

College Success Foundation

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

College Success Foundation provides an integrated system of support, from 6th grade onward, and scholarships to help students from low-income backgrounds in Washington state and Washington D.C. finish high school and graduate from college. Maria Rebecchi is responsible for serving approximately 1,500 students and families, as well as training 70 internal advisors, each year.



Maria Rebecchi

Director of Scholarships and
Financial Aid Education

Even for a seasoned veteran like Maria who has worked in financial aid for 30 years, the complex, ever-changing financial aid process can be daunting. After Maria made the switch from working in financial aid at a college to serving as College Success Foundation's director of scholarships and financial aid education, she sought out professional development that would help her design the most effective financial aid supports for families in the foundation's programs. Specifically, Maria wanted to learn how to simplify the financial aid process to make it accessible to students and families, and to deepen her understanding of how to handle complicated aspects of the process.

Simplifying the Process

“I wanted to design a training program that focused on respect—translating what felt like punitive, bureaucratic language into information families could understand,” says Maria. The uAspire training confirmed her instincts about the tone for her training program.

“The trainer delivered information in a manner that was clear, concise, and respectful—exactly the approach I wanted to create.”

“She also helped me to see that I was covering too much detail, likely overwhelming families, and outlined a streamlined financial aid process that we have now integrated into the College Success Foundation’s curriculum,” says Maria.

“A lot of organizations do financial aid training, but they don’t deliver information in a way that a first-gen student will understand, and they don’t account for specific circumstances that families face.”

Handling Special Circumstances

While simplifying the process for families, the uAspire training sessions also provided comprehensive information for advisors on confusing steps, such as how to enter tax information if parents don’t file taxes. “The trainer encouraged us to ask questions and provided helpful guidance on how to handle special circumstances—going well beyond the common questions typically addressed in this kind of training,” says Maria.

“Many trainings just stay on the surface, but uAspire goes into detail related to sections that frequently stump families and advisors. They have a helpful blend of thoroughness and clarity.”

Serving as a Trusted Partner

Maria has now taken three uAspire courses. “I trust both the material that uAspire presents and the way that they present it,” says Maria. She also appreciates that uAspire stays on top of all of the changes in policies and regulations, serving as a great resource for program directors like herself and ensuring that College Success Foundation is giving students and families the latest information.

Maria says that uAspire’s training, and the training that frontline advisors subsequently deliver, “are not only helping students apply to school, they are also empowering them to be conscientious lifelong consumers: asking questions, seeking out answers, and getting the help that they need.”

“I love having colleagues like uAspire who are doing work with the same level of accuracy and compassion that I bring to my work. In my opinion, uAspire is the go-to organization for financial aid education.”

Ready for a student-centered approach to financial aid training for your team?
Contact Michelle Murphy at michellem@uaspire.org