new component of the program that involves working with students through their college experience, rather than having the program end when they start college. Bridges to a Brighter Future received a donation that allows the program to support students through college. The funds were received in August 2010 and the program hired an Assistant Director in November 2010 to work with college students. The plan is to visit students once a semester and to facilitate student access to existing college-based resources, not to duplicate these resources.

Data-Driven Practices

Bridges to a Brighter Future has maintained copies of student grade reports, application materials, interview documentation, registration forms, high school course enrollment, and extracurricular activity participation for all students since 2004. In addition to these data, which are collected and analyzed to assess progress toward program goals, BBF surveys student and parent satisfaction once a year for Saturday College, the summer program, and Crossing the Bridge. BBF uses survey feedback to make changes in the programs to ensure the specific needs of the students are met and the program is effective. By surveying, BBF works to keep students engaged and connected to the program. During the four-week summer program, for example, students are asked how they like their classes, what they are learning, and what they are enjoying. This information helps program staff understand what needs to be changed for the next summer.

Additionally, program staff conduct individual meetings with each student in the fall. During this time, staff are spending one-on-one time with students to gauge what personal challenges students are facing. BBF uses this information to plan and prepare a summer program and Saturday College experiences that meets students' needs. For example, one year, BBF had an issue with students making good decisions. Therefore, the workshops and theme of the summer program that year was decision-making. BBF fosters a one-on-one personal relationship with each student and indicated these relationships keep the lines of communication open to ensure students feel comfortable sharing what works and doesn't work in the program – including the effectiveness of teachers, counselors, and other staff.

Data are tracked, analyzed, and utilized for both program improvement and funding solicitations. The program engages in a thorough annual report and has a strategic fundraising plan. Funders, es-

pecially foundations and corporate partners, are most interested in the outcomes data such as high school graduation and college enrollment rates. These data are also of particular interest to the school district, which sees the value of BBF.

Before BBF formally adopted the “Crossing the Bridge” component, there was no formal structure to track college graduation rates. All of the prior data is unverified, largely collected through success stories shared by students through media such as Facebook. For example, many students have gone on to become teachers and engineers and stay in touch with the program through the alumni network. Tobi Swartz, Director of Bridges to a Brighter Future, indicated in a phone interview that BBF is very excited to be able to track and validate college outcome data, because it will enable them to target program improvements to help higher percentages of students graduate from college.

College & University Partnerships

Bridges to a Brighter Future is a Furman University program. The two full-time staff are Furman University employees. Bridges does not have a separate 501(c)(3), as it falls under Furman’s non-profit status. BBF is included in the University’s Strategic Plan.

Additionally, Bridges is increasing the number of partnerships with colleges because of the Crossing the Bridge program. In addition to working formally with students through their college experiences, Bridges conducts a week-long series of intense workshops and classes about college success. To facilitate these, Bridges intentionally brings in speakers from outside of Furman, typically from other colleges that Bridges students attend. For example, the chief judicial officer from USC presented about common mistakes students make in behavior and discipline. Many Bridges graduates go on to USC Upstate. Bridges staff also have relationships with the admissions officers at many of the commonly attended colleges and universities. One of Bridges’ volunteer groups is a group of Hispanic graduate students in the sciences at Clemson. The group provides tutors and planned a tour for Bridges where they brought students to visit the research facilities at Clemson.

Evidence of Success

The first cohort of students graduated in 2000, so there have been 11 cohorts to date. Based on the data from these cohorts, the program is having a positive influence on student graduation from high school and college enrollment. The limited data available on college completion also indicates that the program is assisting students to persist and complete a college degree.

Student Retention in Bridges to a Brighter Future

The program has a goal of 100 percent retention of participants from acceptance in 9th grade through HS graduation, but the actual retention over the last 6 years is 89 percent. This is equal to losing approximately two students in one class of 27 over a three year period. To ensure high retention, the program obtains student grade reports quarterly to ensure they stay on track academically and are not at risk of failure in a class or an entire quarter. Retention had been as low as 50 percent

in the early years of the program and new efforts brought the rate up to 80 percent, and the adoption of Saturday college in 2006 brought the retention rate up to almost 95 percent. The program was intentional in improving their approach to working with students and the outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of the new strategies.

High School Graduation

Across the life of the program, 100 percent of students that remain in BBF graduate from high school. As the program's efforts to retain students have been successful and the number and percentage of students remaining in the program have increased over time, this has resulted in an increase in the number and percentage of students graduating from high school, as well.

College Enrollment

College enrollment increased with the adoption of Saturday College. Again, Saturday College was instrumental in increasing the number of students who remained in the program and graduated from college. Of all the cohorts, 187 students of the 204 eligible to enroll in college did, for an average college enrollment of 92 percent of program participants.

College Persistence and Graduation

Students attending the BBF program from 1997-2004 are tracked through the National Student Clearinghouse to obtain enrollment data. After 2004, enrollment data is maintained by the program in EXCEL with data collected through student interviews. For example, of the eight BBF graduates who went to Furman University, all are rising seniors, still attending, and on track to graduate. Since the advent of the in-house tracking, three cohorts of students have graduated from college and the 4th cohort is in the senior year. College graduation across these early cohorts is estimated at about 50-60 percent. Crossing the Bridge was implemented to improve these figures.

Starting with the 2010-11 academic year, the Crossing the Bridge program has required students enrolling in college to participate in a one-week residential transition program at Furman. As a part of this program, students receive a book stipend. In order to receive the fall book stipend, students are required to verify college enrollment. In order to receive the spring book stipend, students are required to submit fall grades. Through Crossing the Bridge, the CTB director visits students once in the fall and once in the spring at the college of attendance to conduct interviews and ensure that students are on path to complete college. These measures should result in increased rates of verifiable student graduation from college.

Sustainability

Bridges to a Brighter Future is fortunate to have an endowment that provides approximately 70 percent of the funding needed to operate the summer program and year-round administration. The program maintains close ties to the woman who created the program through her original gift and continues to support the program. Funding to support and sustain the expansion components from

the traditional summer component including Saturday College (2006) and Crossing the Bridge (2010) comes from annual reoccurring gifts from private sources.

While BBF is a Furman University program, eight percent of the entire budget (\$39,000) is operational funding from Furman University. It is university policy to spend 4.5 percent of the endowment annually, so the endowment and Furman University funding can support approximately 50 percent of the entire program budget. This makes it necessary to raise additional annual funding to support the summer program and any new initiatives, projects or student needs. Forty-two-percent of funding is raised by foundations, donors, grants, and corporations. Included in the private support is an annual grant from The Jolley Foundation to fund Saturday College and an annual gift from an anonymous donor for Crossing the Bridge. In addition, the program maintains a small student needs fund supported by individual donors to meet the needs of individual students. The fund supports school supplies, clothing, graduation fees, and testing fees.

In earlier years, before the improved outcomes data, it was far more challenging to raise these additional funds. However, with the new-and-improved program and the measurable successes, Director Tobi Swartz indicated that she is frequently contacted by corporations and organizations wishing to develop partnerships. Some organizations wish to be involved with the successful program through volunteer opportunities for their employees. Others are looking to provide internship opportunities for the BBF students in college through the Crossing the Bridge program. The external interest – regionally and nationally from corporations and foundations, has increased to a level where the program needs to be intentional in forming new partnerships to ensure that the program remains true to its mission. Additionally, there are about 10-20 individual donors who are highly invested in Bridges.

The program reports to the Furman University Board of Trustees and does not have a separate advisory board, although they have considered developing one. Instead, an informal board of community members, such as the superintendent of the school district and other local stakeholders, meets with the director yearly.

What We Do Best

Director Swartz indicated that she believes that BBF is “most successful in creating a program that promotes a unique family atmosphere beyond that of a typical summer program.” She based her response on feedback she frequently gets from participating students, who use the term “family” to describe the feeling of the program. To overcome the isolation and lack of support from which many participants come, Bridges actively fosters this sense of connection. She noted, “when students are selected for Bridges to a Brighter Future, they join a program of committed participants who unconditionally accept, support, encourage, trust, and love each other. Our program values and culture support this type of environment.” Bridges is very successful in creating an environment where di-

verse students “are able to learn from each other and realize that, while they might be a different race or ethnicity, they have a lot in common.”

To achieve this, Bridges to a Brighter Future was designed to incorporate several specific and intentional activities to assist students in becoming a family and feeling a connection with and commitment to the program. These include the annual “Spring into Bridges” event that brings together new and returning students and their families; the welcome weekend of the summer program that fosters teambuilding and leadership development; an intensive diversity workshop early in the program to breakdown biases and open a productive dialogue on all aspects of diversity; an intentional “family” structure or feeling in the program staffing, activities, and communication; and, an end of summer banquet that celebrates student accomplishments.

Lessons Learned

Program Identity

Bridges has many programmatic aspects to foster a clear program identity with which people want to be connected and belong. Having a clear value system and mission, and crafting a program that supports these, are crucial. Further, the program culture must include students and help to create a family for them. Through a clear program identity, Bridges strives to create pride and enthusiasm to be a part of program among students and staff members. To help communicate the program identity, each new student is paired with two continuing students as mentors. The older students teach the new students what bridges is about, expose them to pride in the program, and share the chants and songs about bridges. Each cohort learns the traditions and helps to build on them.

Recruitment

Bridges purposefully selects only students that need the program, have the commitment necessary to benefit from the program, and who want to be there because they see in the program real value to improving their success in life. Early on, behavior was a problem. Initially, the program worked to help students make the choice to modify their behavior and commitment or leave the program. Additionally, Bridges spends considerable time recruiting the right counselors, teachers, and staff members, all of whom are passionate about working with these students. Today, staff recruitment is largely word-of-mouth and it is much easier to bring in the right people.

Program Structure

The intensive, four-week residential summer program is designed to provide structured and safe opportunities for students to grow. This aspect is crucial to helping students disengage, even temporarily, from the distractions of their lives and focus on academics, personal development, and their future. Further, the Bridges program creates one-on-one relationships between staff members and each of the students it serves to ensure that students’ needs are met. The Crossing the Bridge component

was established to fill an identified need and it is predicted to be an important aspect to supporting students through college graduation.

Confidence and Trust

It can be hard to have confidence in your abilities when you are an outsider trying to make a difference in others' lives. Trust in your abilities and take the time to create trust among the staff, students, and families. Once you have established trust, continuing and graduating students and their families demonstrate that trust to incoming students and families by interacting at events. For example, when new students join, they attend a "spring into bridges" event that all outbound seniors attend with their parents. This summer program involves a ceremony and banquet where the students graduating from high school wear stoles at graduation inscribed with the college they will attend. New entrants see this and get an immediate view of success that enables them to see themselves getting there one day.

High Expectations

Once the program identity is clear and the right people are on board, it is crucial to maintain a program culture of high expectations. This sets the tone for data collection and analysis, encourages high individual performance, and ensures overall high performance of the program. Once the outcomes data reflect the high expectations, it is easier to convince others of the value of the program – facilitating fundraising and improving the sustainability of the program.

If faced with the opportunity to do something different, Director Swartz indicated it might be time to hire a social worker. She commented,

We have spent many years refining and improving all aspects of the program. However, the students' emotional, family, and social issues have grown to be overwhelming. Therefore, we would like to have a social worker on staff, at least part-time, to assist with the issues that our students and families encounter. We address these student issues to the best of their abilities, but it would be in the best interest of the students in the program if the professional support of a trained social worker was available.

A challenge that the program will face in the future is achieving a balance between the success of the program and the interest to expand or replicate. Bridges to a Brighter Future at Furman University has been tremendously successful and the program model has already been replicated at Elon University. Director Swartz noted that they "are faced with the decision of creating a formal model or simply sharing the program when approached."

Table 3. Bridges to a Brighter Future: Students Served by Year and Outcome

Year	Applied	Accepted in 9th Grade	Continued to 10th Grade	Continued to 11th Grade	Continued to 12th Grade	Eligible to Enroll/Enrolled in College	Persist 2nd year	Persist 3rd year	Graduate in 4 years
2005-2006	66	25	25						
2006-2007	76	29	29	25					
2007-2008	78	26	26	28	21				
2008-2009	76	26	26	24	27	21	20*	20*	
2009-2010	83	27	27	25	21	23/19	18	18	1**
2010-2011	86	27	27	26	23	18/17	17	NA	
2011-2012	125	25	25	26	26	20/17	NA		

Notes: Eligible to Enroll is defined as students who are citizens and eligible to enroll in college. BBF serves a number of undocumented students.

* 20 students includes 2 who joined the military

** 1 student completed college in 2 years

IV — College Bound St. Louis

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College Bound St. Louis is an organization driven by research. Its programs and strategies were developed by commonly cited best practices and peer-reviewed literature on college access and success. The intentionality of program leaders in making research-based decisions and goals reflects a clear and single focus on college completion. This focus recently expanded from college graduation to obtaining life-sustaining wages after college, and College Bound St. Louis (CB-STL) continues to set high expectations for its students and provide high levels of support. In addition to the use of research-based practices, another strength of the organization is the verification of student data through the collection of transcripts, admission and financial aid award letters, and the use of National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). While an increasing number of programs are starting to utilize NSC and collect other academic information about students, CB-STL has continuously used externally validated outcomes (in lieu of self-reported outcomes) to quantify program effectiveness.

Program Overview

College Bound St. Louis (CB-STL) provides promising high school students from under-resourced backgrounds with the academic enrichment, social supports, and life skills needed to apply, matriculate, and succeed in four-year colleges. The CB-STL program begins with students in their freshman year of high school and remains with students until they graduate from college. It has a daily presence in participating high schools and works closely with families, high school staff, and university partners to ensure alignment between high school preparation and college success. The CB-STL culture is one of high expectations and high support with an unwavering focus on degree completion. By the time CB-STL students graduate from high school, they have invested approximately 800 hours — in addition to school and work — to prepare for success in college and career.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 2006
- This is a Federal CACG-Supported Program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during
 - ☒ Regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- This is a school-based and community-based program.
- Services students in: 4 high schools and 2 community-based sites and 68 colleges
- Urbanicity: Urban area
- Duration of Program: Seven years
- Typical number of years students are in the program: more than 5 years
- Primary services are provided at: Secondary schools
- Grade level when students enter the program: 9
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 175
 - 2009-10 = 273
 - 2010-11 = 364
 - 2011-12 = 439 (estimated)
- **9th grade students served:** 1,000 annually (*Get Your Prep On Program*)
- **Program Funding Provided By:** AmeriCorps; State Government; Business/Industry; Private Foundation; Individual
- **Targeted Population:** Low income; Historically underrepresented minorities; First generation to attend college; High school and college students.

History & Mission

College Bound St. Louis was created in January 2006 by Lisa Orden Zarin and a small group of stakeholders who recognized the disparities between the college-going rates of privileged youth and the rates of disadvantaged youth. The founding group was committed to reducing such gaps by helping students with test prep and the college application process. The vision of those involved in the creation of the CB-STL program was to help “change the lives of young people through the power of higher education.” In its initial year, there were 39 students enrolled in the program. In 2008, College Bound St. Louis expanded to serve 175 students and had a waitlist at both of the schools served by the program, Clyde C. Miller Career Academy and University City High School. By September 2009, College Bound St. Louis had expanded to serve 300 students at five sites (four high schools and one community-based site located at Washington University) in a seven-year wrap-around program. As of August 2011, College Bound St. Louis serves over 450 students at six program sites and 68 colleges, and is serving an additional 1,000 9th grade students in four high schools.

Goals

Goals for high school success include:

- 100 percent participation by high school students in college preparatory classes
- Average increase in ACT score from baseline to final of 15 percent or higher
- 100 percent graduation rate from high school
- 100 percent of students graduate from high school prepared for college math
- 100 percent of students apply to and are admitted to at least one 4-year college or university
- 100 percent of students complete FAFSAs that result in fund award letters
- 100 percent of students enroll in a high-quality post-secondary institution

Goals for college success include:

- 95 percent of students matriculate into college immediately following graduation
- 93 percent re-enrollment from freshman to sophomore year
- 85 percent of students who enroll in Complete U continue to junior year
- 75 percent of students earn a minimum of 20 credit hours prior to their sophomore year
- 75 percent of students who enroll in Complete U complete college within 6 years (the same rate as high-income peers)
- Students do not exceed \$10,000 in debt per college year, or a maximum of \$40,000 of college debt

Program Staff

College Bound St. Louis has a staff of 31 people, including 10 full-time and 2 part-time paid members. The organization also has 19 AmeriCorps staff members and 5 volunteers and interns throughout the year.

Admission & Selection

Most students must apply for admission into the program during the spring semester of their freshman year in high school. When there are openings in the program, new students can enter up until the beginning of 11th grade. Admission is competitive as College Bound St. Louis receives more applications than they are able to accept. Nonetheless, CB-STL does not turn away *qualified* applicants. Among some of the admission criteria, CB-STL looks for students who demonstrate financial need, attend under-performing schools and will be the first in the family to graduate from college.

Once a student fills out the required paperwork, he or she is considered as “applying” to College Bound St. Louis. If the student does not meet the requirements of College Bound St. Louis (parent level of education, low income status, low GPA combined with no success predictors) or does not demonstrate willingness or ability to attend classes and benefit from services provided (as determined in interview process), they are placed on a “not-accepted” list. If students pass these two steps in the application process, they then complete the enrollment packet and attend class. If the student does not complete the packet or attend class, they are placed on the “non-participant” list. Students can go from non-participants to enrolled students if they turn in completed paperwork and come to class early in the school year.

Program Components

College Bound St. Louis offers a comprehensive college preparation and persistence program that starts in 9th grade and continues until students graduate from college. Figure 1 depicts the CB-STL program model. The program components include Get Your Prep On and the 7-Year Wrap Around Program.

Get Your Prep On

Get Your Prep On is a year-long early awareness program that targets all 9th grade students and families attending CB-STL’s partner schools. These sessions and workshops provide information and resources about the benefits of higher education as well as information on how to plan, prepare, pay for and pursue a college education.

Seven-Year Wrap-Around Program Consisting of 5 Braided Components

Students interested in this program must apply to College Bound St. Louis, typically in the spring semester of 9th grade. The five components include: Making the Grade; Culture, Character, Capacity; Admission Accomplished; Families as Partners; and Complete U.

Making the Grade

Making the Grade is a comprehensive academic enrichment program consisting of courses in math, language arts, weekly tutoring, AP study groups and skill-building workshops. Students interested in participating in this program must apply to College Bound, typically in the spring semester of 9th grade. The goal of this program is to provide students with the academic foundation to succeed in college level coursework at selective institutions.

Culture, Character, Capacity

This wrap-around program provides students with exposure to cultural events, community service, and an ongoing “bank account” of financial, social service, and mentoring resources. This component of College Bound addresses the cultural capital factors needed to succeed in diverse higher education settings and provides students with the tools needed to “mitigate the effects of social, financial and psychological hardship that disrupt students on their path to college success.”

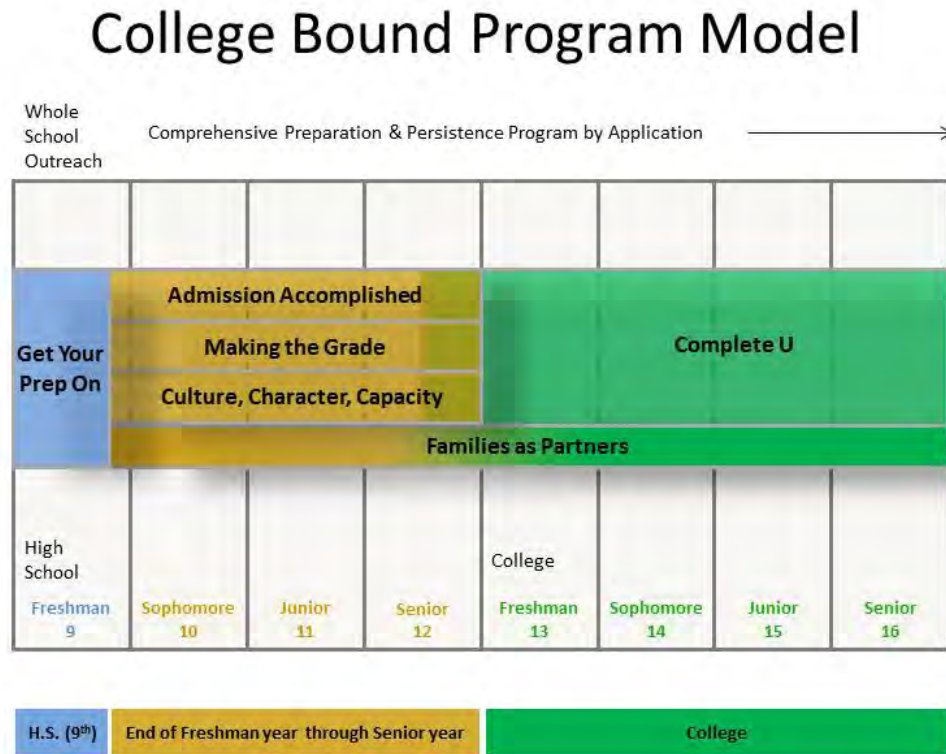
Admission Accomplished

Admission Accomplished is the college access component that serves students in “closely-knit” cohorts groups. It provides students with theories of action focused on college completion, guidance from professional counselors, a network of supportive relationships and tools to help students create high quality applications to four-year colleges. The goal of this program is to prepare students for selective colleges that match their interests, aptitude and financial resources.

Complete U

Complete U begins in the second semester of 12th grade and continues working with students into their first year in college and until graduation. This component aims to provide a seamless transition for students from high school to college by preparing them for the emotional and psychological challenges of such transition. Students participate in a financial literacy program; learn about classroom etiquette and residential life from college advisors. The goal of Complete U is to ensure that College Bound students who are admitted to college, graduate from college and can “go and enjoy the full benefits of living in a community and contributing to a vital and educated workforce.”

Figure 1. College Bound Program Model



Data-Driven Practices

According to College Bound St. Louis, the organization collects, tracks, and reports on the milestones and indicators that predict and verify college persistence through degree completion. College Bound St. Louis uses third-party validated information such as student transcripts, ACT scores, letters of admission and Student Aid Reports as a means of verifying outcomes. College Bound St. Louis does not use student self-reporting for outcome reporting. Milestones and indicators for high school and college success were drawn from evidence-based and peer-reviewed literature such as articles and reports from The Pell Institute, Lumina Foundation for Education, Education Trust, the U.S. Department of Education, and The Toolbox Revised.

To set milestones and measure indicators, College Bound St. Louis collects a vast amount of data, including results from pre- and post-tests administered by CB-STL, ACT scores, financial aid information, and attendance data at CB-STL events. Some sample measures include:

- Student pre- and post-test results from our ‘College Knowledge’ curricula module
- Student pre- and post-test results from our ‘Financial Literacy’ curricula module
- Student baseline and final ACT scores
- Student pre-and post-test results from our summer academy (College Bound Summer Institute), for rising high school juniors.

- Attendance at all College Bound student events (tutoring, academic academies, community service events, ACT prep course, FAFSA enrollment seminars, etc.)
- Academic performance, monitored each grading period for all students, in high school and college
- Number of community service hours for each high school student
- College scholarship and award money by high school student
- PROFILE and FAFSA verification completion
- College acceptance and admittance by student
- Students benefitting from mental health services and number of counseling hours provided by CB
- Financial stability of college students, measured in relation to their individual financial plan
- Percent of students living on campus first and second year

College Bound St. Louis has a daily presence in partner high schools and maintains a cooperative relationship with school districts as well as close ties to students and families. Given these positive relationships and strong presence in the schools, the program is well positioned to capture a wide spectrum of data from and about students. CB-STL staff monitors students' grades, course selection, attendance, and school suspensions through quarterly progress reports and official school transcripts, teacher and guidance counselor meetings and student/family interviews. Access to information and frequent contact with the students has been proven effective at assisting CB-STL staff to quickly identify students who are struggling academically or emotionally and to initiate appropriate interventions.

Additionally, CB-STL students regularly complete evaluation instruments after classes and activities. College Bound St. Louis's data collection practices include student learning logs, surveys, inventories, standardized test scores, pre- and post-tests. Evaluation instruments were created with assistance from university partners and provide immediate feedback on the effectiveness of each curriculum. Data are collected continually throughout the program from students, schools, administrators and families. Data are then used to measure the effectiveness of programs and provide a quantifiable basis for continuous improvement efforts. CB-STL uses their metrics to compare CB-STL program effectiveness to national standards and common measures of academic success. Moreover, data are used to inform funders, policy makers, and high school and higher education partners.

CB-STL is committed to using data for program improvement. For example, CB-STL uses data to observe patterns and trends within a student's performance over time, and to use that information both to empower the student and to provide interventions when necessary. Staff members also assess 'best fit' universities for students by examining patterns such as financial aid awards by school. One of the program components that experienced several redesign efforts was the ACT preparation course. According to CB-STL, this program has gone through four different iterations in order to

achieve its current high-performing preparation curriculum. In the initial course, the average overall score improvement rate was eight percent, but the most recent data show average overall increases of over 20 percent. The new curriculum was also designed to overcome stereotype threat bias. In addition to program changes based on externally validated data, CB-STL has also responded to student feedback by providing additional program enhancements, such as selection of courses and more information on college majors.

Other key uses of data are two intervention programs – Attendance Intervention and Academic Intervention. Attendance Intervention – “Missed Opportunities” — is a systematic procedure used to get students ‘back on track’ if absences at College Bound St. Louis classes or events exceed three for a given student. The Academic Intervention – “Lifting the Grade” – is an extensive quarterly program that includes a series of interventions for students who are struggling academically in high school. A comparable academic intervention program is implemented for collegians.

Evidence of Success

College Bound St. Louis exhibits positive outcome data to suggest that students who participate in and graduate from the program are more likely to graduate from high school, and enroll and persist in college. According to CB-STL, 100 percent of their students have graduated from high school for four consecutive years. The same percentage has also completed FAFSA forms, received admission to, and enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

One important caveat to note when looking at these results is that College Bound St. Louis sets “accountability groups” for high school and college students from which they calculate success rates. The high school accountability group is set on January 1 of a student’s *junior* year in high school. Students may exit the CB-STL program and new students may enter the CB-STL program prior to this time. Students exit the program either because they no longer wish to participate, because (after multiple interventions with the school, family and student) CB-STL asks them to exit the program, or because they have relocated out of the St. Louis area. There are no changes to student enrollment once the accountability group is set, however, and statistics for high school graduation are based on this number. Fifty-one students exited the CB-STL program since 2007 for reasons including: Attendance/Engagement (student missed more than 50 percent of the classes and/or activities and did not respond to interventions); Grades (student’s grades showed steady decline and student would not accept academic or personal interventions); Self-removal (student chose to leave program); and External circumstances (moving).

In 12th grade, students who decide to continue in College Bound St. Louis’s Persistence Program, Complete U, (College Bound St. Louis works with students while they are enrolled in college until they graduate) must sign a FERPA release form in order for CB-STL to validate their college performance, enrollment, re-enrollment, and financial aid data. Students who sign the FERPA forms are considered part of CB-STL’s college accountability group. Postsecondary persistence and com-

pletion rates are calculated based on the total number of students in the college accountability group. Table 4 presents the high school graduation and college enrollment data for College Bound St. Louis.

Taking into consideration the accountability groups for both high school and college, below are additional outcomes of College Bound St. Louis students:

- 96 percent of students (N=56) who enrolled in the Complete U program in 2010 re-enrolled for the second semester. (Of the two students who did not re-enroll, one went on to enter the military; one stopped out for personal reasons and intends to re-enroll for the Fall 2011 semester.)
- Of the Complete U program enrollees in 2008 and 2009 (35 students and 41 students, respectively) an aggregate of 93 percent of students who matriculated in college re-enrolled for their sophomore year.
- 83 percent of CB-STL students who enrolled in Complete U in 2008 (35 students) matriculated to their junior year of college
- 75 percent of CB-STL college students who enrolled in Complete U in 2008 are on track (based on credits acquired toward degrees by Fall, 2010) for college completion within six years. This is the same rate as students in the higher income quartiles.
- 87 percent of CB-STL college students (115 students) are still enrolled in college. College Bound St. Louis feels that the goal of 90 percent persistence remains attainable, as staff members are encouraging students who stopped out in Spring 2011 to re-enroll for the Fall 2011 semester.
- 63 percent of college students (26 students) in the Complete U class of 2009 earned at least 20 credits in their first year. Eighty-two percent or 46 students of class of 2010 earned 10 credits or more at the midyear point. The average number of credits earned is 12.5.

College & University Partnerships

Within the postsecondary community, College Bound St. Louis works with five university partners that impact the activities and outcomes of the CB-STL high school program. Additionally, College Bound St. Louis works with a diverse group of colleges and universities to help students tap into resources on campus so they access needed services. Postsecondary partners that assist with programs at the high school level include: Maryville University, St. Louis University, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Missouri – Columbia, and University of Missouri – St. Louis. Examples of the partnerships are provided below.

Maryville University hosts a three-day residential college application workshop focused on creating high quality college applications, activity profiles, and personal statements. Combined with the workshop are tours of the college and information about college life.

St. Louis University hosts the College Bound St. Louis Summer Institute, a four-week academic program for rising high school juniors (6 hours/day) to ensure that students enter the school year with greater proficiency in mathematics, especially Algebra II and Trigonometry, which are directly related to college persistence. SLU also trained College Bound St. Louis staff in FAFSA completion and provided access to their FAFSA explanation materials.

Washington University in St. Louis provides space on campus and trained student tutors who work with and mentor College Bound St. Louis students every weekend during the school year. College Bound St. Louis is the only high school program officially sanctioned by Washington University's *Each One Teach One* program.

University of Missouri – Columbia hosts the Audrey Walton Leadership Conference on their University of Missouri campus, which College Bound St. Louis students attend. College Bound St. Louis also has a strong partnership with the TRiO Student Support Services program.

University of Missouri – St. Louis hosts an annual summer Girls' Leadership Camp and provides College Bound St. Louis students with camp tuition waivers. The camp – Pathways to Leadership – emphasizes real-world, practical learning experiences, including meeting and learning from college students, faculty, staff and professional women across various occupations. UMSL also provides space for ACT baseline and practice tests.

In addition to the partnerships mentioned above, CB-STL's college counseling and persistence teams continue to cultivate relationships with college and university partners that exhibit evidence of student success after matriculation. To create program fidelity, CB-STL has begun developing criteria upon which the organization can evaluate a school's capacity to support students to degree completion. These criteria, provide below, serve as a guide for CB-STL coaches to direct students and families to schools whose services and mindset align with high graduation rates for non-traditional students:

- Students/families accumulate \$10,000 or less in debt per year
- School provides support services for low-income, first generation students (e.g. TRiO SSS & McNair Programs, Multicultural Centers, Bridge Programs, etc.)
- Class sizes that give students the opportunity for recognition and class discussion
- Intentional academic support as demonstrated by intrusive advising, early alert systems, freshmen orientation, first year seminars, and defined interventions for students who are struggling
- Institutional retention policy – colleges that are explicitly concerned with retention and are striving to close the gap between minority & majority graduation rates
- High quality career centers and career counseling
- GPA requirements tied to merit money that gradually increase over time, allowing students to adjust to college academic rigor

- Residential campuses that require freshmen to live on campus
- Educational innovation – study skill courses, learning communities, and Freshmen Interest Groups (FIGs) to ease freshmen entrance and help students adjust to college life
- Willingness to share data and accept College Bound St. Louis’s FERPA release form
- Designated staff on campus who can serve as liaisons for CB-STL students
- Good relationship with financial aid office – staff are willing to work with the needs of non-traditional students
- Expressed desire to partner with CB-STL to increase retention rates and on-time graduation

Sustainability

College Bound St. Louis has a diverse funding stream that includes a mix of private foundations, government funding, companies, and individual donors. Since the program began operating in 2006, it has experienced substantial financial growth, with an initial budget of \$96,236 in 2006 to \$1,100,843 in 2010. The total number of donors (corporate, individual, and foundation donors) grew from 84 in 2006 to 337 in 2010. Among the biggest changes to the funding strategies of the organization was a recent shift from foundation funding to multiple funding streams with an emphasis on individual funders. Chief Executive Officer Lisa Orden Zarin explained that College Bound St. Louis aspired to obtain federal grants from the beginning and, in fact, the federal and state support to the program went from zero in 2006, to four different sources in 2010 including grants from the Missouri Department of Economic Development’s Youth Opportunity Program, the Missouri Department of Higher Education, and federal grants for VISTA and AmeriCorps. In the past two years, fundraising efforts have focused on maintaining foundation support while increasing private donors, as suggested by research on best practices of philanthropy.

These shifts are supported by the organization’s board members who have become actively involved in fundraising as the organization has grown. The board was originally involved in fundraising at the strategic level, but recently formed a Development Committee to support College Bound St. Louis’ growing financial needs. CB-STL board members, policymakers and committed donors are now engaged in a “Bridge to 2015” fundraising campaign that aims to raise \$5 million from venture philanthropists over the next five years and continues to look at social innovation opportunities – with a focus on technology and data -- that can lead to new revenue streams.

What We Do Best

CEO Zarin indicated that one of the areas in which College Bound St. Louis excels is combining “high expectations with high levels of support.” She noted:

Helping students develop a mindset of self-advocacy, resilience and determination is central to success, as is acquiring the academic skills, cultural capital and social supports necessary for thriving in a campus setting. College Bound St. Louis’ capacity to provide positive relationships with supportive adults, a comprehensive network of services, opportuni-

ties for personal growth and community service are at the heart of producing consistent and positive outcomes. CB-STL's know-how in the area of program implementation is rooted in the conviction that generational change requires a commitment to braided services that are "strong and long," stable and unyielding, even in the most turbulent times.

College Bound St. Louis achieves their goals by being “an organization driven by research, a commitment to higher education, and a desire to learn and improve.” CEO Zarin indicated that “the staff are continuously engaged in studying and sharing knowledge on issues related to education, generational poverty, cultural capital, service learning, behavioral change and technology — as individual contributors and as a team.” To support and facilitate this, CB-STL encourages staff participation in professional development opportunities, including national and regional conferences, off-site learning workshops, classroom observation, one-on-one business coaching, and visits to other college access organizations to gather promising practices. CEO Zarin noted, “this learners’ mindset has allowed College Bound St. Louis to develop a deep and thorough understanding of the issues in our field, and to gain the trust and confidence of school leaders, students and families. It has also allowed us to select carefully among different program models so we can apply new learning with a balance of enthusiasm, thoughtfulness and intention.”

Lessons Learned

The College Bound St. Louis program has evolved since it first began operation in 2006. CEO Zarin explained that the program started out as something completely different from what it is now: “In the first year, we thought that if we provided students with standardized test preparation and guided students to well-matched colleges that would be enough to get students to succeed; we did not realize just how robust the program needed to be to effectively support students to complete college.” Similarly, College Bound St. Louis originally served students at the end of their sophomore year in high school, hoping that with assistance and support, students would be able to “move the needle” towards college success. Unfortunately, CB-STL staff soon discovered that their vision had come a little short: student course selection was poor and there was not sufficient engagement with program staff. They also realized that students were not adequately prepared for college-level math, as most of the students who had top grades in high school could still not place into college math and even those who did place into college math tended to fail it. This prompted College Bound St. Louis to start working with students before sophomore year and CB-STL added the early awareness component to the program to begin outreach to students in 9th grade. Academic rigor and support through tutoring was also added to the program. In addition, CB-STL shared data from their first cohorts with school district members to demonstrate that high grades in high school math courses were not correlating with students’ capacity to place into or pass entry-level college math.

A major unexpected lesson learned was that even the highest performing students (valedictorians and students who had taken honors classes and had high GPAs were “devastatingly unprepared” for college-level course work, which “paved the way for attrition.” Further, in the early years of the pro-

gram, CB-STL staff observed the “cascading effect of poor grades.” CEO Zarin provided an example:

A student arrives with optimism, realizes they are unprepared, fails course work, isolates himself/herself, and doesn't identify their academic or social problems with institutional support centers (i.e., student perception through the lens of stereotype threat bias is, “They'll just think I'm some dumb black kid” or “They'll think I'm just some poor kid”). The student goes into academic probation, financial aid is withheld, and it then becomes very difficult to regain their footing UNLESS there is a very supportive authority figure who can help them regroup and get back on track.

Another area of unexpected learning was the degree to which early and chronic trauma in students' lives impacted them after they left for college. CEO Zarin noted, “It was almost like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.” She explained:

While students were at home in ‘survival mode,’ their coping mechanisms worked well for them. When they were suddenly introduced to a great deal of freedom and an environment that was danger-free, they began to experience mental health issues that threatened to derail them socially and academically. While all students experience stresses in their transition to college, the degree to which our students experienced stress made them especially likely to engage in behaviors that led to attrition.

Another lesson learned was the sheer number of structural obstacles students face at colleges and universities, including the “Darwinian approach to students' learning” that many professors maintain; the frequent disconnect between admission offices, financial aid offices and student support centers; the fact that enrollment and housing deposits must be made before grants are received; and, the circular nature of students having to make-up courses in order to keep their financial aid, without being able to get the aid to enroll in the make-up course until they complete an appeal process, by which time they've missed the enrollment deadlines, etc. Further, CEO Zarin noted that, “the verification and award letter processes alone can be daunting, especially when they are combined with unfriendly attitudes and presumptions (from some front line financial aid providers) that students are hiding information.”

College Bound St. Louis recently expanded its focus and “moved the stake in the ground” from college success to a focus on career and life-sustaining wages for their students. This expansion emerged as the staff began noticing that students entered college with little or no proficiencies in math or science and, even though they are persisting in college, they could not persist in ‘wealth generating’ majors. CEO Zarin noted that, “Most of our students, because of their academic deficits — particularly in math — are not able to pursue wealth-generating majors. They start in business, biology or engineering and must transfer out into majors that have less rigorous requirements. For many of our students, their majors are ones that they selected by default, not preference.” If the goal is to help low-

income students break the cycle of poverty, College Bound St. Louis staff realized that attaining a college degree alone would not be sufficient. Thus, CB-STL has increased the attention on college internships, as well as summer activities and academic rigor in the high school programs.

An aspect CEO Zarin noted that she wished she could do differently, given the opportunity, would be to develop a more aggressive funding strategy (including earned revenue streams) and engage a more robust group of investors earlier in the development of the program to ensure long-term program sustainability. This statement reflects a current challenge of the organization as it thinks about the future years. CEO Zarin explains, “we are focusing on developing reliable funding streams, innovative ways to earn income, a succession plan for all leadership positions, and a strategy to move from an AmeriCorps model – if necessary – to a staff-based model should government funding dissolve.” Given the current economic climate, College Bound St. Louis is “vigilant” about the possibility of losing federal funding. The organization’s leaders, therefore, are developing alternative funding opportunities that could both infuse the organization with capital and support other access providers.

Table 4. College Bound St. Louis: Students Served by Year and Outcome

Year	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	12 th grade/High School Accountability Group	1 st year of college/College Accountability Group	Persist 2nd year	Persist 3rd year	Persist 4th year
2005-2006									
2006-2007			39 (7)						
2007-2008				39	39	35	33	29	NA*
2008-2009	(expanded)	42	(56)	(42)	42	41	38	NA*	
2009-2010	566	67	71 (42)	56	56	56 (7)	NA*		
2010-2011	890	83	76 (21)	71	71	71 (13)**			
2011-2012	1101	88	101 (27)	76	76				

* Information not available at the time of publication

** Estimated number as of September 2011

NOTES:

- 100 percent of students in the High School Accountability Group from 2008 – 2011 matriculated to college. Table numbers identified for college reflect students who participated in CB-STL's college persistence program — not total number of CB-STL students attending postsecondary institutions. The goal of this segmented reporting is aimed at correlating the impact of services provided with the outcomes achieved.
- CB-STL uses NSC to track and compare outcomes of students who are not in CB-STL's Accountability Group with students who are in CB-STL's Accountability Group.
- CB-STL's 9th grade component does not feed directly into the high school comprehensive component.
- Program expansion (after 2008) resulted in the opportunity to serve new students. New students are represented in parentheses.
- New students in the College Accountability Group represent a pilot program aimed at testing whether persistence services can be effective for students who did not benefit from CB-STL's high school program.

V — The Boys Hope Girls Hope - The College Road

Boys Hope Girls Hope

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The Boys Hope Girls Hope College Road is a model of a comprehensive program that supports students from 6th grade through college (and in some cases, graduate school) completion. In addition to local supports for students, a core element of the program involves bringing students together from across the nation for summer events and campus visits. While this increases the program costs related to travel, it effectively expands the horizons of the participating students and exposes them to new places. Students have frequent face-to-face contact with local supports and they are also a part of a larger national network through web-based social media. All program improvements are driven by frequent data collection and analysis, and the assessment strategy was designed with the curriculum so that they align.

Program Overview

The College Road is a comprehensive college access, persistence, and completion program for students in the Boys Hope Girls Hope (BHGH) organization. Participants, called BHGH scholars, are first generation college aspirants, often also the first in their families to graduate from high school. Most scholars are in out-of-home placement although non-residential services are also provided to students. The “build out” of The College Road began in 2002, though the first program component was delivered in 2003. Since then, The College Road has grown and continues to develop according to scholar needs, external trends, and internal evaluation of each component’s effectiveness.

History & Mission

Boys Hope Girls Hope was founded in 1977 in St. Louis, Missouri. Since its inception, the organization has provided homes, educational opportunities, and family-like support to “young people

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 2000
- This is a Non-profit Program
- This is a community-based program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during
 - ☒ Regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- Services students in:
- Urbanicity: Urban area
- Duration of Program: 6th grade through 16th grade
- Typical number of years students are in the program: more than 5 years
- Primary services are provided at: College campus, elementary and secondary school, and community center/agency
- Grade level when students enter the program: 6
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 350
 - 2009-10 = 400
- **Parental Component:** Yes. FAFSA counseling/guidance; Campus visits and tours; Meeting with college/university faculty or students; Participation in student activities
- **Program Funding Provided By:** AmeriCorps; Private Foundation; Individual; Fundraising
- **Targeted Population:** Low income; First generation to attend college; High school grads (pre-matriculation); High school students; Middle school students

whose potential was best developed in an out-of-home placement.” The organization’s success has led to its replication across the country with program affiliates in 16 states and locations abroad throughout Latin America.

With the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer in 2001, the Boys Hope Girls Hope underwent changes to support new organizational and scholar outcome goals. Specifically, board members and the new CEO put resources and energy into helping scholars finish college. They established a new set of goals: 100 percent of BHGH scholars in residence would graduate from high school, and 75 percent of collegians would complete their college degrees. This latter goal was an effort to drastically increase the organization’s college graduation rates from 46 percent. Thus, the concept of The College Road was created in 2000 to work with students as early as 6th grade and prepare them for postsecondary access and success.

Goals

The College Road’s primary goal is to reach (or exceed) the board-established benchmark that 75 percent of collegians will complete their degrees. When the goal was first articulated in 2001, it specified “within four years.” Later, it changed to five years, which is the referent used in the *Collegian Success Formula* to evaluate how individual affiliates’ scholars are progressing. That said, College Road supports and works with any scholar who wishes to complete their degree, so cohorts are kept open if any scholars in that cohort are still enrolled. The Chief Academic Officer, Julie Allen, indicated that “even if it takes 10 years – that is okay. We keep our cohort open for as long as we need to.”

Admissions & Selection

The College Road is careful and thoughtful about who joins the program. Scholars must demonstrate appropriate motivation for their age level and some type of family support, such as letting kids go into the primary care of the program. Initially, students were accepted into The College Road program when they joined the Boys Hope Girls Hope program as residential students. The BHGH program has expanded to provide community-based services to students who live at home, but who meet the same profile as students in the residential program. The scholar profile is defined as students “who could not have succeeded without help.”

All of the young people on The Road have been accepted as Boys Hope Girls Hope scholars, either in the residential program or non-residential programs. In order to be accepted, they must demonstrate need, desire and potential. The official entry to The College Road is Campus Camp. Upon successful completion of that experience, students participate in an induction ceremony and are invited to join the “college-bound fraternity.” The fraternity was developed in response to the large body of literature that points to the power that rites of passage can have towards positive developmental outcomes.

Students join the BHGH program for many reasons, and typically join the program in 6th to 8th grade. The size of the cohorts vary from 11 (the first cohort) to 48. On average, the cohorts have about 35 students. When students are invited to join The College Road, they receive a packet identifying them as a College Bound scholar and presenting them with an overview of the program. The College Road runs at a national level and works with students in different BHGH sites through a central team.

Program Staffing

The College Road has three full-time staff members, one AmeriCorps coordinator, college interns, and about 40 AmeriCorps members who are full-time. The program is also supported by various consultants, over 500 mentors, and 1500 volunteers.

Program Components

Once “on the road” there are a number of requirements for the scholars. These include completion of Essential Experiences and journaling about them on the Compass, use of the MAP, academic progress, and meeting On Course for College (OCC) goals appropriate to their individual needs each quarter. The OCC goals correspond to the “Am I Ready” rubric and the Profile of a College-Ready scholar.

One of the key components of The College Road program is a national event that takes place every year. Rather than replicating the event in multiple regions, College Road scholars across the affiliate programs attend a program in a secluded rural setting. The program is facilitated by Ph.D. level consultants who have worked with The College Road over the years. The strength-in-numbers at the national level, the seclusion from distractions, and exposure to a different environment all provide students with opportunities for diverse experiences. “When students see a cornfield in Nebraska after growing up in a city – there is some value to shaking students out of their comfort zones,” described Ms. Allen. In addition to the national program, students also participate in the following program components: College Bound, Academy to Campus, Lettered Scholars, and Collegian Support.

College Bound

Students participate in College Bound in grades 7 and 8. Among some of the goals for this component are for each scholar to understand their learning style and how to apply it to a variety of educational settings. Scholars develop effective time management and study skills and practice positive decision-making. Some of the activities in which they participate include:

- College Compass, a web-based portfolio that guides scholars through a series of activities that correlate to four compass points: Personal Competency, Intellectual Development, Arts Appreciation, and Career Planning. The Compass program encourages scholars to read and plan for college.

- Campus Camp, a week-long college immersion experience where students stay on a college campus. The camp simulates the college classroom and campus environment and aims to make college-going feel like a normal routine for scholars.
- Alpha Lambda Omega, a college-bound fraternity created to make the students' experience in the program more similar to what they will experience in college. An annual induction ceremony officially sets 8th graders on The College Road program.

Academy to Campus

In grades 9 through 12, scholars participate in Academy to Campus activities where they master higher-level personal competencies and develop unique talents and vocational interests. Students take a survey called "Am I Ready?" that measures how prepared they are to ask for help, seek vocational interests, and identify a postsecondary institution and major. Academy activities include:

- Mapping College: scholars switch from the online college compass to a second online portfolio that serves as an information/resource center that guides scholars through the college search process. It also helps scholars set academic and personal goals as well as prepare for college entrance exams such as ACT and SAT.
- The Great American College Road Trip takes 10th grade students to different types of colleges and universities. Scholars from all affiliate programs travel as cohorts and visit HBCUs and Hispanic Serving Institutions, research universities, liberal arts colleges, etc. The aim is to help students identify a good fit for them from the beginning of their college careers to decrease transfer rates.
- Collegiate Preparation Seminars: students participate in seminars for two consecutive years after 11th and 12th grade. They attend a College Success retreat to discuss how to have a successful senior year in high school and freshman year in college. They participate in college activities; they are introduced to college discourse by college professors, and learn how to manage four classes, among other college preparation activities.

Lettered Scholars

The Lettered Scholars is a reading program for all College Road scholars. Program staff members believe that reading is critical to college success and, therefore, make sure that all scholars starting in 6th grade participate in reading activities. The goal of the Lettered Scholars program is to equip scholars with the cultural capital and literacy skills to confidently approach college-level studies. The Lettered Scholars activities include:

- Cadre, a network of volunteers whose role is to mentor scholars and support them in personal and academic matters.
- Read for the College Road, which challenges scholars in all affiliate programs to develop strong literacy skills and exposes them to a variety of literature and thought. One of the ongoing activities is Read, Investigate, Prepare (R.I.P.), where students have to read 35 "dead

or nearly dead” authors. Students who read 35 such authors qualify for additional scholarships. Every year, students in the 9th grade also attend the “Get R.I.P.’d Weekend,” an author-immersion experience where students trace the steps and careers of influential writers. The College Road has recently established a National Literacy Advisory Board that includes young adult advisors and college students.

Collegian Support

The Collegian Support program provides “last dollar” scholarships for scholars who meet the communication and grades/course load criteria. Regarding the communication requirement, freshmen scholarship recipients are required to make contact with the Chief Academic Officer or her designee a minimum of 1 time per month, while sophomores, juniors and seniors are required to make contact at least twice during the course of each semester. This communication can take the form of letters, email, or phone calls, but it must be initiated by the student.

Further, freshmen are required to be enrolled in at least 12 semester hours and earn a grade point average of at least 2.0 each semester. Upperclassmen are required to enroll in at least 12 semester hours and earn a 2.5 grade point average each semester. Grades are due as soon as they become available, but no later than January 15 for the first semester and June 15 for the second semester. Scholarship requests are not processed without grades. Students who do not achieve the minimum academic performance requirements are placed on a plan for academic improvement. The plan is developed jointly by the Chief Academic Officer and the scholar to positively address the academic, social or personal challenges that have created barriers to the collegian’s success. Two consecutive semesters below the minimum academic requirements may result in temporary suspension of the scholarship.

Actions related to suspension of scholarships are based largely on how much effort the scholar is putting forth to improve their academic position. It is not the intent of College Road’s guidelines to be punitive, but rather to encourage students to seek the resources and guidance they need to complete their degree.

On average, The College Road offers \$25,000 to \$30,000 per student over their college career. Program outcomes for collegians include co-curricular engagement and an ability to manage stress and personal health issues. Collegians will be able to successfully manage their college career and a minimum of 85 percent will persist to graduation. The College Road provides additional social and academic support for collegians throughout their time in college through services and annual retreats like Freshmen Connections, Sophomore and Junior Support, Senior Launch, Transition Services, and Leadership Development.

Data-Driven Practices

The College Road collects two types of data: process and outcome data. The process data reflects the programs and processes in place to help scholars move along “The Road.” The data collected on the

processes help inform the development and continuous improvement of the programs and in some instances, data is also used to assess larger BHGH organizational systems and structures that contribute to the scholars' holistic development. The outcome data are collected and used to measure scholars' college retention and degree completion rates.

For collegians, The College Road staff collects information on their grades, GPA, academic major, enrollment from semester to semester, participation in community service, student organizations, the number of years to degree completion and even the financial aid package each scholar is receiving. The College Road is also starting to follow students into their graduate programs.

To improve program practices, staff use process data to analyze whether services and support to pre-college and collegian scholars are effective and sufficient to their needs. These data are also correlated with external trends that might expand, strengthen or lessen the need for certain services or program components. To collect the different data elements, staff utilize student transcripts, scholarship application forms, financial aid award letters, and college-generated confirmations of course enrollment. For some of the scholars, The College Road also uses the National Student Clearinghouse as a tool to track students. For pre-collegians, staff collect academic data twice a year via the school-issued grade reports.

The College Road also conducts a literacy skill assessment through two standardized assessment tools: MAZE (Reading Comprehension Measure) and a CRI (Content Reading Inventory). Both MAZE and CRI are research-based tools endorsed by the Consortium on Reading Excellence. In addition to benchmarking, MAZE scores provide the BHGH Academic Team, AmeriCorps Academic Coaches, tutors, and mentors with an indication of the amount of support and scaffolding that specific scholars will need to succeed academically. MAZE is administered to all scholars twice yearly. CRI was developed by Robert Cooter, a professor of Urban Literacy at the University of Memphis, and offers a simple and straightforward method for assessing students' level of competency in reading comprehension and fluency. CRI is administered to all scholars who test in the "Strategic" or "Intensive" range on the MAZE assessment.

In addition to assessing literacy skills, program staff also monitor scholars' college readiness through two online platforms called The Compass and MAP.

College & University Partnerships

The College Road has a large network of individuals in higher education across function and discipline that participate in the organization's programs and contribute to their development and improvement. Although to date there are no formal institutional partnerships, The College Road is working toward this goal in the upcoming years.

Evidence of Success

The two primary benchmarks for The College Road are high school graduation and college graduation. Since 1991, 100 percent of Boys Hope Girls Hope's US alumni have gone on to college. The college retention and graduation rates have improved as The College Road has evolved and developed over the years. For the high school graduating classes of 2002 through 2010, the overall percentage of students completing their degrees or persisting to degree completion is 86 percent.

Scholars officially join The College Road in the 6th grade and remain part of the program through college graduation. Cohort 23 (the class of 2008) was the first cohort to receive all three components of The Road (College Bound, Academy to Campus, and Collegian Support) from 6th to 12th grade (i.e., seven years of support). For these last three cohorts, who received the highest number of years in support, the persistence and graduation rates are consistently higher than previous cohorts (above 90 percent for all three cohorts).

For the 2010-2011 academic year, The College Road worked with 400 students. Of this number, 135 are collegians and 13 are pursuing graduate degrees.

Sustainability

Over the years, the College Road has engaged in a consistent fundraising strategy to secure multiyear funding commitments from corporate and private foundations to support the building and maintenance of the program. Current major funders include: Emerson, Black Entertainment Network, and CNN. Past funders included Morgan Stanley and NFL Charities. Additionally, the Board of Directors is actively involved in fundraising efforts. All of the corporate and private foundation support has come as a result of Board member introductions/support. They are very committed to the College Road and the benefits it affords the scholars.

What We Do Best

Julie Allen, Chief Academic Officer, indicated that The College Road is most successful at creating an effective wrap-around and long-term support structure. She noted “the breadth of support, services and experiences we provide, and most importantly the depth of relationship we have with our scholars” as key strengths of the program.

She attributed this success to “creativity and ‘no boundaries’ thinking, which keeps the program growing and evolving.” She noted that the program strives to “be a better program tomorrow than we are today.” She feels this enables The College Road to “respond to the ever changing environment,” which in turn “contributes to success both in program outcomes and in attracting and sustaining the funding needed to deliver the program.” She continued:

The College Road is successful because of our ‘collective impact’ approach. We don’t rely on any one intervention or experience, but rather the cumulative effect that is achieved

over the time a scholar is in the program. Along the same lines, the philosophical foundation of our program (comprehensive and long-term) allows us early intervention and a depth of relationship with the scholar and their family that is based on authentic understanding and trust.

Another aspect that Allen attributed to the program's success relates to setting high expectations and standards. She noted that "setting those expectations was intentional when we developed the program and was at the forefront when we identified the staff members who would lead it." There was an interesting unintentional aspect that came from these high expectations. Allen explained:

What was unintentional around the commitment to high expectations was how relationships among the scholars themselves would affect the climate and culture of the program (i.e., how the scholars in each cohort hold each other accountable for those standards and common goals). Because we have cohorts staying together for potentially 11 years, scholars are developing deep and abiding relationships with one another that endure into and through college – without regard to the distance they may be separated.

Lessons Learned

One of the major lessons The College Road staff has learned over the years is to utilize the data to reflect on program practices rather than focus all the attention in the development and implementation of programs. CAO Julie Allen explained that is easy to get caught up in building out the program, but staff members or parties involved need to be mindful to use data and look at what it shows about program outcomes before incorporating new program elements. Programs should have a mechanism in place to quantitatively and qualitatively assess services and practices and, particularly with new programs, it is useful to build assessments alongside with the curriculum. "Don't wait to connect the dots," noted Ms. Allen, "you can learn so much from early data and information." The College Road is exploring the option to conduct an external evaluation on the program's 10th anniversary.

In addition, The College Road is engaging a team of researchers to help develop tools and "deep impact measures" to ensure that program assessment is robust. The program wants to have these measures determined by experts, and in the meantime, they continue to look at the number of college graduations and college persistence data. Students are tracked by cohort, which according to CAO. Allen, makes it easier to track true outcomes since services to each cohort have differed as the program evolved.

When asked what one thing she would do differently given the opportunity, CAO Allen responded, "connecting the dots." She explained:

We built The College Road in segments over a period of years. While we had a strong view of where we were headed overall, sometimes the pieces didn't fit together seamlessly. This is

true both of the programmatic elements, but also the way in which we collected outcome data across each of the “lanes.” Often the glitches were small things but, taken together, they did slow us down a bit in realizing the full impact of The Road. The learning for us was the need for creative force AND detail management.

There are two main challenges CAO Allen identified in The College Road’s future:

The first is that we want to continue to grow The College Road. Although we’re quite proud of the breadth of the program, there is still room (and need) for ‘widening the road,’ if you will. Presently, we’re in the process of building out the parent and family ‘lane’ and identifying additional colleges and universities for partnerships/participation in our program components, both of which we see as vital next steps. In addition, we see significant need to further develop the services and opportunities the scholars receive at the various grade levels. The challenge comes in determining which of the several options we’re considering will have the greatest impact and where the resources are to sustain those.

Secondly, there are so many young people with high need and equal potential and we would love to be able to count more as our scholars. One of our greatest strengths (deep-level investment and long-term commitment) is also a challenge as we consider how to scale up without diluting the program or diminishing impact and outcomes. We’re actively talking about and struggling with the best ways to expand our capacity to directly serve more children or how we can help other organizations replicate our program.

Table 5. The College Road: Students Served by Year and Outcome

	College Bound	Academy to Campus	Graduate from HS	Enrolled in College	Persist 2nd year	Persist 3rd year	Persist 4th year	Graduations
2003-2004			18	18				13
2004-2005			24	24				20
2005-2006			16	16				12
2006-2007			14	14				12
2007-2008			16	16				14
2008-2009	25	19	19	19	18	18	18	
2009-2010	25	29 (4)	29	29	27	27		
2010-2011	27	29 (2)	29	29	27			
2011-2012	42	39	39	39				

VI — College Track

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College Track offers an excellent example of a program that a) successfully supports underrepresented students over an 8-10 year period from high school through college completion, and b) uses detailed implementation and outcomes data to structure in an intentional way the successful expansion of its program to new sites. Beyond tracking student entry and exit demographics and academic achievement, CT closely monitors the relative effectiveness of program content and delivery methods to ensure continuous program improvement. CT is very intentional in the way that new sites are selected, new partnerships are formed, and the program is expanded. CT continuously evaluates the usefulness of the data being collected and strives to have a student-centered, real-time, and mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative data) approach to analyzing the effectiveness of the program.

Program Overview

College Track is an educational nonprofit organization working to increase high school graduation, college eligibility and enrollment, and college graduation rates among populations underrepresented in higher education. The goal is to create college-going cultures by engaging a critical mass of underserved students in College Track programming, partnering with schools and community agencies, and influencing lasting change by raising awareness for college readiness and access initiatives.

History & Mission

College Track was founded by two volunteer college counselors who discovered that many students were motivated but lacked the necessary resources to pursue a college degree. They noticed that it was especially difficult for first generation students, specifically first in family, as they often had little or no guidance about the college application process at home and many times attended under-

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 1997
- This is a Partnership Program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during:
 - ☐ During regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- This is a college access after school program for high school students and college students.
- Services students in: Multiple school districts in five geographical regions.
- Urbanicity: Urban area
- Duration of Program: More than one academic year
- Typical number of years students are in the program: more than 5 years
- Primary services are provided at: College Track site
- Grade level when students enter the program: 8
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 565
 - 2009-10 = 730
 - 2010-11 = 872
- **Parental Component:** Yes. FAFSA counseling/guidance.
- **Program Funding Provided By:** Local Government; Local School System; Business/Industry; Private Foundation; Individual; Fundraising.
- **Targeted Population:** Low income; First generation to attend college; High school students.

resourced public schools that lacked sufficient college preparation tools. In 1997, College Track started with a cohort of 25 East Palo Alto students at one high school in the Sequoia Union High School District. Today, College Track supports more than 1,000 high school and college students in East Palo Alto, Oakland, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Aurora, Colorado. In addition, plans are underway for a new site to open in Los Angeles in the fall of 2012.

College Track serves low-income, ethnically-diverse students who reflect the communities in which they live and who are drastically underrepresented at colleges and universities across the country. Forty-two percent of College Track students are African American, 37 percent are Latino, 12 percent are Asian, and 10 percent are either multi-racial or “Other.” Ninety percent of students are from low-income households and 85 percent will be the first in their families to graduate from college.

Goals

The overarching goals of College Track are to increase high school graduation, college eligibility and enrollment, and college graduation rates among low-income, under-resourced high school students. College Track expects that at least 75 percent of the students who go through the program will graduate from college.

To achieve this, CT has the following goals:

- 100 percent of seniors will graduate from high school and be admitted to a four-year college
- 90 percent of seniors will enroll in a four-year college
- 75 percent of CT college students will graduate within six years of entering college

Admission & Selection

Students typically apply and enroll in College Track by the end of 8th grade. Students must complete an application, provide two letters of recommendation, submit the middle school transcript, and submit a signed parent/guardian consent form. CT looks for students with a mix of academic scores and strengths. To be eligible, students must be: first generation to attend college; low income; motivated to attend college; and, members of underserved minority populations. The second stage of the admissions process includes an interview and participation in a group activity where applicants are observed.

Every year, CT interviews approximately 70-100 students, of which 50-60 are accepted. The goal is to have approximately 50 students per grade, or about 200 per site. The program retention rates have increased over the years from around 50 percent for the earlier cohorts since the beginning of the program to 75 percent in 2010. According to CT’s Executive Officer of Programs, Geraldine Sonobe, due to attrition in 10th grade, the program accepts more than 50 freshman and “refreshes” the student headcount in the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades as needed to ensure that the maximum number of students are served and that the program runs at capacity. Attrition in the first two years

is primarily due to conflict with other activities such as sports, or family situations that preclude the student from focusing on college.

Program Staff

College Track has a number of full-time and part-time staff across its five sites, including five people in each of the four established sites and two people in the new site. There are also three college success coaches and six executive level staff. Among its part-time and volunteer staff, CT has tutors, workshop instructors, academic affairs coordinators, and advisors. Last year, over 175 volunteers donated their time to College Track.

Programs Components

All of College Track's programs for high school and college students are centered on five core service areas: Academic Summer Advancement Program (ASAP), Academic Affairs, Student Life, College Affairs, and College Success. For each of these programs, there is an established set of clearly defined student goals and expectations. These expectations are mapped to college acceptance requirements and are structured to best prepare students for the academic, financial, and social demands of college. Every College Track student is expected to attend College Track at least nine hours per week and participate perform community service hours. Over the course of four years, this support amounts to the equivalent of one extra year of high school. A brief description of the five core programs is presented below:

Academic Summer Advancement Program (ASAP)

This is a 3-4 week program that introduces students to College Track in the summer before the 9th grade. Students sample all aspects of the College Track experience that they will receive during the four years including college tours and participating in the Student Showcase event. ASAP provides an overview of what students need to do in four years to get into college and allows the College Track staff to get to know students on a personal and academic level.

Academic Affairs

Academic Affairs provides students with tutoring, small-group academic workshops, ACT preparation, and academic counseling.

Student Life

Student Life enables students to gain leadership skills, develop their talents and interests, be involved in extracurricular activities, participate in cultural and artistic events, and engage in community service. Student Life, through a partnership with the Glow Foundation provides financial education workshops to every student.

College Affairs

This program delivers college-focused advisory workshops to all students in 9th – 12th grade a minimum of 12 times a year. In the senior year, each student is matched to an advisor who supports students through the college application and selection process. The advisor, as well as other staff, provides support for the FAFSA process and applying for financial aid and scholarships.

College Success

College Success helps students once they are in college to ensure that they are academically, socially, and financially able to complete their degree. While College Track provides some assistance with job and internship placement, their focus is on helping students graduate. Supports include: events to help high school seniors transition successfully to college; university and scholarship partnerships to increase the number of students admitted to good schools with higher levels of financial and other support; direct and indirect financial support to ensure that students experience smooth disbursement of funds and can meet all college funding requirements; advising and mentoring so that all students who need or request advising receive it; and communications and events to maintain contact with program alumni so they may continue to receive supports as needed.

Data-Driven Practices

College Track's Director of Program Evaluation and Planning designs and monitors a set of tracking tools that measure organizational performance based on the stated expectations for student achievement and attendance. College Track conducts a Cycle of Inquiry for all the benchmarks to monitor student progress, retention, enrollment goals, and student performance data such as GPA and ACT scores. Benchmarks are metrically calculated and reviewed three times a year. Listed after each goal below are the data collected to measure progress:

Goal 1. All participating seniors will graduate from high school and be admitted to a four-year college. College Track ensures this by:

- Tracking each student's weekly site, workshop, and tutoring session attendance.
- Regularly evaluating students' GPAs in classes required for college eligibility.
- Ensuring students pass the state exams (e.g., CAHSEE in California), and monitoring standardized test scores.
- Utilizing predictor assessments (PLAN and EXPLORE) to assess how students will perform on the ACT and will be academically for college.
- Examining the effectiveness that tutoring has on student GPAs.
- Monitoring students' retention in the program.

Goal 2. Ninety percent of participating seniors will enroll in a four-year college. College Track ensures this by:

- Guiding each student through the college application process and tracking which schools they apply to. Each student applies to a minimum of eight schools (three safety, three target, and two reach).
- Targeting that each student will be accepted to at least 50 percent of the schools they apply to and tracking applications and admissions.
- Requiring all students to apply to a minimum of 24 private scholarships from 9th to 12th grade, tracking the scholarships applied to and awards received.
- Ensuring that each student completes 50 hours of community service per year (35 hours for 9th graders, which increases their eligibility for certain scholarships in addition to enhancing their college application).

Goal 3. Seventy-five percent of CT college students will graduate within six years of entering college. College Track ensures this by:

- Addressing the financial obstacles that under-resourced students face in attending college and tracking the supports for each student through Advisory and the Glow financial education workshops.
- Assisting all students and families in filing the FAFSA form.
- Measuring the financial gap for our high school seniors and awarding CT scholarships to those who need funds the most.
- Providing college students with merit based and need based scholarships (up to \$6000 annually).
- Addressing the emotional hardships college students may face through a combination of counseling, advocacy, and helping them identify resources on their campuses through the College Success cohort programs set up at 6 universities and colleges – and tracking these interactions with students.
- Through a partnership with Beyond 12, coaching to be provided to all CT college freshmen at community colleges and California state colleges.
- Tracking students through college and validating their records with the National Student Clearinghouse and transcripts from CT scholarship recipients. Recently, College Track developed new FERPA statements for their students that will allow them to collect transcripts for all students. Having access to students' transcripts will allow College Track to determine, based on the number of credit hours taken, whether students are on track to graduate on time.

Data collected by program staff is utilized not only to ensure College Track is meeting its goals, but also to improve program practices. Over the past four years, College Track's priority has been to develop an internal evaluation methodology that is: student centered, real time, and mixed methods.

Student Centered

Weekly data entry processes are aligned to attendance expectations and services. Additionally, an annual student satisfaction survey is conducted to assess the experience of students in CT programs.

Real Time

Tracking systems are able to produce dynamic reports that allow for systemic thinking and immediate decision making.

Mixed Methods

In addition to the quantitative data collected on student participation, GPA, graduation, and more, qualitative data are collected three times per year. Staff members fill out internal evaluations and reflect on their program and their site. Further, six program “walks” are conducted per year, which monitor program quality, student engagement, and what students demonstrate that they are learning in each class.

Data are collected on an ongoing basis (weekly, monthly, quarterly, by semester, and annually). According to College Track, the organization fosters a data-driven culture and evaluation system in order to best develop programs and make informed decisions based on real-time data and demonstrated results.

College & University Partnerships

College Track maintains three types of partnerships: local partnerships connected to specific CT sites, organization-wide partnerships, and partners that support “new” sites.

Local Partners Connected to a Specific College Track Site

These include CT’s high school partners so that they can work collaboratively with teachers, counselors, coaches and principals. They also include local universities and colleges where CT frequently recruits instructors, tutors and advisors (e.g., UC Berkeley, San Francisco State, Stanford, and Tulane University). In addition, CT partners with community-based organizations such as Youth Speaks in San Francisco as a way to provide services at a low cost or no cost to CT students.

Organizational-Wide Partnerships That Serve All or Most Sites

While not an institution of higher education, the EnCorps Teachers Program connects STEM professionals interested in teaching to College Track and schools where they can try out tutoring and some instruction before committing to getting a teaching credential. EnCorps provides approximately 10 to 20 tutors to College Track in the Bay Area at no cost. College Track provides training, coaching and experience to these professionals. Additionally, the BEYOND 12 program provides coaching and support for CT’s incoming college freshmen students enrolled in California community colleges, state colleges, and two universities (about 50 students). The service helps CT better connect its freshmen and address the many needs that they confront.

Partners that support our “new sites”

In New Orleans, CT partners with the Urban League of Greater New Orleans, which provides facilities’ and transportation costs, does joint fundraising, and supports CT’s parent and volunteer programs. In Aurora, CO, CT has partnerships with Summit54 and the Aurora Public Schools. Summit54 is an organization that seeks to support and collaborate with existing programs benefiting academically motivated students who lack the school, home or financial situations to help them attend and graduate from college. CT has developed specific criteria for selecting large scale partners.

College Track fosters strong partnerships with colleges, universities, and scholarship programs to ensure the highest levels of support for CT students. These partnerships benefit students by helping them connect with admissions officers, EOP offices, and other supports, as well as providing financial resources. The partnerships are seen as a “synergy of services that benefit both sides” and help meet student needs at low or no cost.

Evidence of Success

College Track actively engages students from the summer before 9th grade and supports them through college graduation. The program aims to provide seamless, longitudinal services that build and reinforce the habits and skills necessary to succeed. Over the last 13 years, CT has served over 1,100 students, of which 100 have already graduated from college. In addition, College Track has achieved the following results:

- 100 percent of CT seniors graduate from high school
- 90 percent are admitted to a four-year college
- 55 percent of students graduate from college within six years

In addition, Kaplan ACT Test preparation and repeated test taking (paid for by CT) appear to boost achievement among CT high school seniors. For this past year, 57 percent of seniors graduated from high school with ACT scores that indicate they have college-level ELA competencies. In math, 32 percent of seniors are predicted to be ready for college-level coursework. These scores are a notable increase from 42 percent in ELA and 9 percent in Math before the test preparation program.

Among seniors who graduated high school in June 2011, 96 of 111 seniors (86 percent) have been offered admission to at least one college, with students receiving 3.5 offers of admission on average (up from 3 last year). Fifty percent of seniors received 3 or more offers and the top 25 percent of seniors received 6 or more offers. For all CT program graduates, 508 students have been admitted and enrolled in college. Of this group, approximately 98 students have graduated (19 percent), and 300 (60 percent) are still enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Due to a transition year in 2005-2006, College Track lost touch with some students, but has been trying to reconnect with them and succeeding with many.

Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of the program, College Track has a diverse funding portfolio that varies by program site. Through a very active board, College Track has been able to attract funding from entities like the College Access Foundation of California and celebrities committed to education like Will.i.am. However, the funding varies by site. Likewise, the CT fundraising strategies have changed over time and as the program expands to new sites.

The first five to six years of College Track were funded primarily by individual donors, a few foundations and grants, holiday appeal letters, and one main fundraising event done every year with Pixar. In 2007, CT hired a Director of Development who built the funding sources over the last four years to include government, partnerships such as the Urban League, a capital campaign (includes new market tax credits), and increased revenue from foundations and grants. In addition CT holds multiple fundraising events, one or two large ones each year and small local events at each site. CT is initiating local advisory boards to supplement the fundraising efforts of the board. Each site will have a board that is focused on fundraising for that particular community. The CT Board has been extremely involved in fundraising efforts. It has a development committee that is responsible for overseeing the fundraising events, increasing donations from individual donors, and reviewing all of the organization's fundraising efforts.

As far as potential challenges to fundraising, CT identified the relative inaccessibility of government funding, such as 21st Century funds, in California. In New Orleans where we received the funds for three years, we have come to the end of our contract. Government revenue in general is sparse. The other huge variable is the economic climate with stock market swings and loss of confidence in the US and world markets. In 2008, the market downturn had a negative effect on raising funds, particularly from individual donors. In general, CT is confident that they can withstand these negative forces due to their strong board and founder, a trend in philanthropy to support college access, and their track record in raising funds. CT has been creative in meeting fundraising goals and they will continue in that spirit. Specifically, CT is facing these funding challenges by:

- Being more strategic with local fundraising events
- Creating local advisory boards to raise funds (increases capacity)
- Building the College Track name to attract more foundations/individual donors
- Increasing the network of government, foundation, grant contacts and resources
- Cultivating more high-income donors
- Increasing the number of fund raising events
- Working with partners to increase joint fundraising efforts

What We Do Best

Geraldine Sonobe, Executive Officer of Programs, listed five areas in which she believes College Track has had great success. These include: creating an environment that is both familial and focused on college eligibility and success; providing structures that help students succeed academically, including the summer program for entering 9th graders; providing a range of financial support, particularly the College Track “bank book;” building an extensive network of strategic partnerships; and, continual building and strengthening the organization’s institutional knowledge. Bank Book Dollars can be used toward college expenses and students earn them by meeting important benchmarks each semester over their four years in high school. Students can earn up to \$1,400 a year from 9th through 12th grade, for a maximum of \$5,600.

The success in building and strengthening the organization’s institutional knowledge supports the other successes by enabling rapid replication of the program attributes. Sonobe noted:

As we continue to grow both geographically and programmatically, we have found that our essential documents have served as an anchor in grounding us in our work. These documents include: 1) Student and Program Expectations; 2) Student-Parent Handbook; 3) the College Track web site; 4) Bank Book Policy; 5) Cycle of Inquiry results distributed internally three times a year; 6) our advisory curriculum; and, 7) Professional Learning Community description and structure.

Further, College Track utilizes a management information system (Salesforce), which they see as “an invaluable resource of student data, range of reports, program descriptions, curriculum, dashboards and detailed records of all of our financial disbursements.”

Ms. Sonobe attributed these successes “to an incredibly committed and smart Board and staff.” She further noted:

The Board is comprised of outstanding individuals who are strong in raising funds and very sharp in terms of moving the organization strategically. They are 100 percent passionate about supporting the College Track mission. Our staff is also comprised of highly talented, well-educated individuals. Our staff works hard, they are smart and resourceful, they love the students and it shows; they are deeply committed to improving the communities our students live in.

Lessons Learned

As College Track has opened new sites, concerns about successfully replicating the program have been raised, but overall, CT feels that they have identified the set of criteria for selecting new sites and replicating the model. Among these criteria, there are five components of the CT programs that have proven to be effective for each of College Track’s sites: a) the five core programs; b) the way

College Track structures the core programs and advising; c) the ratio of tutors and other support staff to students, which used to be arbitrary and now it is more intentional and almost formulaic; d) a clear set of expectations for students, parents, and staff; and, e) a consistent and effective cycle of inquiry process. Further, CT has a disciplined approach for entering a new site. Once a site is selected, the first step is to hire the academic affairs person and the site director. Next, CT has guidelines for selecting facilities and hiring and training staff. Training is a major component and there is a formal longitudinal training on-site, observations at other sites, and time with the evaluation team to learn the benchmarking, goals, and accountability measures. CT has developed an effective personnel evaluation process that aligns staff goals and review to the goals and benchmarks for CT.

One obstacle College Track encountered over the years was the ability to have enough tutors for the programs. A clear example of this involves the cost of tutors in the Bay area, which ranged from \$12 to \$25 per hour. When tutoring around 120 students a day every day of the week, this expense was not sustainable for the program. Internally, the College Track staff debated about the quality and reliability of volunteer tutors. The organization went through a transition period for about a year when the new recruiting and training mechanisms were put into place to prepare volunteers to tutor CT students. That process, while it felt like a long learning curve, has significantly improved staff member skills in volunteer recruitment, training, development – which are all crucial to the success of CT.

If given the opportunity to change one thing about College Track, Geraldine Sonobe, Executive Officer of Programs, indicated that she would “strengthen the staffing structure.” She noted that the culture of College Track is highly entrepreneurial and that they frequently come up with “some incredible solutions for addressing the achievement gap and getting more students to graduate from college,” but that in some cases they do not have the staffing capacity to implement new ideas as effectively as they want. She felt that College Track could do even more for the students it serves if CT could make a “few additional hires in strategic areas.” She also acknowledged that for the organization to grow and serve more students, great care has to be given for additional costs. Thus far, it has been part of the strategy to be conservative in hiring new staff. Through the cycle of inquiry process as well as student results, CT will have appropriate information for staffing structure going forward.

Regarding potential challenges in the future, Ms. Sonobe replied:

The biggest challenge I see is in the shifting in the college landscape, especially in California where tuition is rising exponentially while classes and services are cut. For our students, this could be devastating. An increasing number are selecting community colleges purely for financial reasons; either directly enrolling as freshmen or transferring from a 4-yr college. The chances of a community college student eventually graduating from a 4-yr college are extremely low.

Table 6. College Track: Students Served by Year and Outcome

Year	Accepted in 8th Grade	Continued to 9th Grade	Continued to 10th Grade	Continued to 11th Grade	Continued to 12th Grade	Graduated High School	Enrolled in college	Persist 2nd year	Persist 3rd year	Persist 4th year	College graduates (4 years)	College graduates (5 years)	College graduates (6 years)	College graduates (more than 6 years)
2003-2004							23			19	7	5	2	1
2004-2005	64						30			27	15	2	2	
2005-2006	62	68 (12)					43			39	10	7	1	
2006-2007	125	46 (6)	54 (11)				44			39	10	4	5	
2007-2008		128 (34)	54 (20)	65 (19)			55			51	12	18		
2008-2009			119 (15)	55 (11)	65 (5)	65	46			42				
2009-2010				122 (19)	56 (1)	56	64		61					
2010-2011					115	115	54	51						
2011-2012														
2012-2013														

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of that cell's count that are "new" students who entered the program during that cell. High School data is only provided for three cohorts. HS Graduating classes of 2009 and 2010 include East Palo Alto and Oakland, 2011 adds in San Francisco. College data, however, excludes the San Francisco cohort.

VII — Education is Freedom

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Education is Freedom provides an example of an effective model to encourage middle and high school students to aspire to and achieve a college degree. Working with a relatively small staff-to-students ratio, the model is designed to be quickly replicated at other schools and school districts. This has permitted the program to expand quickly in the past few years without jeopardizing program quality or student success outcomes. Further, data-driven decisions are supported by a comprehensive data collection, analysis, and database systems structure that is consistent across program sites.

Program Overview

Education is Freedom (EIF) was founded in 2002 by a visionary corporate CEO who “envisioned a world where every young person could pursue a college education and was committed to creating an educated workforce that could build effective companies and strong communities in today’s knowledge-based economy.” To achieve these goals, EIF initially offered renewable scholarships to first-time college students. However, it was soon revealed that financial support alone was insufficient to ensure college success, especially for students with profound social or economic barriers.

In 2003, EIF launched a program to provide comprehensive, school-based college planning services to students in the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD). Targeting Dallas ISD was of particular importance given the lack of college-going orientation in the area and the population demographics. Schools in Dallas ISD are mainly in urban settings with many transient students. Eighty-seven percent of Dallas ISD students are low-

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 2002
- This is a Non-profit Program
- This is a school-based program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during
 - ☒ During regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- Services students in: Dallas Independent School District. For the 2011-2012 school year, EIF will be serving 23 comprehensive high schools and 6 middle schools. EIF will expand services to 3 middle schools in DeSoto ISD beginning fall 2011.
- Urbanicity: Urban area
- Duration of Program: More than one academic year
- Typical number of years students are in the program: 4
- Primary services are provided at: Middle or secondary schools
- Grade level when students enter the program: 6-12
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 2840
 - 2009-10 = 8567
 - 2010-11 = 11500
- **Parental Component:** Yes. FAFSA counseling/guidance; Meeting with college/university faculty or students; Motivational speakers; parent life skills workshops.
- **Program Funding Provided By:** Local School System; Community Organization; Business/Industry; Private Foundation; Individual; College/University.
- **Demographics Served:** Low income; Historically underrepresented minorities; First generation to attend college; Middle and high school students.

income, 95 percent are racial/ethnic minorities, and many are the first in their family to attend college. In addition to the high school-based services, EIF provides college integration services to high school graduates and has recently incorporated a middle school component to begin raising college awareness earlier in students' lives.

EIF's sequenced model includes a pilot middle school program, an intensive high school program, and college integration services for EIF graduates. EIF equips students for life after high school, so they are prepared for the workforce and ready to sustain themselves, their communities, and the economy.

Goals

EIF staff works with students in each high school campus. One of their goals is to voluntarily enroll at least 25 percent of the student body at each high school and 40 percent of the senior class at each school over each academic year. Other specific targeted outcome goals are:

- 90 percent of EIF seniors will graduate from high school
- 80 percent will apply to college
- 80 percent of college applicants will be admitted
- 70 percent will apply for public financial aid (FAFSA and TASFA)
- 50 percent will apply for external, private scholarships
- 70 percent will pursue a post-secondary education

Among the long-term impacts EIF hopes to achieve are:

- Create a college-going culture across each school community
- Promote high school completion among urban students
- Equip middle school and high school students to overcome barriers to successful college entry and completion
- Assist students in navigating and completing the college entrance and funding processes
- Empower parents and guardians to become active participants in their students' success.

Admissions & Selection

Education is Freedom has an open enrollment policy. All middle school and high school students attending participating schools in the Dallas ISD are eligible to enroll in EIF through the end of their sophomore year. At the high school level, students self-select into the program. All students who complete the enrollment agreement are accepted into the program. The enrollment agreement holds them to high standards for attendance and behavior, a maximum of three unexcused absences per year, and no more than one school suspension. Additionally, students are expected to earn and maintain at least an 80 percent grade average by the end of their junior year, which increases their chances of being admitted to college and receiving scholarships. That said, students are not asked to

leave the program for any reason. If students are struggling to meet the requirements, they can still benefit from the life skills workshops, special programming, and knowledge that prepares them for college as well as careers. Parents and/or legal guardians are required to sign and understand the agreements.

There is no formal enrollment agreement at the middle school level. Students who earn honor roll, and have good attendance and behavior are invited to the EIF program, and to a special school-wide EIF recognition to celebrate their achievements. Also, faculty and staff at the schools can identify and recommend students who need extra services and support. The middle school program teaches students self-respect and accountability, prepares them to be high-functioning students, helps them transition to high school, and increases early college awareness.

Program Staff

For the vast reach that EIF has and the number of students it serves per year, EIF has a relatively small staff of about 30 to 34 full-time employees. EIF has an office equipped with a computer lab in each of the schools served, and approximately 24 employees across all partner schools. The organization also benefits from corporate and community volunteers who provide support by working one-on-one with students, assisting students with essay writing and other workshops, chaperoning campus visits, and assisting EIF with special programs.

Program Components

Through participation in Education is Freedom, students: a) complete the recommended state high-school curriculum as outlined by the State Board of Education; b) enroll in pre-AP and AP courses; c) attend life skills classes; d) work one-on-one with their Higher Education Advisor to craft a college plan; and, e) strive to maintain an 80 cumulative GPA by the end of their junior year and take the SAT/ACT. Further, parents/guardians are asked to attend EIF workshops each year. In their senior year, EIF students: a) apply to a minimum of five colleges and universities (including one community college); b) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA); and, c) submit a minimum of three scholarship applications. An overview of program components is described below:

Higher Education Advisors

Students enrolled in EIF are provided comprehensive college planning services facilitated by a full-time Higher Education Advisor (HEA) assigned to each EIF high school campus. HEAs are central to the EIF program as they prepare each urban youth to pursue higher education. HEAs assist and mentor students through all college planning activities to ensure that students are prepared to enter and graduate from college. HEAs serve as college advisors, mentors, and role models to EIF students whose parents and peers may not understand the value of a formal education or have limited knowledge of what it takes to enter and succeed in college. HEAs also facilitate parent outreach, to educate families to proactively support their students' educational goals. Moreover, in order to gen-

erate a college-going culture among students within Dallas ISD, EIF provides mentoring for its students through staff members and volunteers who can offer positive adult influences for college and career paths.

EIF: G3 (Get Ready. Get Set. Go to College!)

EIF students enhance their life skills by completing grade-level specific, monthly EIF:G3 workshops that promote personal and professional development. EIF students are introduced to a variety of skills such as decision making, conflict resolution, note-taking, academic integrity, college major selection, business etiquette, and financial literacy. Students also learn life skills that are crucial to academic and professional success but are not formally taught in standard school-based curriculum. EIF will continue to strengthen the integration of technology to make the personal development and skill building workshops available to more students.

Academic Recognition

EIF students are recognized during academic celebrations that publicly honor academic achievement in order to create and maintain a culture of learning that will extend beyond high school. Celebrations are held in a similar fashion to a pep rally usually reserved for sports, providing students with a chance to cheer for and celebrate their peers for their hard work in school. Celebrations promote improved academic performance through positive peer influence.

Mayor's Intern Fellows Program

The Mayor's Intern Fellows Program offers rising EIF juniors and seniors in high school meaningful leadership and career experiences at Dallas-area companies via paid summer employment. Interns gain job application experience and learn job-related skills and useful information about the company/organization and its industry, and professional etiquette in general. Host companies over the last three years have included AT&T, Atmos Energy, Brinker International, Children's Medical Center of Dallas, Deloitte, JPMorgan Chase, Parkland Hospital, and Southern Methodist University.

Parent Outreach

Through parent outreach, EIF helps families create strong linkages between programmatic efforts, home, and school environments. Parent outreach helps educate and empower parents/guardians to effectively assist their students through high school completion and college planning processes. Some topics explored through parent life skills meetings include raising children of integrity, protecting children from bullying, using the Internet to explore college options, and securing finances for college. Parent outreach can help offset the impact of not having a guardian who attended college, and strengthen relationships between students/families and their school community.

College Entry Prep

EIF students receive opportunities for interactive individual and group sessions to complete essential college enrollment processes including college applications, scholarship applications, federal and state financial aid applications (FAFSA and TASFA), and essay writing. Students are also assisted with

registering for SAT and ACT exams, and are offered SAT/ACT test prep in collaboration with EIF's university partners. Students receive help submitting these components in hard copy and/or electronically inside EIF's on-campus computer labs.

University Partnerships and Scholarship Opportunities

EIF helps students secure college funding through university and external scholarship partners. University partners have dedicated exclusive, merit-based scholarships to EIF students (estimated value over \$12 million) and some provide college planning and/or retention services for EIF students. EIF has developed partnerships with University of Texas at Austin, University of North Texas, University of North Texas at Dallas, Texas A&M University-Commerce, and Jarvis Christian College. EIF continually seeks new university partners. In addition, EIF students are eligible for exclusive scholarships including the Mayor's Chesapeake Energy Scholarship Fund, established in 2008 by former Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert and the Dallas Foundation. EIF also identifies additional scholarship opportunities that may be available for EIF students.

Mentoring

In order to generate a college-going culture among students within Dallas ISD, EIF facilitates mentoring for its students through staff members and volunteers who can offer positive adult influences to help with students' college and career paths.

College Integration

EIF offers exclusive opportunities for students to engage with higher education communities both prior to and after college entry. EIF arranges college visits, college talks, and summer bridge programs for high school students so that they can better visualize college options and college life. To support college-bound students with the transition from high school to college and to provide resources after college entry, EIF offers tailored college preparation, identification of college student support resources, and retention social media outreach.

Middle School Champions of Change (MC²)

Middle school students receive guidance and advising through the EIF MC² program. EIF MC² encourages strong academic performance through (a) academic promotion and recognition with pep rally-style events, (b) weekly classroom and lunchtime discussions to encourage students to think seriously about school and their futures, and (c) parent outreach.

Technology is an important tool to reach EIF students. For example, EIF furnishes an office and tech lab on each campus, with laptops, router, printer, and large screen monitor. Additionally, students work with higher education advisors to create student profiles using Careercruising, a career profile building software package that is widely utilized by Dallas ISD. HEAs assist counselors on campus to ensure that students are widely utilizing Careercruising, which helps students to assess skills and strengths, and align them with college majors, college admission plans, and careers. Technology reduces barriers by narrowing the digital divide for low-income students, and providing stu-

dents real time guidance through college admission processes. Further, students and families use the labs to complete college applications, assess skills and interests, and take virtual college tours (helpful for low-income students who can't afford to travel to many college campuses). Technology also helps document students' college admission and enrollment status, register them for standardized tests, and maintain proprietary databases, essential for customizing student services and analyzing program outcomes.

Data-Driven Practices

EIF analyzes over 27 outcome measures to assess program effectiveness and to ascertain whether the organization is achieving its goals. EIF has internal and external evaluation teams that analyze different data elements such as students' high school graduation rates, SAT/ACT test registrations, test-taking behaviors, scores, financial aid and scholarship applications, college applications, acceptance rates, college attendance, persistence, and completion. The organization's internal evaluation team also administers surveys to collect baseline measures of college knowledge and perceptions, effectiveness of specific program components and events, the integration of the EIF program within each campus served, and other qualitative measures. Program effectiveness is assessed by the external evaluation team at the University of Texas at Dallas. Particularly, this group looks at three key performance areas: academic performance (i.e., high school GPA, number of AP courses taken), college readiness elements (i.e. SAT/ACT registration and scores), and 11th grade exit-level exam scores.

Information collected by EIF Higher Education Advisors from students and high school counselors are entered into a centralized EIF database. In addition, EIF verifies college enrollment data with the National Student Clearinghouse, colleges, and universities, as well as information collected from surveys. The information is tracked on a daily basis throughout the school year and summer months. In addition, verifications from colleges and universities are tracked periodically through contact with institution liaisons, with student permission via signed FERPA waivers.

To evaluate program outcomes, the EIF management team sets target goals that the schools expected to achieve. Summary tables and graphs are generated from the data and allow both managers and Higher Education Advisors to track performance in real time. Below are examples of the reports generated on a regular basis:

- Weekly Reports (sent to HEAs)
- Bi-weekly Reports (sent to management team)
- Monthly Reports (sent to school district – i.e., Dallas ISD)
- Evaluation Reports (sent to funders/stakeholders as needed)
- College Retention Reports (Clearinghouse)
- Ad Hoc Reports (special data requests that are not included in the regular reports)

The summary reports are used by the EIF school-based staff to measure their performance versus key target outcomes, which result in increased accountability. Further, the collected data are also useful in generating student-level reports, which are used for college and scholarship matching, among other purposes. Evaluation reports gleaned from surveys are used to improve programming by soliciting general feedback and quantifying the results through rating scales that can be tracked over time.

Education is Freedom aims to create a college-going culture across each school community and equip middle and high school students with the tools needed to overcome barriers to successful college entry and completion. While there is strong emphasis on college completion, the organization is still working on enhancing its program to better serve students through college. Two years ago, EIF began efforts to track students through college and are putting more focus on that now. However, the challenge remains in tracking previous cohorts of students in order to have a clearer sense of the longitudinal impact that the program has on students.

College & University Partnerships

Although students are considered graduates of the EIF program upon high school completion, they continue to receive support directly from EIF staff during college and through formal partnerships with specific colleges and universities. For instance, EIF helps students secure college funding through university and external scholarship partners. EIF's university partners have dedicated exclusive, merit-based scholarships to EIF students (estimated value over \$12 million), and some also provide college planning and/or retention services for EIF students. EIF has developed scholarship partnerships with several institutions including the University of Texas at Austin, University of North Texas, University of North Texas at Dallas, Texas A&M University-Commerce, and Jarvis Christian College. As EIF continues to build new partnerships, the organization is incorporating a College Success component to their agreements, by which institutions provide retention services to EIF students who are also scholarship recipients. The agreements vary by university; some universities merge EIF students into existing retention programs and others maintain a cohort of EIF students within their programs. Formalizing these agreements with university partners allows EIF to direct students and connect them with the numerous resources on campus. This is important because EIF does not want to duplicate services already offered to students on campus. EIF is further able to assist with college student success by monitoring their academic performance and degree progression with student permission via signed FERPA waivers.

Evidence of Success

According to EIF staff, students who participate in the program throughout high school are more likely to stay in high school and complete each grade, have higher GPAs, take Advanced Placement classes, graduate from high school, and apply to and enter college. Data from the EIF 2010 Annual Report indicated that, in the 2009-2010 academic year, EIF served 2,359 high school seniors across 15 of its 16 high schools (1 high school was redesigned, and included only grades 9-11) and 94 per-

cent (2,226) of EIF seniors graduated from high school. Some 95 percent (2,241) of the total seniors applied to college and, of those, 87 percent (1,950) were accepted. More than 9,000 applications were submitted to almost 300 different colleges and universities. Of all EIF graduates in 2010, 68 percent (1,519) were enrolled in college during the fall semester of 2010. For contrast, data reported by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board indicates that of the 6,671 Dallas ISD class of 2009 graduates, only 3,008 (45 percent) were documented as enrolled in some type of postsecondary institution. Moreover, the class of 2010 was awarded over \$7,600,000 total in scholarships for their first year in college.

Sustainability

EIF obtains funding for its programs from a wide range of sources. About 40 percent of the funding is provided by the school district in a per pupil allocation. Although the schools do not independently contribute financially to the program, they provide the space and dedicated staff to work with EIF. Outside of the district and the schools, EIF engages in an aggressive two-fold fundraising effort; EIF has a development team that reaches out to corporate partners to secure resources. Their efforts sometimes overlap with the grant writing team. EIF is working towards diversifying their funding streams and securing multi-year commitments. The organization is also looking to increase the participation of independent donors, as well as opportunities to receive state and federal funding.

The organization actively seeks funding through written grant proposals from both private and institutional funders as well as federal, state, and local governments that support the mission of Education is Freedom. EIF also hosts an annual signature fundraising event to raise funds for the organization by aggressively seeking local corporate sponsorship for its intern program.

Due to both the local and national economic climate, EIF has been faced with the challenge of reduced funding from foundation support, similar to many organizations. Additionally, state and local budget deficits in education funding have been a challenge for EIF. A reduction in local district funding has required EIF to refocus its efforts in streamlining resources to continue to meet the needs of the program. These challenges have resulted in efforts to diversify the revenue streams to include a broad spectrum of individual, corporate, foundation, school district, state, and federal sources.

Another potential challenge EIF is preparing to face is a decrease in student financial aid. In preparation for this, EIF is educating students and families on financial aid issues and options. EIF hosts a financial aid information night each fall and a financial aid completion program each spring for every EIF high school. EIF also utilizes partnerships with universities and other organizations to meet students' needs through exclusive scholarships for EIF students. Many of these scholarship opportunities are also tied directly to student support services offered by universities.

Finally, a decrease is possible in the number of companies willing and able to commit to offering internships to EIF high school students. This would pose a significant challenge as EIF aims to equip students for careers after college graduation. The Mayor's Intern Fellows program provides EIF students with paid, summer internships at Dallas area companies. EIF students are eligible to apply during the spring semester of their 10th and 11th grade years.

What We Do Best

Tiffany Gurley-Alloway, Vice President of Evaluation and Accountability, offered many insights into the Education is Freedom program and its leadership. She indicated that EIF is best at “getting students to college, and working with parents/guardians as partners along the way.” This is possible because EIF has strong leadership in its CEO, with experience working as a change agent. The leadership helps to streamline processes to maximize efficiency and effectiveness while being fiscally responsible. She offered that EIF fosters a college going culture on the campuses it serves. Further, EIF meets “the affective needs of students, which enables them to dream of attending college, and realize their dream.” By educating parents and guardians, EIF empowers them to proactively partner with their students toward college success. She noted that EIF educates parents “on today's college planning processes, so they are better equipped to proactively support their students' success and goals, as a guiding partner, whether they have earned a college degree or not.”

Dr. Gurley-Alloway attributed EIF's success to being “committed to our mission, and to innovative approaches to fulfilling our mission.” She added that EIF has a dedicated team that is “committed to meeting the students' needs and doing whatever we can to prepare them to enter and succeed in college.” Additionally, the symbiotic relationship with Dallas ISD has enabled EIF to effectively support students and make a difference in their lives. EIF intentionally supports the counselors and administrators' work on each campus, which has helped EIF develop a reputation as collaborators. This has resulted in an increasing number of Dallas ISD principals selecting EIF as their preferred provider among college access partners.

Dr. Gurley-Alloway noted that EIF “stresses the importance of data to support our mission” and that this also played a huge role in the overall success of the program. She noted:

We emphasize metrics, and our desired outcomes set the stage for everything, from data collection, analysis, and database systems to program design, work processes, staffing, and organizational structure. We have constant internal benchmarking to assess the effectiveness of our program for EIF students, in addition to our external program evaluation. The EIF Program is designed based on proven practices. Our Team participates in ongoing professional development, and shares proven practices as part of staff development.

Lessons Learned

Education is Freedom experienced fast growth in recent years, from working with only 3 high schools in 2008-2009 to 23 schools and 6 middle schools in 2011-2012. To accomplish this in a way that effectively supports students in these high-need districts, EIF documented the start-up and daily processes of its programs and services. The EIF model had to be flexible enough to be customized to each school district and each school campus, a process that took some experience to learn. Now, the program can be very intentional in its growth and expansion, systematically preserving the core elements of the program. As the organization has expanded over time, its chief leadership learned important lessons, such as:

- Strong leadership, an influential board, and having a team with the right skills in the right jobs.
- Goals/target outcomes should set the stage for everything from data collection and analysis to database systems, work processes, and staffing (Tiffany Gurley-Alloway noted that “when you hire dedicated people, the results will be phenomenal”).
- In order to remain vital, an organization must be viewed as a partner within the school districts it serves.
- Process documentation is essential.
- When needs change, an organization must be fluid enough to change with them.
- Organizations must stay current on technological advances in the industry.
- You must never lose site of the competition. Organizations must understand the business, potential partners, and competitors. Further, you must understand what sets your organization apart from others. You must constantly scan the horizon for entering/emerging organizations, and never underestimate their potential impact on your business.

Dr. Gurley-Alloway offered the following collective thoughts of the EIF leadership team as words of advice for other programs:

- Understand and maintain a laser focus on your core business, and ensure that it is aligned with your mission.
- Let your mission guide what you do; be flexible enough to change how you do it.
- Know your customers, all of them, and how you can uniquely address their needs.
- Building relationships with campus staff is as important as building relationships with students and parents.

When asked what one thing she wished they could have done differently, Dr. Gurley-Alloway noted that her President and Board of Directors have developed many exciting goals that would position EIF and its students for success in the long-term. She shared two of their goals with us.

We would advocate for the definition of “middle school success,” and metrics creation. Doing so would allow us to enhance our middle school program to be more comprehensive as preparation for high school and college, to include academic enrichment, formal mentoring, and college immersion, and to secure funding for the same.

We would also like to be able to ensure that EIF students are financially, emotionally and socially supported throughout their college experience and to guarantee employment for EIF graduates upon graduating from college. Working with corporations, including those who sponsor the Mayor’s Intern Fellows Program, would allow us to help ensure we have a dedicated workforce ready to accept the emerging jobs that are information and technology-based. This helps students and business/industry as businesses could essentially prepare their workforce beginning in high school; it also underscores our message of equity and economics.

Table 7. Education is Freedom: Students Served by Year and Outcome

Year	Accepted in 9th Grade	Continued to 10th Grade	Continued to 11th Grade	Continued to 12th Grade	Graduated High School	Enrolled in College	Persist 2nd year	Persist 3rd year	Graduate in 4 years	Graduate in 5 years	Graduate in 6 years
2003-2004	107	147	123	107	67	65	26	22	6	6	2
2004-2005	101	172 (65)	137	166 (43)	165	128	80	71	10	8	
2005-2006	488	256 (155)	209 (37)	201 (64)	100	89	53	40	5		
2006-2007	342	446	225	231 (22)	159	140	79	61	2		
2007-2008	358	517 (175)	414	218	189	145	93	79			
2008-2009	365	460 (102)	340	350	321	241	128				
2009-2010	927	1174 (809)	1738 (1278)	2359 (2019)	2226	1519					
2010-2011	659	1544 (617)	2042 (868)	2429 (691)	2286	2240					

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of that cell's count that are "new" student headcounts who entered the program during that cell.

VIII — Foundation for a College Education

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Foundation for a College Education is a model of a relatively small program that successfully encourages high school students to aspire to and prepare for college success. The program seeks to benefit communities as well as individual students by actively engaging students and parents in the college preparation process. As the program has expanded, it has become more intentional about tracking data related to program content and delivery, in addition to the focus on student data. The program was designed to meet the specific needs of a target population in California, and this focus is both a strength of the program and a potential challenge to program replication.

Program Overview

Foundation for a College Education (FCE) works to increase the number of students of color from East Palo Alto and surrounding communities who graduate from a four-year college or university. FCE provides a comprehensive college access and retention program through academic tutoring, leadership training, and college counseling that enables students to graduate from high school and enroll in and graduate from college. One key component of the program is parental involvement, which helps families advocate for their children and work to create a community where higher education is attainable. FCE's motto is "high expectations lead to high achievement." Recognizing that getting their students into college is only the first step, FCE continues to support students in college to ensure they graduate with a bachelor's degree or higher.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 1995
- This is a Non-profit Program
- This is a community-based program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during
 - ☐ During regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☐ Weekends
- Services students in: East Palo Alto and surrounding communities
- Urbanicity: Urban area; Suburban area
- Duration of Program: More than one academic year
- Typical number of years students are in the program: more than 5 years
- Primary services are provided at: Community center/agency
- Grade level when students enter the program: 9
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 145
 - 2009-10 = 145
- **Parental Component:** Yes. FAFSA counseling/guidance; Campus visits and tours; Meeting with college/university faculty or students; Participation in student activities; Family counseling; Motivational speakers
- **Program Funding Provided By:** Business/Industry; Private Foundation; Individual; Fundraising
- **Targeted Population:** Low income; Historically underrepresented minorities; First generation to attend college; High school students

History & Mission

Foundation for a College Education was founded in 1995 by Glenn Singleton and Chris Roe, who, through their for-profit college counseling company, recognized the need to create an alternative for families who could not afford their costly college planning services. The organization began working with students and families at Woodside High School and other community agencies. Then, in 1997, FCE established a formal collaboration with the Palo Alto Unified School District's Voluntary Transfer Program, a court-ordered desegregation program that lets families in East Palo Alto send their children to school in Palo Alto, which is a separate city and school district from East Palo Alto. To close the college-going gap in East Palo Alto and its surrounding areas, FCE works with students to prepare them not just for entering college, but to graduate, as only 11 percent of East Palo Alto residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. FCE works with youth of color who typically are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are first in their families to attend college, and possess very limited exposure to higher education. Currently, close to 200 students and parents of African American, Latino, and Pacific Islander descent participate in the program annually.

Goals

- 100 percent of FCE's College Bound students will graduate from high school
- 100 percent of FCE's high school graduates will enroll in college
- 85 percent of FCE's College Success students will receive their degrees within 5 years
- 100 percent of FCE's College Bound students will have at least 1 parent actively involved in the program.

Program Staff

FCE has a small staff that includes three full-time and four part-time employees. Program staff provide support to high school students and their parents as well as to college students and parents.

Admissions & Selection

According to the organization's website, FCE's admission procedures are designed to ensure that FCE is the right fit for the students interested in the program. The application and selection process includes a student essay, a one-on-one interview with the program staff, and a teacher recommendation. While students are expected to have a minimum GPA of 2.5 in order to apply, this admission criterion can be waived with strong teacher advocacy. The final step in the application process involves an interview with the student's parents. FCE has an open admission policy and students are recruited at local middle and high schools

Initially, students joined the program as late as their second semester of junior year. Recognizing that this was not sufficient time to work with the students and prepare them college, FCE started their outreach to parents and students the second semester of 8th grade. FCE also holds information ses-

sions where they describe the program to parents and students. FCE's Executive Director Anna Waring explained that due to the rigor and demands of the program, which, among other things, requires monthly meetings for parents and students, they lose a number of people after the information sessions. However, the students in the program understand and accept the requirements, thus FCE has low program attrition rates. Beginning with last year's freshman class, FCE aim is to enroll 18-20 students into their entering 9th grade class and graduate the same number of students four years later.

Program Components

Foundation for a College Education recognizes that getting into college is only the first step and additional support throughout college years is needed. Therefore, FCE continues to support students to ensure that they graduate with a bachelor's degree or higher. FCE delivers services to students through three major program components: College Bound, College Success, and College Scholarship Program.

College Bound

FCE's College Bound Program is the academic and college planning component of FCE and supports students and families in grades 9 through 12. With students, the College Bound program aims to raise their expectations and academic performance beyond grade-level requirements and prepare them for college preparatory courses, honors and advanced placement. In addition, the College Bound program seeks to help families learn to navigate the college admissions process and utilize the resources available at their schools. Some of the services offered through College Bound are:

- Academic enrichment and support through one-on-one and group tutoring (includes academic advising, course selection advising, and study skills enhancement)
- College planning and counseling (includes college admissions planning and support, college application instruction and support, and PSAT/SAT preparation)
- Local and national college tours
- Mentoring and college coaching
- Financial aid and scholarship guidance/instruction
- Parent/guardian development and support
- Leadership development
- Career exploration

College Success

FCE prides itself on providing services to students while they are enrolled in college. "Unlike many college access programs," the organization's website states, "[FCE] measures success against college completion rates, not simply college enrollment." To support students after high school, FCE has developed a comprehensive college retention program with services such as:

- College transition and orientation support
- Academic and personal counseling
- Financial aid and scholarship guidance/instruction
- Parent/guardian development and support
- Transfer admission advising
- Career counseling
- Leadership development

College Scholarship Program

To alleviate some of the financial hardships that students may experience during their college years, FCE developed the College Scholarship Program, which provides grants for FCE students. These grants “play a key role in retention.” Every year, FCE awards 6 to 8 scholarships ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Other types of financial support to students cover additional expenses such as books, student fees, travel, etc.

In addition to the three major programs in which FCE students participate, FCE also holds monthly meetings for students and families. SPACE (Students and Parents for a College Education) is a community meeting that brings together staff, students, and parents every other month. Information provided at these meetings is relevant to all grade levels and discusses topics such as “college life.” During the alternating months, FCE holds grade-specific meetings to work with students on particular projects and topics such as transitioning to high school (for 9th graders) and assisting seniors with refining the list of colleges and applying for financial aid etc. Attendance at the grade-specific meetings is mandatory for students and parents. FCE also provides after school and late night tutoring sessions for students three nights a week during the school year. Students can choose to attend group sessions on a drop-in basis or schedule one-on-one meetings with tutors.

To increase college awareness, FCE brings in 15 to 25 different college representatives in the fall to speak with students about various aspects of college life. Students are required to attend a minimum number of sessions each year. This minimum increases as students get further along in high school. The focus of the program is to help students gain knowledge about the different types of colleges and universities.

As the program has grown, a concern has been maintaining the personal interactions and high levels of attention and support for students.

Data-Driven Practices

FCE collects a range of academic indicators to determine if their students are “college eligible” and prepared for college. Once students are enrolled in college, the information collected is used to determine if students are on track to graduate within five years. Some of the data collected in both the College Bound and College Success programs are the number of preparatory courses taken, grade

point averages (GPAs), SAT scores, high school graduation rates, college admission data, college persistence and completion rates, as well as the time to graduation.

Similar to other college access programs featured in these case studies, FCE conducts external verification of student academic data through transcripts and reports on SAT scores. FCE also tracks students through the National Student Clearinghouse, though they are currently transitioning to a computerized tracking program called Beyond 12. The information gathered by program staff is reviewed frequently, for example, high school grades are reviewed in a quarterly basis, and college grades are reviewed at the end of each quarter or semester. Moreover, college students are contacted every month by email or social media; and students attending institutions in the Bay area (about 85 percent of FCE students) are visited annually. Communication with college students also includes care packages and “goodie” bags prepared by staff and students’ parents as a mechanism for keeping parents involved.

College & University Partnerships

Although FCE does not have formal partnerships with any individual college or university, they have good relationships with a variety of post-secondary institutions that enroll a number of FCE students. These institutions include:

- Notre Dame de Namur
- Santa Clara University
- University of San Francisco
- San Francisco State University
- Foothill College

In addition, approximately 20 college and universities send admission officers to speak to students in the College Bound program about admission requirements, requirements for majors, and college life. The sessions are extremely important for the students, the vast majority of whom will be first-generation college students and have little knowledge of the higher education system. Moreover, FCE’s Assistant Director of College Success maintains relationships with admission officers through frequent phone and email contact.

FCE has a more extensive relationship with Stanford University. Five members of FCE’s Board of Directors and Advisory Board are Stanford professors or administrators, which helps FCE gain access to the university’s many resources. In return, FCE has participated in Stanford’s Board Fellows program and hired a SPIN (Stanford Program in Non-profits) fellow to assist with the organization’s fund development. In the past, Stanford students, working under FCE Advisory Board member and School of Education professor, Milbrey McLaughlin, undertook two important research projects for

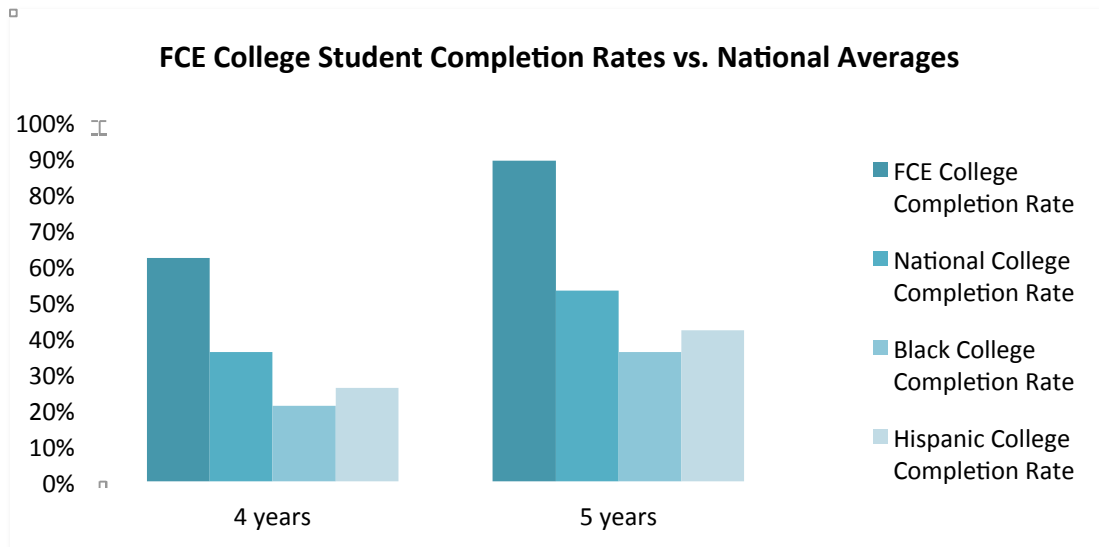
FCE. One group provided an evaluation of FCE’s parent engagement program and the other looked at the pros and cons of creating a middle school program.

Evidence of Success

According to Dr. Waring, FCE loses very few students during high school because the initial hurdle they go through to apply to the program is pretty high. In the last four years, the program asked three students to leave and two left due to family reasons, resulting in attrition of five students out of 70 (7 percent). Once students and families decide to be in the program, they are committed to participating in the events. Dr. Waring indicated that if students stay in the program, “100 percent graduate from high school” and almost every one of them has gained admission to a four-year institutions. In 2010, 3 of 11 FCE students attended a two-year college immediately after high school. FCE recognizes that the challenges these students face are different compared to those who attend a four-year college, but FCE maintains a good relationship with the two-year institutions and works with the students to make sure they are paired with the appropriate resources and have a plan for transferring to a four-year college or university.

To date, FCE has sent 122 students to college. Fifty-three have graduated (43 percent) and 55 are still enrolled in college (45 percent). Dr. Waring explained that college graduation rates are largely predicted by the type of institution their students attend. That is, students attending private college are more likely to graduate on time. For FCE students, 85 percent of those who start college graduate. Approximately 64 percent graduate in four years and 89 percent graduate in five years. This latter statistic enables FCE to determine whether they are meeting their goal of having 85 percent of students receive their degrees within 5 years (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. FCE College Student Completion Rates vs. National Averages



Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of the program, FCE engages its board through frequent updates on admission figures and fundraising efforts as they relate to the overall health of the organization. FCE also sends regular reports to various funders. Most of the funding for FCE comes from private sources. Nearly half comes from individuals, approximately 45 percent comes from foundations, and about five percent comes from corporations and community groups.

FCE recognizes that it is small and community-based, but it is exploring the possibility of growing and serving more students and families. The challenge that Dr. Waring is most concerned about is “how to grow in size while maintaining a quality and personalized program.” FCE has been documenting the various aspects of the program and engaging in conversations about what aspects are essential (high expectations, family and community empowerment) and what might not be essential (a particular program or activity). Further, they are beginning to explore the aspects of the program that might be successfully delivered online (some tutoring, college research, etc.) and how that might influence the way the program operates. Dr. Waring noted that the program is “about to outgrow our current space and that we need to find a place that is both affordable and located in East Palo Alto, the community we are committed to serve.”

The final challenge to sustainability noted by Dr. Waring is the continual need for money to fund the mission. She indicated that the program is about to begin a strategic planning process that will help them narrow down some of these ideas and think about what is the most effective way to meet the mission in the future. She indicated that she is “not sure which direction we will take, but I am committed to making any changes with quality and based on our core values.”

What We Do Best

Executive Director Waring indicated that “FCE is most successful at working with students and their parents to make sure that they have the information and the confidence to be effective advocates for themselves.” She added that “the way we work is designed to empower our clients rather than having them dependent on us. For example, students and parents lead sections of meetings, serve as translators, mentor others, etc. If parents or students are unsure of what they should say to teachers or counselors, we will role play with them and even go to the meeting, but they take the lead.” Dr. Waring attributed this success to having college graduation as the goal from the beginning. She explained that “all programs were and are developed with this endpoint in mind.” Additionally, she noted that FCE listens to the students and parents and “designs programs and activities that they need and want,” in addition to reviewing “research and literature about best practices.” For example, FCE’s parent engagement program “grew out of our parents’ desires to understand how education worked and how they could be more effective in helping their children.”

Lessons Learned

Since the organization was founded in 1995, there have been many changes to the program services and focus. One of the major changes has been adapting the services to parents and families according to the shift in demographics in the local area. As a result of the 1976 Tinsley Court decision, many East Palo Alto families opted to have their children educated in more affluent school districts such as the Palo Alto Unified School District. Even though students were attending schools out of the district, the college-going rate for these students was still low because students were not enrolling in the right high school classes for admission to college. In 2000, FCE formed a partnership with the Voluntary Transfer Program of the Palo Alto Unified School District to work with students and parents to help them be more aware of what they needed to do to ensure college admission and graduation. In the early years of the program, most families were African American and many members of these families were actively involved in advocacy efforts in East Palo Alto, which was a magnet for many Black activists in the 1960s and 1970s. In the past decade, however, East Palo Alto has experienced an influx of Latino and Pacific Islander families and that led FCE to increase their work with parents include self-advocacy as well as advocacy about education.

As the organization continues to grow, Dr. Waring has developed a list of pending questions that they hope to address. Some relate to program growth, what growth looks like, and how it can potentially affect FCE's personal interactions with the students. "We have been so small that we can have one-on-one conversations with kids that are not routinized or formalized," commented Dr. Waring. She added, "as we grow, we need to figure out how to keep the personal interactions and yet achieve the same goals." There are also questions about how to organize the program alumni and how to be more intentional at creating an alumni council. Among the FCE staff, some see potential for growth at the regional level, with a model that is tailored to the unique challenges faced in California. Others see a national problem, and envision a program that supports students nationwide. FCE hopes to engage in these conversations early this fall (2011) and prepare a document to present it to the board members in April 2012. FCE also hopes to continue to evolve and be more responsive to the group that they service (e.g., there is a new focus on bilingualism given the demographic changes).

When asked about an aspect that she wishes could be done differently if given the opportunity, Dr. Waring indicated that she "would start working with families earlier, probably in middle school. Even though we start at 9th grade, many students have already fallen of the track that leads them to college. This may be an area we pursue in the future."

Table 8. Foundation for a College Education: Students Served by Year and Outcome

	Enrolled in FCE in 9th grade	Continued to 10th grade	Continued to 11th grade	Continued to 12th grade	Graduated High School	Enrolled in college	Persist 2nd year	Persist 3rd year	Persist 4th year	College graduates (4 years)	College graduates (5 years)	College graduates (6 years or longer)
1995	?	?										
1996	?	1+?	?									
1997	?	1+?	2+?	1								
1998	1+?	?	?	10	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
1999	?	4+?	2+?	11	10	10	1	-	-	-	-	4
2000	2	1+?	8+?	6	11	11	8	1	-	-	-	4
2001	3	4	7+?	9	6	6	10	7	1	-	-	1
2002	4	5	7	10	9	9	5	9	6	0	-	2
2003	6	7	9	8	10	10	8	5	9	2	1	-
2004	7	8	8	10	8	8	10	7	5	3	3	-
2005	9	10	8	8	10	10	7	10	7	3	1	0
2006	8	10	10	8	8	8	10	6	10	3	1	0
2007	6	9	12	10	8	8	8	10	6	3	2	0
2008	4	9	10	11	10	10	8	8	9	3	4	0
2009	6	6	10	10	11	11	10	8	8	5	1	1
2010	19	13	8	10	10	10	11	10	8	7	1	0
2011	10	19	13	9	9	10	10	11	10	1	1	0
2012					9*	9*						

Notes: Incomplete data for early cohorts. * predicted.

IX — Hispanic Youth Institute

The Hispanic College Fund

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Hispanic Youth Institute (HYI) represents an effective, data-driven program using proven practices and procedures to establish new program sites across the US. A standardized application process ensures the same types of data are collected for all students and permits assessment across program sites to evaluate the overall impact of the program nationally. Additionally, there is a standard curriculum for the primary component of the program – the summer kick-off event, and a standardized data collection and analysis mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the kick-off. One aspect that HYI is wrestling with, however, is the ability to collect and analyze standard data across all program sites for the year-long component, which has considerable variation between sites.

Program Overview

To address the high school drop-out crisis and low college enrollment rates in the Latino community, the Hispanic College Fund created the Hispanic Youth Institute (HYI) to educate and motivate high school students to go to college, pursue professional careers, and give back to their communities. The Hispanic Youth Institute is a national program operating in eight communities that aims to help students graduate from college, become professionals, and give back to the community. The program kicks off with a four-day, three-night college empowerment program on a college campus where students learn to overcome real and perceived barriers to college access. Students participate in workshops, connect with local professionals, meet college admissions officers, and interact with near-peer mentors. Upon completion of the

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 2004
- This is a community-based program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during
 - ☐ Regular school hours
 - ☐ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- Services students in: Eastside Union High School District, Los Angeles Unified School District, Dallas ISD, Prince George's County School District, Chandler Unified School District; Los Angeles, Silicon Valley, Central Valley, Dallas, New Mexico, Arizona, Maryland, Virginia, DC.
- Urbanicity: Urban area; Rural area; Suburban area
- Duration of Program: More than one academic year
- Primary services are provided at: Kick-off program is on a college campus. Year-round programming is offered at secondary schools, community centers, and college campuses. This varies by region.
- Grade level when students enter the program: 9
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 786
 - 2009-10 = 912
- **Program Funding Provided By:** Federal Government; Community Organization; Business/Industry; Private Foundation; Individual; College/University; Fundraising.
- **Targeted Population:** Low income; Historically underrepresented minorities; First generation to attend college; Dropout, stopout, or at-risk students; High school students

kick-off program, students are enrolled into year-round programming that reinforces the key themes of college, career, and community.

History & Mission

The Hispanic Youth Symposium began in 2004 as an initiative of the National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Offices and the Hispanic College Fund. The purpose was to fill a void of information and support for a rapidly expanding Hispanic student population in the Greater Washington area and create a pipeline for the workforce in the area including corporations, the federal government, and education/nonprofits. The program was modeled after the Idaho Hispanic Youth Symposium, which was a successful high school dropout prevention program. College access programming and career programming were added. Partnerships and volunteers were key to the programmatic effectiveness and cost effectiveness of the program. Although it is national in scope, it has always been a community-driven program.

The first program in summer 2004 had 63 students from around the Greater Washington, DC area and was held at Marymount University in Arlington, VA. Between 2005 and 2010, several new sites were opened nationwide. In 2010, year-round programming began to roll out. Regional staff was developed in each area, and the program name was changed from Hispanic Youth “Symposium” to Hispanic Youth Institute to reflect the year-round activities. A study was completed to measure the student change on the Children’s Hope Scale, with statistically-significant improvements in student Hope Scores in about 1,000 students. The program was recognized by the College Board for having an innovative “getting ready for college” program. In 2010, there were 1,021 students participating in the program.

Goals

- 75 percent of alumni will achieve a bachelor’s degree within six years of graduating from high school
- 50 percent of alumni will pursue careers in business, health care, or STEM
- 65 percent of alumni will report having volunteered at least four hours per month in the previous six months

Admissions & Selection

Admission into the program is competitive and students need to apply for admission. HYI gives preference to students with certain factors, such as being the first in their family to attend college or receiving free or reduced lunch. These students receive additional points on their application to increase the applicant pool of underrepresented students. Academically, the selection focuses on “middle students,” that is, students whose grades fall in the B and C range and who could go to college, but without appropriate support and intervention probably would choose not to attend. Typically,

students join the program in the 9th grade with some joining in the 10th grade. Every year, HYI serves approximately 1,000 students in eight different regions.

Program Components

The Hispanic Youth Institute serves students in eight different communities including Dallas, Texas; Arizona; New Mexico; Virginia; Towson, Maryland; and three communities in California – Silicon Valley, Central Valley, and Los Angeles. Programs and services offered to students by HYI consist of two major components: a summer kick-off event and year-round programming.

Summer Kick-Off in Each Community

Beginning in the summer, 100-200 high school students experience a university campus for a four-day, three-night college empowerment program where students learn to overcome both real and perceived barriers to college access. The students participate in college and career workshops, connect with local Hispanic professionals, meet college admissions officers, interact with near-peer mentors, listen to inspirational speakers, and compete for scholarships. Throughout the on-campus experience, the students build their confidence and receive practical tools to help them along their pathway to college.

Year-Round Programming

Upon completion of the on-campus kick-off program, students are enrolled into year-round programming that reinforces the key themes of college, career, and community, while encouraging them to promote a college-going culture among their peers throughout the remainder of their high school years. The Hispanic Youth Institute works with organizations in the local community to leverage existing resources and fill resource gaps. HCF staff partner with local community-based organizations to provide workshops and activities for students. Graduates from the summer kick-off program are expected to attend activities in the year-round program, but attendance or participation at events is not required.

Program Staffing

The Hispanic Youth Institute has various directors in each of the regions, a national program director, and a part-time administrative staff. The program relies on a great number of volunteers and has about 1,000 to 2,000 volunteers working with HYI in varying degrees, such as on planning committees, to implement local programs. For example, HYI holds a Hispanic Heroes event featuring 40 to 50 local professionals who engage students in small groups and talk to them about overcoming obstacles in order to reach to where they each are today. All regions are staffed, although HYI is looking to have a minimum of one staff member per region and some staff currently oversee multiple sites.

Data-Driven Practices

HCF sees the value in being a data-driven organization and, while obtaining funding for external evaluations has been a major obstacle, the organization internally collects a wide range of information on its programs and students. Currently, HCF tracks high school graduation and college-going rates, students' career interests, and volunteer activities that directly connect with the program goals. Examples of other indicators include students' hopes and confidence, and whether students have mentors.

To collect student information, HCF administers various surveys at different times throughout the year. During the summer kick-off program, pre-and post- surveys are conducted as soon as students arrive on campus for the program and upon its completion. The pre- and post- surveys ask students about their college aspirations, college knowledge, and information regarding financial aid resources. The surveys are designed to measure the immediate impact of the kick-off program and provide staff with feedback for improving the program. Every spring, HYI also conducts an alumni survey containing nearly 70 questions about students' college enrollment and persistence. Information collected from the alumni survey allows program staff to track the program's progress towards the long-term goals and a majority of the program's long-term data is acquired through the alumni surveys. The challenge, however, is that as students get older (i.e., and are out of the program for longer durations), they tend to be less responsive. The highest recent response rate for the alumni surveys was about 22 percent, according to the National Director of Pre-College Programs, Stina Augustsson. Other surveys are administered to program volunteers, such as the near-peer mentors who work with students. HCF is currently investigating the option to track students through the National Student Clearinghouse to expand its ability to track student progress.

Following each of the summer programs, the HCF staff holds an annual meeting with team members from across the country to examine the feedback from surveys and engage in discussions with the program planning committees. HYI emphasizes the critical need to focus on continuous program improvement and make the students' voice an essential part of those improvements. Moreover, Ms. Augustsson explained that collecting data is not enough to improve a program. Rather, all data collected needs to be used. "Looking at the data is not easy to do," she noted, "but it helps [us] evolve and keep the program successful."

Further, the organization has developed program manuals based on data from prior years, so that new locations may be developed quickly. This keeps HYI ready to expand the program model to new regions, with a Board-approved set of minimum criteria for establishing new sites. In order to start working in a new community, for example, HCF works with its local advocates to raise a minimum of \$100,000, secure a pipeline of funding to support ongoing program operations, and have strong university and outreach partners such as high schools. Additionally, the program development materials include a list of the kinds of people who need to be involved in the establishment of a new site, starting with the local advocates who help bring in the program. Finally, in addition to the pro-

gram manuals, there is a standardized process and protocols for data collection at the national level that is non-negotiable at each HYI site to ensure that there is comparable data from site to site.

College & University Partnerships

Since many of the students participating in HYI are the first in their family to attend college, the summer program is held on a university campus. Students experience dorm rooms and roommates, eat in the university cafeteria, and attend workshops in college classrooms. Often, students come to campus intimidated and leave campus feeling like they belong on a college campus. This mental shift assists students in overcoming the perceived barrier that college “isn’t for them.” The HYI summer kick-off program is hosted on eight university campuses across the country each year. HYI has established partnerships with many of the host institutions including Arizona State University, Fresno State University, Santa Clara University, Southern Methodist University, Virginia State University, Towson University, and University of New Mexico. University partners assist the program in a variety of ways, including free or discounted use of facilities, assistance from university staff, collaborations on proposals, program planning committee volunteers, near-peer mentor recruitment, guaranteed scholarships for alumni of the program, and year-round program initiatives.

Partnerships with universities also allow for on-campus follow-up programming coordinated by HCF staff and volunteers and the opportunity to invite parents and students back to campus. Additionally, partner institutions work with HYI to bring students into other programs that the institution or the student groups are running on campus. HYI builds partnerships that are sustainable and successful because they are mutually beneficial to HYI and the university.

In addition to the primary partner institutions, HYI runs a College, Career, and Community Resource Fair at each program site, bringing an average of 30 institutions to the event. College admissions counselors and financial aid officers from a variety of institutions teach workshops, such as how to write a strong essay, how to pay for college, and how to apply to college.

Evidence of Success

An in-depth study of the Silicon Valley site found that the portion of students who self-reported awareness of financial aid and other ‘college-going’ aspects typically doubled between the summer event pre- and post-tests. Further, the summer event greatly increased students’ self-reporting of intentions to attend college and belief that “college is for them.”

Additionally, the 2011 survey of program alumni – across all HYI sites nationally, found that 94 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, “As a direct result of my involvement with the Hispanic Youth Institute (or HYS), I encouraged my friends or family members to go to college.” While the response rate on the alumni survey is lower than desired (18 percent), survey findings seem to indicate a successful program. Regarding “highest educational goal,” 36 percent indicated a

master's degree, 26 percent a Ph.D., 13 percent a bachelor's degree, and 12 percent an M.D. Only 38 percent of respondents indicated having a parent or sibling who graduated from college.

Specific to the types of career aspirations, 20 percent of respondents plan to or are pursuing careers in STEM-related fields and 21 percent indicated plans for health-related careers.

Almost 90 percent of respondents indicated volunteering at least one hour in the prior six months.

Several positive outcomes are reflected in the self-reported outcomes on the survey (percentage agreeing or agreeing strongly is listed in parentheses):

- (94.5 percent) "I feel more confident in myself after attending HYS"
- (88.9 percent) "I feel more confident in my abilities to apply for scholarships as a result HYS."
- (81.3 percent) "HYS has helped me reach my college goals."

Sustainability

Given that HYI is a program of the Hispanic College Fund (HCF), the fundraising efforts are delegated to the organization's development team. A large percentage of the funds come from corporations, although the organization tries to diversify their funding streams. The HCF also receives federal funding, donations from private foundations and individual contributions. The HCF engages donors in their programs and activities as a way to increase their connection to the organization. Many corporations volunteer at different HCF program events such as the Hispanic Heroes, and participate in different planning committees. In terms of sustainability, and given the small staff at the HCF, the volunteer model has always been utilized since the organization started.

The fundraising efforts have changed over time primarily due to the growth in the program. When the program was only located in one region, the efforts were much more localized. As a national program, the fundraising efforts are focused to capture donor interest at the local, regional, and national level. HCF attempts to build local gifts into regional or national gifts. Additionally, as the program now serves many more students per year, they have found that the average gift amount has increased over time. The board meets twice a year to discuss fundraising strategies and approve budgets. However, the board is not involved in day-to-day decision making on fundraising strategies.

It was noted that the lack of an endowment creates a challenge to making strategic investments in the program. This results in program expansion being dependent on financial support received from the community. This presents another challenge because many communities heavily populated with Hispanics lack the funds necessary to bring the program to their region. Further, many potential funders have not been interested in investing in the program because it is not present in key Hispanic markets such as Chicago, New York, and Miami.

What We Do Best

According to HCF staff, the program “is most successful in empowering students by equipping them with tangible and intangible tools, which increase hope (defined as a cognitive process that necessitates individual agency and one’s ability to generate different strategies to reach a desired goal) and lead to resilience.” During the program, students build aspirations, expectations, develop a life vision, increase their practical knowledge and skills base, and develop a support network. Having developed these assets during the program, students leave with a great amount of hope and confidence that helps them overcome real and perceived barriers.

While students increase their understanding of the college application process, government grants and subsidized loans, the FAFSA, on-campus student support, work-study options, and other fields of “college knowledge,” the primary purpose of the program is to empower students to understand and believe that they can and will go to college. HCF staff noted that, “students graduate from the program with a greater understanding of their own potential to succeed in the face of adversity.”

Additionally, the students leave the program having established a support network consisting of Hispanic professionals and near-peer mentors that are available to help the student for the remainder of his/her high school career, as they transition into college, and as they ultimately move into a professional career. HCF staff shared this comment from one of the participants of the 2011 Virginia HYI Kickoff:

Living in Saginaw (MI) I don’t see many positive Hispanic influences, not even in my family. This area is all I’ve experienced in terms of my heritage and other Hispanics. It’s not an encouraging or inspiring place. I’m ashamed to say it, but I was beginning to believe some of those negative stereotypes...people say about Hispanics. HYI changed all that. It made me see that there are so many of us willing to make a difference for the betterment of not just the Hispanic community but the world.

The motto of the HYI Kickoff is: “If it is to be, it is up to me!” HCF staff indicate that this message is “constantly reinforced throughout the program and becomes a part of the empowered student’s attitude as he/she leaves the program.” Evidence of the impact of this message can be seen in this statement from a program alumni, “When I came to the Hispanic Youth Institute I had little hope of making it to college, but I’ve found the confidence and motivation. Now, I don’t just want to go to college, I know I’m going to college; it’s not a closed door and I can make it.”

HCF staff believe that the summer event is so successful because its programming and structure are very intentional and research based. The HYI targets “at-risk” students for this program – students with strong potential but significant risk factors, including low family income and parental educational attainment. Peer-reviewed research findings are the basis of the selection of students and

the structuring of activities and experiences to mitigate the unalterable risk factors and to enhance student resiliency.

Interestingly, these intentional aspects of the program are resulting in “an unintentional-yet-powerful outcome of the program,” which is a reshaping of students’ cultural identity. HCF staff noted that as the high school students interact with Hispanic professionals, college students, HCF staff, and motivational speakers they realize that “they are not alone in their pursuit of personal success and academic excellence.” This unintentional component serves to strengthen the overall success of the program. HCF staff noted:

Most students that come to the program associate with the lowest socioeconomic class in the Hispanic community. Many students may not be aware that there are Hispanics in a high socioeconomic class or have never met any. After the program they are aware that many affluent Hispanics were at some point members of the same low socioeconomic class. The fact that students can leave the program with a reshaped cultural identity in which they can identify and relate to both socioeconomic classes contributes greatly to the success of the program. This reshaped cultural identity acts as a catalyst to increasing hope and resiliency in the students.

Lessons Learned

One of the strengths of the Hispanic Youth Institute is the potential to have a positive impact on college success at a national scale. Because the program works simultaneously in different communities across the nation and the message delivered to students is consistent, the HYI model exhibits great potential for large-scale impact. In fact, Ms. Augustsson indicated that the HYI has attracted substantial attention in local communities and the demand for their program model has increased over the years. In terms of replicability, HYI has prepared manuals to set up their model in new locations. Still, programs are “grown organically,” as explained by Ms. Augustsson, referring to the support and interest of local advocates being crucial to establishing new HYI program sites. The application process for students is the same nationally and all surveys utilized by programs are also the same across program sites. The data piece is “non-negotiable” and parties interested in replicating the HYI must agree to engage in the proscribed data collection efforts.

With the national approach, however, there are also come challenges and concerns. The model of local outreach and national focus is both the HYI’s greatest strength and weakness. While focus on the local is important, collecting and evaluating data consistently across all sites can be problematic. Given the nature of the year-long program component of the HYI, one that varies by community, the workshops held in one area may look completely different from those offered at other areas. For example, the College 101 workshop in Silicon Valley, California, is different from the New Mexico workshop. Even though the summer kick-off is virtually the same in all regions, there is much varia-

tion among the year-round programs, which makes the impact of the program hard to assess uniformly at a national level.

As the program expands, the biggest challenge will be ensuring consistency and quality amongst the various regions. In order to address this issue, the Hispanic College Fund will need to make a considerable investment in operations and infrastructure so that program expansion can be supported adequately. HCF is confident that they “will not lack for prospective, experienced staff members” when they do expand. As a result of having served at the HYI Kickoff, many college students who serve as near-peer mentors have witnessed the power of the program in equipping students through this type of work. Many of them have expressed an interest in working for the HCF or similar organizations. Currently, many of the HCF’s employees were once volunteers and were drawn from this pool of individuals who are eager to create a positive change in the Hispanic community.

Among other challenges, the HYI is also exploring ways to improve the tracking of alumni participation more effectively – students are considered alums of the HYI once they complete the summer kick-off. Since participation at the year-long events is not required, attendance at these events varies. HYI is working on identifying effective tracking mechanisms as they currently do not have a centralized system for collecting and analyzing these data.

Despite the challenges, the HYI prides itself in helping Latino students see college as an attainable goal. Their focus on preparing students to overcome real and perceived barriers to college access and success is a holistic approach that addresses social and emotional factors that are often excluded from programs. The HYI approach helps students see college as a possibility and motivates them to pursue higher education before they begin discussing how to get through college.

Regarding one aspect the program would do differently if given the opportunity, Daniel Sarmiento, Director of the Hispanic Youth Institute, responded:

The thing that we would do differently would be to enact comprehensive tracking. We gather longitudinal metrics using surveys but we lack a formalized system to track individual student progress. Not only do we need to track students better, but we also need to track additional indicators in the community. For example, in California, instructors at schools (served by the HYI) have informally mentioned they believe that increases in the school’s Academic Performance Index score (API - CA Dept of Education) are directly related to the Hispanic Youth Institute’s programming. A comprehensive study needs to be conducted to track the program’s impact, not only with individual students participating in the program but also with the schools and communities they come from. Having acknowledged our need to improve tracking, it is important to point out that we have not done so due to a lack of funding for such an undertaking.

Table 9. Hispanic Youth Institute Students Served by Year and Outcome

	Apply to program	Are accepted into Summer Program	Enrolled in 9th grade	Enrolled in 10th grade	Enrolled in 11th grade	Enrolled in 12th grade
2004	N/A	63	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005	N/A	187	(13)	(74)	(97)	(3)
2006	N/A	299	(1)	(10)	(30)	(3)
2007	654	463				
2008	1174	742	(92)	(279)	(330)	(41)
2009	1736	914	(220)	(357)	(328)	(9)
2010	3203	1021	(427)	(474)	(116)	(4)
2011	3244	957	(455)	(416)	(82)	(4)

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of that cell's count that are "new" students who entered the program during that cell. HYI students do not continue from year to year, but may participate in multiple years. Therefore all student counts are treated as "new."

X — The Partners Program

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The Partners Program offers a model of data-driven program enhancement and expansion for small organizations. The organization originated as a community service program of The College Preparatory School, an independent high school, offering an intensive academic and enrichment summer opportunity for low-income public middle school students of color, with the independent high school students serving as tutors and mentors. Twenty years after its inception, it separated and became its own 501(c)(3) organization and in the past five years it has grown to include a variety of other program components, including: academic-year supports for the middle school students, expanded leadership development opportunities for high school students (both at the independent school and in the local public schools), new leadership development opportunities for college students, and high school transition and college transition support for the public school students. The intended goal is to build a continuum of supports from 6th grade through college graduation. Data from parent and student surveys have directed the program expansion and continuous program improvement. As the program components expand, data collection strategies are developed to ensure that the implementation and outcomes of new components are effectively evaluated.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Program began operation in 1986
- This is a Non-profit Program
- This program operates during the:
 - ☐ Academic Year
 - ☐ Summer
 - ☒ Both
- Services are provided during:
 - ☐ During regular school hours
 - ☒ After school hours
 - ☒ Weekends
- Services students in: Oakland, CA, and environs; Oakland Unified School District.
- Urbanicity: Urban area
- Duration of Program: More than one academic year
- Typical number of years students are in the program: 3
- Primary services are provided at: Elementary or secondary schools
- Grade level when students enter the program: 6
- Students served:
 - 2008-09 = 132
 - 2009-10 = 132
- **Parental Component:** Yes. Participation in student activities.
- **Program Funding Provided By:** Federal Government; Business/ Industry; Private Foundation; Individual; Fundraising.
- **Targeted Population:** Low income; Historically underrepresented minorities; First generation to attend college ; High school students; Middle school students.

Program Overview, History, & Mission

The Partners Program was founded in 1986 and incorporated in 2006. Until 2006, as a community service effort of a local independent high school, it was a summer program that served about 45 middle school students per summer. Starting in 2006, each incoming class size was doubled, and the program has worked with 93 middle school students and 30+ high school and college students the

last 2 summers. Full enrollment for middle school students is set at 96 students, 32 per grade level, so that no class size is larger than 16 students.

The organization's mission is to create relevant and responsive programs that bolster students' academic success and improve access to high quality college preparatory educational opportunities, while engaging students and supporting them in making a commitment to educational equity.

In its expanded form, The Partners Program is designed to provide a pipeline to college graduation, starting with programs for middle school students and continuing through college graduation. The final pieces of this pipeline are still being developed.

Both before and after this recent growth, the core program of The Partners Program has been a tuition-free, full-time summer academic and enrichment program for low-income Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) middle school students. While in the early years the goal for these students was high school completion, the current goal is helping them to progress toward 4-year college graduation and a life of self-sufficiency and giving back to one's community. More than 98 percent of program alumni have graduated on time from high school – almost double the local public school rate - and many have gone on to graduate from college and even graduate school, and are now leading successful lives and careers.

In the past 5 years, the summer middle school program enrollment has doubled, the leadership development programs for high school students have been significantly expanded, the leadership development programs for college students have been added, and the high school transition program for 8th and 9th graders and their families and the college transition program for high school juniors and seniors have been created and implemented. In fall 2011, the program launched its latest expansion: a year-round academic support program for middle school students taking place on-site at two OUSD middle schools serving primarily low-income students.

Beyond helping individual students and families, The Partners Program since its inception has been committed to supporting public education in Oakland; these new partnerships with two OUSD middle schools deepens this commitment.

The Partners Program is not intended to be a substitute for public education, nor does the program aim to remove students from public schools. Instead, The Partners Program, created in partnership with public school colleagues, augments public school services and helps improve public school students' academic performance and social skills. This commitment is exemplified by the partnerships with OUSD middle schools, the fact that nearly 100 percent of Partners middle school program participants are public school students, and the fact that more than 80 percent of Partners program participants continue their educations in public high schools.

Goals

The primary focus of The Partners Program is on four-year college graduation for program participants. This outcome is considered to be a primary gateway to a life of self-sufficiency and giving back to one's community. All program activities are aligned to this goal. Measureable outcomes related to this goal include a focus on the following questions:

- Are program participants succeeding in school both academically and socially?
- Are they graduating from middle and high school and from college on time and with good grades?
- Do they and their families understand the pathway to college graduation, starting in the middle school grades?
- Do they have the support that they need to navigate this path, everything from standardized testing practice and financial aid workshops to learning college entrance requirements and how to pack for freshman year in the dorms?

Admission & Selection

Admission decisions give priority to OUSD students, especially those who are low-income according to federal lunch program guidelines, who are first generation to college, who are immigrants to the US or the children of immigrants, who are from families and communities often underrepresented on college campuses, and/or from families for whom the path to college is especially difficult. Further, the program seeks to admit students who are highly motivated, have a positive attitude, are hard workers, and are focused on college graduation. Most students in the program are in the middle band of academic performance, meaning B- and C- earning students – those who are likely to fall through the cracks of college preparation activities or are not identified as “college material” at all.

Students apply and enter the program in 6th grade and officially begin program activities in the summer after the 6th grade. The application process is designed to keep barriers to participation low. Students complete a one-page application of basic personal information and must attend an open house orientation with a parent, guardian, or other caring adult (i.e., a teacher or mentor). Middle school partners (usually the 6th grade teaching teams) fill out a very brief student evaluation while lunch status (free, reduced, or neither) is verified by a school counselor or administrator. Grades and test scores are not viewed at all during the process; any student who is motivated is welcome, regardless of current academic performance.

Admitted students come primarily from three groups: about a third of students are siblings of current or former students, a third are from the first partner middle school, and a third are from the second partner middle school.

Program Staff

The program employs one half-time, year-round staff person as the program director. Two assistant directors support the program spring through summer and about a dozen teachers are hired full-time for seven weeks to operate the summer program. Additionally, about 35 high school and college students are recruited to support the summer program as mentors and tutors, and this number will increase with the addition of the academic-year program component starting in fall 2011. These students receive stipends and are typically alumni of the middle school program or students at The College Preparatory School.

Program Components

The Partners Program began as a summer program for middle school students and has grown to offer year-round supports, as well as programming beyond middle school. The plan is to be a 10-year program that supports students from 6th grade through college completion. Program components reflect the shifts over time from focusing on helping students complete high school, to helping them access college, to helping them complete college. Components of The Partners Program include: summer academy for middle school students, academic-year program on two public middle school campuses, high school transition program for 8th and 9th graders, college transition program for juniors and seniors in high school, and leadership development programs for high school and college students.

Summer Academy for Middle School Students

The summer program represents the core of The Partners Program. This was the initial offering from which other supports have grown. The Partners Summer Academy for Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) middle school students is a 5-week, full-day, tuition-free program for rising 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students (i.e., those who have just finished 6th, 7th, and 8th grades) of color who qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch programs. The Summer Academy helps students achieve summer learning gains instead of summer learning losses as they prepare academically and socially for high quality college preparatory high schools.

This component is structured such that there is a professional teacher in every classroom, supported by 4 high school or college teaching assistants and serving 16 middle school participants. The professional teachers develop the curriculum, introduce the lessons, and then supervise the 4 assistants as they lead small group (4 middle school students each) activities. The goal is to have constant engagement of the middle school participants all day every day of the 5-week summer program, which runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

All students take skill-building classes in math, literature and reading, debate, technology, and writing, plus creative classes in theater, digital art, visual arts, dance and performance. In addition, all students take a project-based class called “Pathways,” which is focused on the academic and social skills needed to succeed in a high quality college preparatory high school and later in college.

Partners Middle School Academic-Year Program

This component was recently launched in two partnering middle schools to provide academic-year support for Summer Academy and other middle school students on site at their OUSD middle schools. As with the Summer Academy, high school-aged mentors and tutors assist professional teachers in the delivery of these services. The program predicts recruiting the majority of Summer Academy students from these participating middle schools, with the Summer Academy and the Middle School Academic-Year Program complementing each other, thereby providing year-round (12-month) supports.

Partners High School Transition Program

This program was launched in fall 2009 as a Saturday workshop for 8th graders and their families. Starting in 2010, a daily component was added to the Summer Academy in the Pathways class with a follow-up workshop series in the fall. The Partners High School Transition Program helps 8th graders and their families to better understand the complex landscape of high school choice, to research their options, to construct a portfolio of schools to apply to, and to complete those applications. In addition, the program helps students and families to make a smooth and successful transition to a high-quality college preparatory high school – public, charter, or private. (Note: because OUSD is a choice district, students must apply to the public schools they wish to attend.)

Partners Leadership Development Programs

During the Partners Summer Academy and now also during the Middle School Academic-Year Program, high school and college students provide mentorship and tutoring to participating middle school students under the watchful guidance of the Assistant Director for Leadership Development Programs and participating faculty. This component, structured into five progressive tiers, provides high school and college students with opportunities to earn a stipend and/or community service hours, develop leadership skills, engage in educational equity work, and explore the worlds of teaching and non-profit program management.

Partners College Transition Program

The Partners College Transition Program, currently in its first year, consists of college, scholarship, and financial aid advising for alumni of the Partners Summer Academy who are juniors and seniors in high school. The program is structured as a five-day, full-time summer boot camp followed by eight Saturday morning workshops in the fall and spring.

A more robust program model in collaboration with the University of California at Berkeley's extension program is being explored in order to serve more students and put greater advising resources at their disposal, and the hope is to eventually hire a case manager for high school and college students to help them stay on track for on-time college graduation.

Data-Driven Practices

Data are collected annually, typically in association with the summer program. Because in the past the programming stopped at 9th grade, the high school and college graduation data were only loosely connected to program activities. As the program has expanded to support students through high school and (in the future) college, data collection is also expanding to ensure that each new grade level is effectively supported. Specifically, data are used in four ways to improve practices.

- First, data permit identification of students who are off-track, so that interventions may occur. For example, at an alumni visit day recently, program staff identified three high school freshmen who are already off-track for high school graduation. Program staff are now working with these students to help them enroll in smaller high schools where they will get more individualized attention and support.
- Second, program staff look at grade-level data to gauge the effectiveness of all program components. For example, the High School Transition Program is focused directly on increasing the percentage of rising 9th graders who enroll in high-quality college preparatory high schools. The baseline data (prior to program supports) was 20 percent. The first year data (with only minimal supports in the fall) was 30 percent. The second year data (with both summer and fall supports) rose to 50 percent. With the current class, who are receiving more focused supports in summer and fall plus a family education piece, the program hopes to improve this percentage to 70 percent.
- Third, annual family surveys provide information to guide program improvement and expansion, and also show the areas where families are pleased with programming. For example, both the Middle School Academic-Year Program and the College Transition Program were added in response to the summer 2010 family survey.
- Fourth, surveys help gauge student and family satisfaction with various program components, from the nutrition program to field trips to individual classes. With regard to the last of these three, survey data helps determine where to focus supports and instructional guidance for faculty.

With the shift in the focus of the program from high school completion, then college access, and now college completion, the need for reliable data has increased. With prior and current cohorts of students, however, there has never been an expectation of commitment to a 10-year program. This has resulted in some gaps in the data regarding alumni success in college. Therefore, some data efforts work to provide insight into the accuracy of the overall data program (i.e., seeking to find lost alumni, who are ultimately likely to have less-successful outcomes than those who respond to the surveys and calls). Moving forward, the program intends to clearly indicate to entering students in 6th grade that this is a long-term, college-completion program and to track student outcomes data through to college completion.

College & University Partnerships

The Partners Program currently has one relationship in place, an informal connection with a counseling and financial aid administrator at a local community college. This relationship stemmed from a prior work relationship between the director of The Partners Program and the administrator and serves to benefit Partners Program students who are not eligible to go to a four-year college; they can go directly to the administrator for assistance with financial and academic planning.

In addition, the director is exploring a formal relationship with The University of California at Berkeley's extension program to provide rising high school seniors with a one-week college application boot camp class, as well as college, scholarship, and financial aid application coaching provided by students in the graduate certificate program in college counseling. Discussions are already underway on this partnership and The Partners Program has secured start-up funding for 10 students. This new partnership will be piloted in August 2012.

Evidence of Success

Before the current director started in 2009, the previous director did a comprehensive alumni survey and phone banking effort that reached 40 percent of the middle school program alumni. This effort learned that:

- 98 percent of reporting alumni graduated high school on time (relative to a local rate in the 40 percent-range in the 1990s and currently in the 50 percent-range)
- 100 percent of those graduates had matriculated to college
- 95 percent of those had either graduated from 4-year college or were on track for that goal

Because the programming historically stopped when students entered 9th grade, The Partners Program does not take “credit” for these outcomes, but rather sees itself as part of the students’ and families’ success plans. Moving forward, as the program adds more supports in high school (now) and college (in the near future), the impact on the students’ college graduation trajectories will be more direct, and survey efforts will more effectively reach program participants fully through to college graduation. This is especially important knowing that the 60 percent of alumni who are lost or did not respond to the survey are much less likely than the respondents to have graduated from college. Through adding high school and college programming the program hopes to stay in touch with a greater percentage of alumni and to help them achieve college graduation.

Further, the increase in the percentage of middle school participants who transition to college-preparatory high schools has increased from 20 percent to 50 percent in the first two years of the High School Transition Program and is on track to achieve 70 percent with the next class.

Sustainability

According to John Fanning, Director of The Partners Program, the program's fund raising approach is to grow at a pace that can be supported both financially and programmatically. He noted that one of the board members says that it is "important for us to not exceed our 'caring capacity.'" The program also strives to keep costs very low through a frugal approach to expenditures and to offer funders a "strong value on their investment – programming that is high quality with few frills."

The program's annual budget has increased from approximately \$50,000 in the first few years of the early 2000s to over \$180,000 in fiscal year 2011, and they expect to cross the \$200,000 threshold in fiscal year 2012. This growth in funding is directly correlated with an increase in programs and program seats. The Summer Academy has doubled in size since 2006, and other program components have been added, as has been detailed in this report.

The program is growing rapidly, and the board has supported this growth through increased fund-raising efforts. The board chair is an excellent fundraising leader, and all board members participate readily by helping reach out to their friends and business associates, as well as by making contributions themselves. That said, there is no set minimum contribution required of board members. The overall funding strategy is to fill the "fundraising pyramid" with a few large contributions at the top (\$25,000 or more), then a larger number of mid-sized contributions (mostly \$3,000 - \$10,000) in the middle, and then the largest number of gifts at a smaller level (usually \$1,000 or below) at the base. The majority of individual gifts come in response to an annual appeal. The board chair also solicits gifts toward an endowment, which currently provides approximately 15 percent of the annual budget.

As the funding sources have expanded to support the program growth, the funding mix has changed slightly. The great majority of the early funding (i.e., early 1990s) was from local foundations. By the early 2000s, this had shifted mostly to individuals and small family foundations. Today, the program benefits from a mix of small foundations, corporations, individuals and family foundations, and a bit of government support (for lunch and snack reimbursement, comprising 5% of the total organization budget). In addition, throughout the program's history, very generous in-kind support from The College Preparatory School has provided program and office space, use of office technology (phone, copier, fax, laptops and computer labs, etc.), and support for professional development, accounting and finance, an annual audit, and more.

Another change in funding relates to some of the prior foundations that supported the program, but for which the program no longer fits the requirements. Some have changed focus, while others now require a level of program and data sophistication that is beyond the capacity of a small organization like The Partners Program. Director Fanning noted, however, that they "have been able to successfully supplant this funding with investments from smaller (often family) foundations and individuals

who are attracted by our small size and our growth trajectory, knowing that their investments have more significant impact here than they might in a larger organization.”

One particular challenge Director Fanning noted is that many funders like to “support something new, which leaves our strong core program needing support. Some good work is neither new nor terribly innovative, yet is strong and effective - and for these efforts it is hard to attract investment.”

Another challenge is to find the funds to hire a second half-time, year-round staff member. Director Fanning added:

The end goal for Partners students is that they graduate from four-year college ready for a life of financial self-sufficiency and giving back to their communities. As a small organization, our primary challenge moving forward is how to support these students throughout high school and college with meaningful programs and interventions that help them to stay on track, given our small budget size and the fact that we don't expect to grow much bigger than we currently are. Our plan at present is to raise enough funds to support an alumni case manager who will keep in touch with students after they matriculate to 9th grade, connect them with resources at their high schools and colleges and at other nonprofit organizations, and have the capacity (time, resources) to intervene effectively with the students who are struggling most.

What We Do Best

John Fanning, Director of The Partners Program, indicated that their “greatest value added is helping middle school students prepare for, identify, research, apply to, and enroll in high quality college preparatory high schools.” He noted that approximately 80 percent of Partners students attend public high schools, most of them in Oakland, so Partners’ staff work closely with students and families to help them understand the local district’s Options process (Oakland’s open enrollment process) and also how to identify top high schools using graduation rates, college admission requirement completion rates, and standardized test scores. Over the last 3 years, the percentage of Partners middle school students who matriculate to high quality college preparatory high schools has increased significantly, from 20 percent to 50 percent, with a target of 70 percent for the next 9th grade class. Director Fanning added, “being a small program that can’t support students intensively through their high school years, we know that guiding them toward strong high schools is a very important, effective, and impactful strategy for us, and we’re proud of the progress that we’ve made.”

The biggest challenge Director Fanning identified to this particular success is the cultural draw of the large “name brand” public high schools, “the ones that everyone has heard of and where many of our students’ friends will go and where their families have gone.” Unfortunately, for the three large public high schools that Partners’ students historically have attended most often, the percentage of freshmen that graduate four years later with college admission requirements completed is less than

40 percent. It is a challenge to help students and families make a choice for a high quality school over the school with which they are most familiar and comfortable.

Another “best practice” cited by Director Fanning is the central role that high school and college students play in teaching and mentoring the middle school students, and in running specific program components. With a 4:1 student-to-mentor ratio, no middle school student has the opportunity to disengage in academic and other activities; there is no hiding in the back of the classroom or activity room. Furthermore, for the mentors and tutors, five tiers of leadership development training ensures that they are engaged and learning while also supporting the middle school students. This is a clear win-win, and these older-peer-to-younger-peer relationships are the “brilliant gem” of the program.

In addition, a factor cited by Director Fanning in Partners’ success is the program’s alignment of efforts with student outcome data. For example, Director Fanning noted that the matriculation rates to high quality college prep high schools has increased steadily because programmatically they have aligned efforts to achieve this outcome. Over time, they have learned that to be effective, they need to use multiple modes of program delivery — daily classes in the summer program, family meetings, reminders at summer graduation, letters home, Saturday workshops in the fall, compiling high school data into easy-to-understand one-page grids, follow-up calls, emails, Facebook messages, connecting families with high school enrollment coordinators, etc. Director Fanning commented that, “there is no one-step-and-its-done approach here. Each year we add a new piece or strategy in order to try to improve the outcomes. This is a ‘continuous improvement’ program loop — make a step forward, evaluate the process, and see how to make it even stronger.”

Lessons Learned

Director Fanning offered four tips regarding lessons he has learned over the years.

- First, even when programs are small or growing, data collection is key. Surveys are a good example. Ask parents what is working and what else they need. Ask the students. Find out how satisfied everyone is. Pay attention to where students go after they leave your program. Learn what success patterns look like. Director Fanning warned that it can be easy, especially for small organizations, to focus only on program delivery and not on data. He indicated that it is crucial keep data and program delivery connected. Don’t wait until you’re “big enough to have a data person.”
- Second, work toward professionalization. Having clearly defined processes and procedures and a professional approach to program development and delivery will facilitate program growth and performance. Further, having an exemplary and engaged Board of Directors can help programs move forward in ways that are sustainable both financially and programmatically.

- Third, when an organization is small, a lot depends on collaboration and partnerships. Many programs are too small to effectively impact students on their own, but knowing everybody in this area who is doing this work and having them know you, enables an organization to achieve more on behalf of the students and families. For The Partners Program, this means being able to help students find resources outside of Partners, matching students with the services they need that Partners doesn't yet provide, and even starting new collaborative programs from scratch, as in the collaborative partnership with the University of California at Berkeley's extension program.

The final tip is an extension of the point about collaboration, but specific to public/private partnerships in education. For external programs that do not work closely with the public schools in which their students are based, Director Fanning commented that, "it's hard to serve kids well if you don't know what is going on with them daily in school." For this reason, The Partners Program has formal relationships with the schools in which their middle-schoolers are based. They "want all teaching teams to know us and we want to know them." The Partners Program is building formal processes with their two partner middle schools to talk about students and their struggles and to share data. Director Fanning stressed the importance of "getting along" with districts that do not have funding to assist with data collection, adding that a "critical mass of programs and kids" and finding financial support for data collection can help persuade the district to commit to collaborative data efforts.

As for one opportunity to do something differently, Director Fanning noted that he wished he knew "where all of our alumni are in order to better understand their (and our) outcomes and how we can better support our students as they progress through high school and college – especially those who are struggling or have dropped out." For this reason, the program is actively attempting to remain in contact with all current students to maximize the likelihood that alumni will respond to the surveys and update their information long after they have completed the program. Also, by adding program components for alumni while they are in high school and eventually college, the program will be in a better position to know how students are doing and to assist them in their journeys.

Table 10. The Partners Program: Students Served by Year and Outcome

Summer of entry	Accepted in 6th Grade	Continued to 7th Grade	Continued to 8th Grade	Continued to 9th Grade
2005	18			
2006	32	15 (1)		
2007	29	31 (1)	16 (2)	
2008	23	29 (3)	26 (3)	
2009	31	32 (11)	19	
2010	30	32 (3)	31 (5)	
2011	32	32 (4)	29 (6)	

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the number of that cell's count that are "new" student headcounts who entered the program during that cell



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