# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

# uAspire ensures that all young people have the financial information and resources to find an affordable path to and through college.

A college degree has never been more necessary—or expensive.

Only 12% of students from low-income families will graduate college.

We work to remove the financial barriers to higher education through student advising, counselor training, and policy and systems change.

### To our steadfast supporters and new friends,

Resilience, power, strength ... these words come to mind when I listen to our students on how they are navigating the impacts of COVID-19. Overnight, they became online learners, caretakers, and breadwinners—all against a backdrop of intensified racial violence. Now they are questioning how to hold on to the futures they have been working so hard to achieve.

2020 was uAspire's 35th year supporting students to find their path to an affordable college degree. In so many ways, our decades of experience prepared us for this fight—our ability to leverage technology and partnerships, our expertise with financial aid and higher ed systems, and our incredible community of supporters.

The pandemic has irrevocably threatened the pursuit and completion of an affordable college education. Our mission and commitment to thousands of young people has never been more critical to the future of our nation. As uAspire's new CEO, I am deeply honored to lead our work rebuilding higher education systems informed by student voices with an absolute commitment to equity.

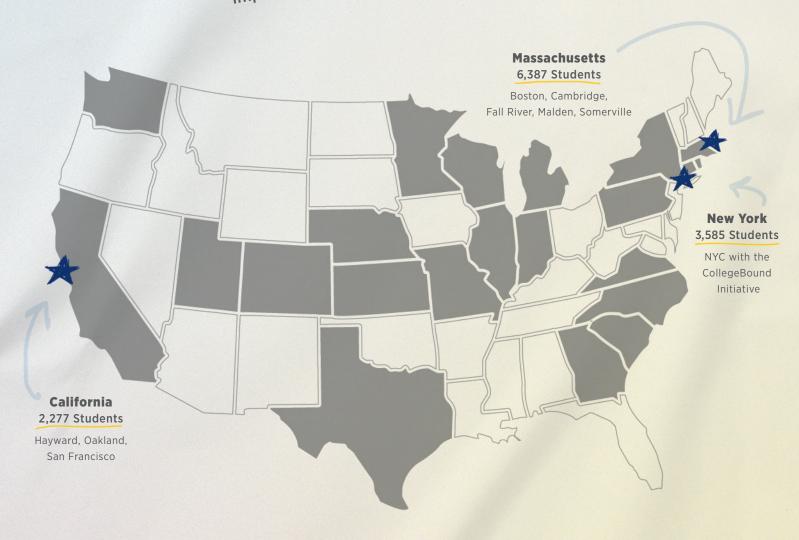
The child of immigrant parents and the first in my family to graduate college, my life trajectory was completely changed by my degree. It enables me to be here now, working with all of you to ensure that every young person has the same opportunity, regardless of their socio-economic status or the color of their skin.

Creating clear paths to equitable, affordable college degrees is by no means simple, but as we look to the year ahead, the opportunities for supporting student success are unlimited. Going back to "normal" is not an option. We must work together to imagine and build a brighter future for all students. I hope you will join us.





impacted over 910,000 students nationwide.



### Advising 12,249 Students

California, Massachusetts, New York

### Training 519,480 Students

California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin

### Policy 383,459 Students

Federal and state policy in California and Massachusetts





### **OUR STUDENTS**

**79%** Low-income backgrounds

83% First-generation college students

92% Identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or Person of Color

When the coronavirus forced colleges and high schools to shut down, our high school students were in a critical window when college decisions were being made and support was needed most. Meanwhile, college students facing severe financial challenges caused by the pandemic had to keep their grades up from home, many without a reliable internet connection or the computers needed to participate in distance learning.

### Nearly overnight, all of our student advising shifted to text-messaging,

a remote engagement model that is core to our practice and impact. With unwavering determination, our advisors met students on their phones—no Wi-Fi, login, or app necessary—to navigate increasingly chaotic financial aid systems and access resources to meet their basic needs.

Since May, students have endured violent reminders of the devastating role of systemic racism in our society. As students experienced the economic, mental, and physical effects of dual crises, advisors made sure they felt heard and cared for and connected them to mental health resources, delivering the support students needed most—100% virtually.

# Afford program

### **GRADES 11 - 12**

Identify affordable college options

Complete financial aid applications

FAFSA, CSS Profile, CA and NY Dream Act

Review Student Aid Report

Complete verification

Review, compare financial aid offers

Appeal financial aid due to income/ circumstance changes



### SUMMER AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Finalize enrollment decision

Manage loans

Access on-campus resources

Pay first-semester tuition bill

Estimate indirect expenses



### Victoria

### AFFORD ADVISOR, BAY AREA

When students moved to virtual learning they were worried they'd get distracted being at home with their whole family. Some students were doing their Zoom classes on their phones even if they had computers because an internet connection wasn't available or stable. They were struggling to keep up with their assignments and many were still working or looking for work.

On top of all that, students were trying to get through verification, appeal their financial aid package because their situation changed due to COVID, and decide which college they can afford to attend in the fall—without knowing if it was going to be virtual or on campus.

We checked in with students to ask, "How are you and your family doing? How's school going?"

To show that we're here for them and everything isn't just about financial aid. It was important to meet students where they were at and trying to see, "Hey, is your mental health okay? How are you adjusting to everything that's happening?"



# Succeed Program

### COLLEGE YEARS 1 - 3

Cover tuition and fees each term

Renew FAFSA

Complete verification

Apply for economic relief

CARES Act funds, emergency aid,
unemployment benefits

Confirm Satisfactory Academic Progress

Know current and overall debt amounts

### **EMERGENCY AID**

"I have bills I need to pay and was told I am not able to go to work until this dies down. I had to sell my laptop to pay my car insurance."

- uAspire College Student

In New York, advisors were able to offer \$10,000 in emergency aid, in increments of \$100 to \$250, to students suddenly facing unexpected expenses and financial hardship. In the coming year, we'll explore ways to implement a broader emergency assistance program, as it can play a vital role in ensuring that students can succeed in higher education and fill the gaps for students who need to access food, stable housing, broadband and devices, child care, medical expenses, and transportation.



## Redjam

### SUCCEED ADVISOR, BAY AREA

When campuses closed in the spring, everyone was struggling to get clarity from the colleges about what was going on because things were changing so quickly. From the schools' communication to students, it wasn't clear. Without on-campus housing or resources, students became concerned about basic needs and they couldn't wait for information from the schools.

### We had to be proactive, compiling information about the CARES Act and emergency funding, and disseminating

it to students ASAP. Eligibility and applications were different across the board—even for schools within the same system. We also had to think of how to support students who may not be eligible for federal funds but could access emergency grants from their school. Students needed that money immediately, so it was on us to figure out what's the process and when it is going to happen.

### Melina

### SUCCEED ADVISOR, NEW YORK

Accessing financial aid offices, the Bursar's office, any office really, was already difficult, and COVID made it even more so. HESC [NY State Higher Education Services Corporation], the agency that manages state aid, had to repurpose employees to focus on unemployment claims. Students had a really tough time getting a response to questions. Institutions were chaotic so we couldn't rely on them for guidance. It was a very, very confusing time for students, for everyone really.

I just encouraged students to continue to be proactive. One particular student had been contacting HESC for months about TAP [NY State Tuition Assistance Program], and it finally came through. It's a win. The student is like, "I can be relieved now, my bill will be covered." They could have very easily just given up, but they didn't. And I hope that my encouragement helped.



### COLLEGE **ENROLLMENT**

66% uAspire Students

National average for students from low-income

### **SECOND YEAR PERSISTENCE**

81% uAspire Students

National average for all students"

### **GRADUATION IN SIX YEARS**

510/ uAspire 27 % National average for students from low-income high schools.

uAspire students in the high school Class of 2013 graduated college at **nearly 2X the national average** for their peers. These results are especially promising as this cohort was only advised in the 12th grade. Students are now supported by uAspire up to three years into college.



### In 2019-20, uAspire administered \$596,440 in scholarships.

As scholarship administrators, we manage the application process, applicant review, selection of qualified candidates, and distribution of funds to colleges. We hope to grow support for expanded scholarship work in Massachusetts, as well as California and New York.

### ESTABLISHED 1985

uAspire Last Dollar Scholarship

\$50,000 AWARDED TO 47 STUDENTS

Three-year renewable scholarships from \$500 to \$1,000 to Boston Public High School students

### PARTNERS SINCE 2014

Greater Boston Real Estate Board Foundation Scholarship (GBREB)

\$284,950 AWARDED TO 74 STUDENTS

Two-year renewable scholarships from \$500 to \$5,000 to Greater Boston students

#### PARTNERS SINCE 2012

Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) Scholarship

**\$261,490** AWARDED TO **86** STUDENTS

Financial aid guidance and up to \$20,000 over four years to MGH Youth Scholars

PARTNERS SINCE 2017

City of Boston Scholarship

**REVIEWED 334 STUDENT APPLICANTS** 

Financial need analysis of student applicants for the City of Boston Scholarship program

"In a tumultuous year like this,

uAspire's assistance in determining student financial

uAspire's assistance in determining student financial

need has been invaluable. Four years ago, the City of Boston

need has been invaluable. Four years ago, the City of Boston

began redesigning its scholarship program with a focus on equity.

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uAspire has been an important partner in helping us refine

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and strengthen our process."

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### GBREB SCHOLAR

The GBREB scholarship really helped to offset the cost, and that it was renewable made me feel more comfortable attending NYU. It alleviated that financial burden that I faced trying to figure out how to pay for college. Now I mentor students on the college application process and I'm glad to take my experience as a first-gen college student and apply it to other students who need help today. That's been my highlight of college.

### Tammah

### UASPIRE LAST DOLLAR SCHOLAR

My uAspire advisor was very hands-on, a big help when I was filling out financial aid applications and telling me what resources were available to me. My family was struggling to figure out how to send their first child off to college, so having someone there to tell my mom and my dad, "Hey, I know things are hard. You have multiple kids to worry about. Here are the steps and here are the things that you can do to help her get through."

Even as I was transferring to different schools, uAspire was still there reaching out with scholarship opportunities and asking, "Hey, do you need financial help?" I applied for the Last Dollar Scholarship and was able to use it for books as well as school and lab fees.

### I'm most proud of getting my bachelor's degree.

I initially wanted to start work after getting my associates degree, but it was actually the youth at my youth center who encouraged me to further my education and go for my bachelor's degree. And I was just like, "All right, let's go for it."





### **OUR PARTNERS**

95% Would recommend uAspire's training to a colleague95% Found content relevant to their work with students94% Plan to use the tools & materials from the training

Training school counselors and college access providers to support students through the complex financial aid process is critical to our mission. By sharing uAspire's expertise, we empowered these essential professionals with the knowledge and skills to help more than half a million students access higher education.

Achieving this impact was made possible by our 27 dedicated, student-centered partners. Despite the cancelation of in-person workshops, we continued to deliver our training via live webinars. Tailoring our courses to the experience level and content needs of partners' staff meant they could immediately implement our best practices and tools with students during the pandemic.



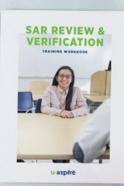
Achieve Atlanta Beyond 12 The Bronx Institute at Lehman College cafécollege Houston CALSOAP Los Angeles College Advising Corps CollegePoint College Possible College Track

The Commit Partnership **EMERGE** Gear Up 4 LA **Gwinnett County Public Schools** Harmony Public Schools

KIPP Colorado Michigan College Access Network Michigan College Advising Corps Michigan Works! Association

Richland School District Two The RISE Network Rivet School Student Leadership Network Success Academy Charter Schools Suffield Academy Texas College Access Network University of Washington GEAR UP YES Prep Public Schools









"We've participated in four different webinars and all of them have been of the highest quality. The supplemental materials are exemplary. They are the highest rated professional development in our organization and as such, we have built a culture around things like reviewing SARs and having award letter meetings with families." UASPIRE TRAINING PARTNER

### SPOTLIGHT

## Corporate Partnership

### **Travelers' Girls Leadership Summits**

At the beginning of 2020, uAspire partnered with Travelers, Girls Inc. and YWCA to host four Girls Leadership Summits in Atlanta, Denver, Hartford, and Minneapolis.

"We are so excited to see our Girls Inc. participants take on the challenge of applying to college with the skills and knowledge they gained from uAspire," said YWCA Girls Inc. Eureka! Coordinator Leah Eby.

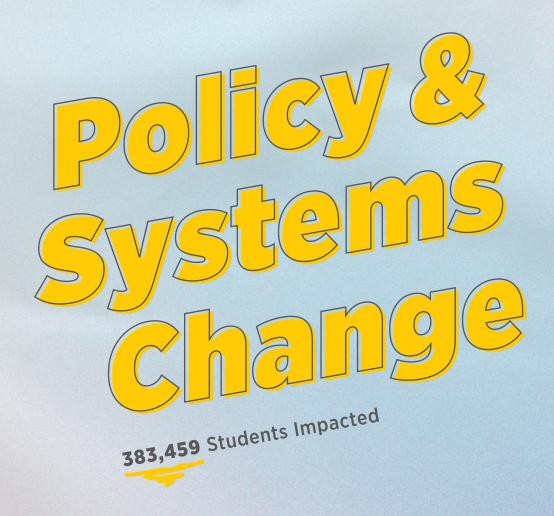
uAspire hosted college affordability workshops for over 300 middle and high school girls and their families. We also provided financial aid training to program staff.

"Through this partnership, girls across the country were able to access tools and resources to help guide them in making sound educational and financial decisions," said Marlene Ibsen, President and CEO of the Travelers Foundation and Vice President of Community Relations at Travelers. "We're pleased to be part of this program and hope the workshops help these young women navigate their way toward a successful future."









uAspire provided higher ed institutions and government agencies with customized recommendations to simplify financial aid systems, **make communication to students more transparent**, and increase equity in policies to better support students from low-income communities and communities of color. Examples of this fieldwork in 2019-20 include:

### Educate Texas, Texas College Access Network

Trained and worked with nine higher education institutions to redesign their financial aid offers and communication to be more transparent and student-centered.

### Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Approved recommendation from a uAspire-led coalition letter to extend the priority deadline for state financial aid (MASSGrant) from May 1st to July 1st, giving 24,669 students access to increased grant dollars.

### Higher Education Student Assistance Authority and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, New Jersey

Provided technical assistance to support the adoption of a new state mandate to offer a state-based financial aid shopping sheet.

# Student Advocacy Fellowship

### **SPRING 2020 FELLOWS**



Annabel - University of California Berkeley

Ben - Harvard University

Debbie - Shippensburg University

Junie - University of Massachusetts Boston

Raymond - Gettysburg College

Roshelle - California State University Sacramento

Ruby - University of California Santa Cruz

Vicktoria - Dickinson College

As the primary consumers of higher education, students' expertise should drive policy change. With this objective, we launched a paid student advocacy fellowship in January. Eight college students completed over 60 hours of training to advocate for change by sharing personal testimony and student-centered solutions with policymakers.

In June **fellows met virtually with 43 state and federal lawmakers,** including the offices of Speaker
Pelosi, House Minority Leader McCarthy, Senators Casey,
Feinstein, Harris, Markey, and Warren, and the House
Committee on Education and Labor. Fellows shared their
experiences affording non-tuition costs like textbooks,
transportation, off-campus housing, and food, and made
policy recommendations to reduce financial hardship and
improve cost communication.



## Raymond

### **UASPIRE STUDENT ADVOCACY FELLOW**

EXCERPT FROM ADVOCACY PITCH TO NINE PENNSYLVANIA CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

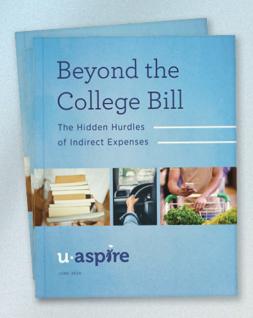
Affording books was one of the most stressful parts of college. Even with the funds I received from my college access program and earnings from my part-time job, it was still not enough.

When I first received my financial aid offer, my family and I were ecstatic. I got a "full ride" and we thought all costs would be taken care of. This turned to anxiety when we learned I still had to purchase course materials, which cost \$481 for my first semester.

Course materials are essential to class participation and learning, and thus should be covered by financial aid. At the very least, professors should be able to share them with students at no additional cost. I'm asking that course materials be open access so that all students, regardless of their ability to pay, can succeed in college.

### RESEARCH REPORT

### Hidden Costs



Students are often in the dark about the non-tuition costs that make up more than half the cost of college. The lack of clear, complete information about indirect expenses threatens students' ability to meet their basic needs and complete their degree. Our research report, Beyond the College Bill, examines how colleges calculate and communicate indirect expenses, how students struggle to understand and afford them, and ways to ease the financial burden on students. The study draws on data analysis from over 800 colleges and the lived experiences of over 150 students.

### **COMMUNICATION & CALCULATION**

39%

of college websites had no indirect expense information 58

different terms for "indirect expenses" on websites that mention them \$8,000

differences in indirect expense estimates from colleges only miles apart

### STUDENT IMPACT

88%

experience significant stress affording indirect expenses 53%

changed food shopping/eating
habits when faced with an
unexpected expense

42%

afford indirect expenses to complete their degree

### CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

# Report Findings

uAspire shared the report's findings with **180 higher education and policy leaders** at a congressional briefing sponsored by The Office of Congresswoman
Ayanna Pressley (MA-07). uAspire Student Advocacy Fellows explained how
costs beyond the college bill impact them and recommended solutions.



"When indirect expenses are accurately calculated, we will be able to properly plan for these costs and are more likely to receive enough aid to afford them."

DEBBIE MATESUN, SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY

"Allowing students to use their SNAP benefits to purchase food on campus is a great idea, since a lot of students don't even know that they qualify for SNAP benefits."



JUNIE ARCENE, UMASS BOSTON



"Lowering the cost of on-campus housing at UCSC can help lower the cost of housing in the surrounding area, making rent more affordable for both students and community members."

RUBY PORTILLO, UC SANTA CRUZ

### COVID-19

# Share & Inform

In 2020's rapidly changing environment everyone supporting students faced a myriad of questions that no one had enough guidance or data to answer. But one thing was overwhelmingly clear: students were struggling and needed support. We committed to accurately sharing what we learned widely and without delay.

- 1,435 unique users of uAspire.org's COVID-19 Support Resources
- **593 attendees** at our free webinars, "Summer Transition" and "How to Support and Engage Students Over Text"
- Paneled on virtual presentations about the financial aid process and systems with partners including DC Public Schools, KIPP, New York City Department of Education, and Urban Assembly
- Collaborated with SwiftStudent to create online templates for financial aid appeals, which students used to request additional financial aid due to COVID-19 impacts

### **COVID-19 RELIEF**

uAspire's policy team shared actionable recommendations with dozens of bipartisan and bicameral Congressional offices to prioritize students' needs in their COVID-19 response. Guidance called for policies to strengthen financial security, widen access to basic needs, simplify financial aid processes, and reduce the broadband gap.

# OUI BOARG

#### Scott Aldsworth

President, Bowdoin Group

### Mark Alper

Professor Emeritus of Molecular and Cell Biology, University of California, Berkeley and Retired Deputy Director, Materials Sciences Division, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

### Sydney Atkins

Head of Private Wealth Management, Ellevest

### Michael Boyle

Managing Director, Bain Capital Credit

### May Bumar

Senior Analyst, Project Management, Liberty Mutual

#### Jonathan Cox

Executive Director, JP Morgan Chase & Co.

### Nadine Duplessy Kearns

Director of DC Partnerships & Strategy, Meyer Foundation

### Luis M. Echeverri

Sr. Director, Insurance North America, Enel

### **Bob Giannino**

Chief Executive Officer, uAspire (2005-2020)

#### Valduvino Goncalves

Director of Guidance, New Mission Collegiate Academy

### David Hadden, Jr.

Retired

#### Simone Hill

Equity & Belonging Lead, Omidyar Network

#### John Hudson

Managing Director, COO of Pension Practice, Cambridge Associates

#### Joie Jager Hyman

Founder, College Prep 360

#### Kerry Ann James

Director of International Distribution, Boston Partners Global Investors

### E.J. Landry

Retired Partner, Deloitte LLP

#### John Lehner

Executive Vice President, State Street Corporation

### William Mandell

Attorney, Pierce & Mandell, P.C.

### Bill McClements (Chair)

Chief Financial and Operating Officer, Partner Therapeutics

### Mary Jo Meisner

President, MJM Advisory Services

### Ho Nam

Managing Director, Altos Ventures

### Pete November

Chief Operating Officer, The Possible Project

### Bob O'Sullivan

Relationship Manager, US Bank

#### Amit A. Patel

Managing Director, Owl Ventures

#### Sharam Pavri

Vice President of Investments and Financial Advisor, JP Morgan Securities

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Chief Executive Officer, Edwin Gould Foundation

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Founding Partner, Trucks Venture Capital

### Robert Shireman

Director of Higher Education Excellence and Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation

### Charles E. Shirley, CPA, MST

Partner, PwC

#### Joel Steinhaus

#### Jennifer Stredler

Vice President, Workforce Development, Salesforce

### Laurie Thomsen

Director, The Travelers Companies, MFS Mutual Funds, and Dycom Industries



### \$1,000,000+

Jonathan and Jeannie Lavine\*

\$500,000 - \$999,999

Anonymous\*
Biogen Foundation\*

\$250,000 - \$499,999

ACCESS Education Fund at the Boston Foundation Barr Foundation\* Crankstart Foundation

\$100,000 - \$249,999

AT&T Foundation
The Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation,
Bank of America, N.A., Trustee\*
Deloitte LLP
ECMC Foundation\*

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Anonymous Altman Foundation The Jeffrey H. and Shari L. Aronson Family Foundation

\$25,000 - \$49,999

Anonymous (2)\*
Bain Capital Children's Charity Ltd.
The Bank of America Charitable
Foundation, Inc.
Patti Bellinger

State Street Foundation, Inc.\*

Lumina Foundation for Education\* Salesforce

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Heckscher Foundation for Children

Samuel Freeman Charitable Trust Goodwin Procter LLP Liberty Mutual Foundation\* Manton Foundation

The Boston Foundation Charles Hayden Foundation Edwin Gould Foundation Koret Foundation\*

California Community Foundation The Emery Family Foundation Loomis, Sayles & Company\* The Lovett-Woodsum Foundation The Kresge Foundation\*
Stupski Foundation\*

Rowland Foundation Herbert and Nell Singer Foundation Slalom Consulting Jen and Rob Waldron\*

New York Community Trust State Street Corporation Warriors Community Foundation Zug Family Fund\*

Ho Nam and Mary-Ragan Macgill\* Quest Foundation Travelers U.S. Bank Foundation

### \$10,000 - \$24,999

Anonymous

Scott and Pamela Aldsworth

Cognizant

Jonathan Cox

Dodge & Cox

Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation

FV

FAO Schwarz Family Foundation

The Brooks and Joan Fortune Family Foundation

William G. Gilmore Foundation

Greater Fall River Development Corporation\*

Frances Hellman and Warren Breslau

Simone Hill

John Hudson\*

Kerry Ann James\*

Suzy and John Lehner\*

Daniel and Marjorie Levin

Bill and Susan McClements\*

Michelson 20MM Foundation

Adam Pisoni

William E. Schrafft and Bertha E. Schrafft Charitable Trust

The Clinton H. and Wilma T. Shattuck

Charitable Trust

Charles and Deana Shirley\*

Stephanie and Brian Spector\*

Laurie and Peter Thomsen

ThreadED\*

WilmerHale

Howard and Candice Wolk\*

### \$5,000 - \$9,999

Anonymous

BankFive\*

**Boston Partners** 

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JP Morgan Chase & Co. Foundation

Matthew La Rocque and Laura Blumenthal E.J. and Chris Landry

Longfield Family Foundation\*

Robin MacIlroy and William Spears\*

Eddie & Alyce Mandell Memorial Scholarship Fund\*

Suzanne and Steve

Mankoff Charitable Fund

William McLaughlin

James and Maureen Mellowes

Laura Meyerson and Michael Kliebhan\*

Nellie Mae Education Foundation

The Omidyar Group

Amit Patel and Madhu Punjabi

PWC

Red Sox Foundation

Seldin/Haring-Smith Foundation

Beth Terrana

University of Massachusetts

Foundation, Inc.

### \$2,500 - \$4,999

Alastair and Leslie Adam

The Paul and Edith Babson Foundation

BayCoast Bank

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Bob Giannino and Cameron Rush\*

Howell Family Charitable Foundation

Joie Jager-Hyman

Patricia Mahoney

William and Janette Mandell and Family\*

People's United Community Foundation

Pam and Stuart Mathews

Murtha Cullina LLP

Jane and Gordon Nelson Cynthia Rivera Weissblum

Rohda Family Charitable Foundation

Joel Steinhaus

### \$1,000 - \$2,499

Anonymous

Allison Blitzer

Bunker Hill Community College

Andrea Carlin

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Daryn and Lindsey Decesare\*

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"Andre" Kearns III

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Michael and Deb Sabin

The San Francisco Foundation

Derek Sanger and Samantha Clark

Mandy Savitz-Romer and Toby Romer

Kate and Jeff Schox

Thomas and Beth Sorbo

Jennnifer Stredler

Mark and Jeri Tarini

Matthew and Peter Vaughan-Vail

### 2020 & 2019

# Financials

Contributions	\$10,950,535	\$8,006,547
Program Revenue	\$486,660	\$891,515
Other Revenue & In-Kind	\$306,753	\$546,191
Total Revenues	\$11,743,948	\$9,504,253
Program Services	\$5,483,283	\$5,660,693
General Administrative	\$902,241	\$867,784
Fundraising	\$2,155,240	\$2,212,973
Total Expenses	\$8,540,764	\$8,741,450
Change in Net Assets	\$3,203,184	\$762,303
Net Assets at End of Year	\$5,211,008	\$2,008,063

From all of us at uAspire, thank you for your support.



