





**ONLY ONE OF SIX STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME
FAMILIES GRADUATE COLLEGE BY AGE 24**

WE BELIEVE A COLLEGE DEGREE & THE OPPORTUNITIES IT BRINGS SHOULD BE AFFORDABLE TO ALL.

THIS IS HOW WE GET THERE:

Advise Students

In-person and virtual support for high school and college students to access financial aid and navigate higher ed systems

Train Practitioners

Professional development and technical assistance for school counselors and program staff

Share Expertise

Digital tools and virtual events available online at no charge for students, families, and practitioners

Advocate for Change

Equitable distribution of resources, college cost transparency, and simplified pathways to financial aid

Customize Solutions

Systems change, program improvement, and content development to amplify partners' efforts to improve student outcomes

To our steadfast supporters and new friends,

As we look to the possibilities of the new year, we continue to be grateful for your support and deeply proud of the work we accomplished during a full year of pandemic programming. In the pages that follow, you will learn how our 2021 programming impacted over 490,000 students nationwide and follow students' journeys as they navigated one of the most consequential decisions of their life—how to make college affordable.

In 2022, uAspire will critically reflect on our accomplishments since our founding in 1985, and the work ahead. Now more than ever before, it is imperative to dismantle the root causes of educational inequity to create affordable pathways to a college degree. As the demand for a college-educated workforce grows, so do the challenges to create equal opportunities for Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities without the crippling burden of lifelong debt. College affordability is an issue we must all come together to solve, and we hope you will be right alongside us in our efforts to do so.

Our students are tomorrow's doctors, educators, scientists, artists, activists, and business leaders. They are our strength, their resilience is inspiring, and their determination is unparalleled. Our students are the why we do what we do, but you are the how we do it. Thank you for your partnership and commitment to our mission in the year ahead.

With gratitude,



Jaclyn Piñero
JACLYN PIÑERO
CEO



Kerry Ann James
KERRY ANN JAMES
BOARD CHAIR-ELECT

2X

**UASPIRE STUDENTS GRADUATE
COLLEGE AT TWICE THE RATE
OF THEIR PEERS FROM SIMILAR
HIGH SCHOOLS**

OUR PROGRAMS IMPACTED OVER 490,000 STUDENTS NATIONWIDE

ADVISING 10,700 • POLICY 169,770 • TRAINING 312,800



WE ADVISED 10,700 HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

91% Identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or Person of Color

79% First-generation college students

75% Low-income backgrounds

One of the most significant changes we made last year was expanding our assistance to provide mental health support while guiding students through the financial aid and college affordability process.

uAspire advisors quickly recognized the need for additional resources as students shared that they were experiencing increased levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. In response, we found resources to help students of color who have been uniquely impacted by racial injustice, incidences of police brutality, and the ongoing health and economic crises.

➤ [Learn more about uAspire's advising programs](#)

WE LAUNCHED OUR MENTAL HEALTH RESPONSE IN 2020:

- Partnered with ComPsych to provide free counseling and life assistance programs to all of our students
- Contracted a licensed mental health counselor to train advisors in care and crisis protocols
- Provided mental health training for advisors



OUR ADVISING IMPACT

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

 **63%**

uAspire students

49%

National average for students from low-income high schools*

SECOND YEAR PERSISTENCE

81%

uAspire students

74%

National average for all students**

GRADUATION IN SIX YEARS

51%

uAspire students

24%

National average for students from low-income high schools*



*National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2021) High School Benchmarks Report 2021.

**National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2021) Snapshot Report: Persistence and Retention 2021.

GLEIDSON DE SOUZA

SENIOR, SOMERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, MA

I recently applied to college and I got into some of my dream schools as the first person in my family [to go to college]—Boston College, Tufts, and Northeastern—which I'm really proud of. They're also very expensive schools. I wasn't very confident about the college process, but that's when I was introduced to uAspire.

Emma and Jen, my advisors, were always texting me, making sure I was on track with my financial aid steps, whether it was filling out the FAFSA and the CSS Profile or uploading documents like a tax return. They were always available to support me which helped me to focus on school my senior year because, especially throughout this pandemic, it was really tough.

I remember one night Emma and I stayed on the phone for two hours calling financial aid offices describing my family's complex financial situation. We reached out to each school and, at first, talking to these people over the phone was outside of my comfort zone. But I was pushed to do these things and I developed a skill set that I wouldn't have gotten otherwise—the ability to advocate for myself. I think it's going to be important to me in the future and I'm proud to have developed that.

I'm really grateful for the counseling and the mentorship I received. One of my favorite parts about uAspire is that they are very accepting and nonjudgmental. It's tough to discuss finances with other people, but we were able to develop trust, ask any questions we had, and it just made the whole process comfortable for us. Now I'm able to pursue my dream. As I prepare to take this next step, it's a comfort having uAspire there to help me along the way and keep me on track.



**"I DEVELOPED A SKILL SET
THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN
OTHERWISE—THE ABILITY
TO ADVOCATE FOR MYSELF."**

DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

BOOK STIPENDS **\$46,750**

Stipends to help with indirect costs like course materials and transportation

EMERGENCY AID **\$99,550**

Financial assistance to help alleviate unexpected financial burdens

SCHOLARSHIPS **\$515,440**

Application process, applicant review, and distribution of funds

- Greater Boston Real Estate Board
- Massachusetts General Hospital
- uAspire Last Dollar
- WinnCompanies

2021 LAST DOLLAR SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



“This scholarship will **allow me to focus more on school** and lightened my financial stress. I hope soon I can give back to uAspire and my community, but for now, the only way I can show my gratitude is by getting those A’s and B’s.”

**JUDRESS
SYLVESTRE**

UMASS LOWELL

WE LAUNCHED ONLINE TOOLS AND VIRTUAL EVENTS TO MAKE SUPPORT ACCESSIBLE FOR EVERYONE.

COLLEGE COST CALCULATOR

2,400 STUDENT ACCOUNTS
3,500 FINANCIAL AID OFFERS

Decoding device for students to compare financial aid offers and know the total costs of attending different colleges

HOW-TO VIDEOS

46 VIDEOS
4,300 VIEWS

Most viewed: Retrieving Your Student Aid Report, Gathering Info for the FAFSA

VIRTUAL EVENTS

45 SUPPORT EVENTS
560 STUDENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

FAFSA, CSS Profile, financial aid offer review, Student Aid Report, verification help events and one-on-one advisor meetings

SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT

9 VOLUNTEERS
61 STUDENTS

Volunteers from Traveler's helped students identify, prepare, and submit scholarship applications



DAKOTA MEDINA

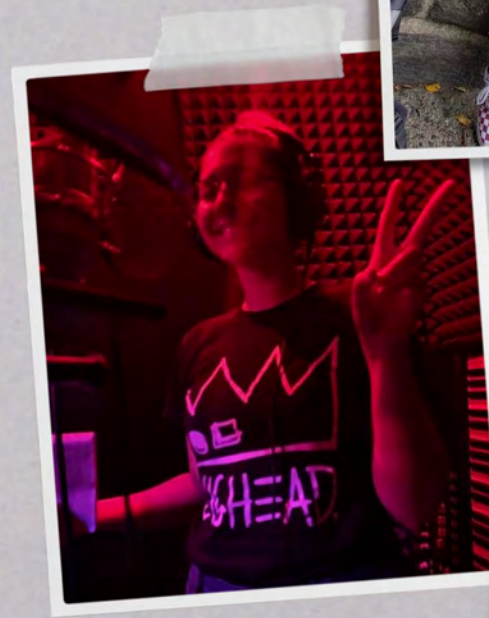
THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

I love college. I can try so many things. I always wanted to do music so I started in audio engineering, but I was getting more interested in marketing—it's creative and I'm a creative person. My uAspire advisor encouraged me to apply to the Media and Communication Arts department, so I went through the whole application, and I got in. I was so excited, I texted her, "I got it!"

My advisor is amazing. I can text her about anything and she'll figure it out with me. I've had conflicts with schedules or financial aid and if I didn't have her advice or help writing emails, I wouldn't know what to do. She'll text me about opportunities and give me suggestions like "maybe talk to this person, apply for something like this." And it's eye-opening because I wouldn't have thought about that stuff.

She also helped me apply for internships. I have to call the financial aid office and see if I can even work for a few months without it affecting my financial aid. It's not just about paying for college. It's trying to help my mom or buying books, transportation, and it all adds up. I've managed to take three or four-week internships and not affect my financial aid, but it's difficult because I want to get that experience during college.

During the pandemic, my uAspire Advisor also helped me with the transition from in-person to online. I was so used to being on campus, seeing people face-to-face, and then I was missing out on all that. I had to just stare at a screen all day, it was hard to keep up the energy. I felt so disconnected, but she helped with that. Working with my advisor, I'm more organized, dedicated, and more relaxed because I have the support system that I need.



**"WORKING WITH MY ADVISOR,
I'M MORE ORGANIZED, DEDICATED,
AND I'M MORE RELAXED BECAUSE I HAVE
THE SUPPORT SYSTEM THAT I NEED."**



WE TRAINED

3,700

SCHOOL
COUNSELORS
& PROGRAM
STAFF

98%

Would **recommend uAspire** trainings to a colleague

97%

Feel **more confident** in their financial aid advising

95%

Reported **positive impact** on student outcome goals

> [Learn more about uAspire's training](#)

BARBARA GAO SHAPIRO

**ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE ACCESS & PERSISTENCE
SUCCESS ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS, NEW YORK CITY**

“uAspire does a great job of covering the nuts and bolts of the financial aid process: How do I, as a student, fill the forms out correctly every year? We really count on uAspire for this kind of support,” says Barbara. “But I learned that our team does not need to know every detail, and instead should have a good understanding of the process broadly and how to find information when we have questions.”

“We shifted our mindset from serving as concierges for students to empowering them to understand financial aid and seek out answers on their own. This approach has made a big difference for our team and students, building confidence across the board.”

“I have always appreciated our partnership with uAspire because they approach the work as we do—with a goal of enabling students to manage their own journey,” says Barbara. “Our students are coming to us and saying: ‘Can you believe that my friend, who does not attend Success Academy, doesn’t have a counselor to help her with the financial aid process? —so I am helping her.’ We are instilling confidence in these students, and they are becoming community ambassadors.”

Success Academy subscribes each year to uAspire’s Partner Portal, a rich online database of information about financial aid. “The portal is like an insurance policy for our entire team,” says Barbara. “We all sleep better knowing that we can just log onto the portal and ask a question about a particular situation a student is facing or a question that has surfaced.”

“The training is not all about financial aid. It is part of a much bigger picture of helping students realize their potential,” explains Barbara. “We are seeing, day by day, our student-centered approach paying off, and are grateful to our partners at uAspire who have modeled this culture of empowerment.”



**“UASPIRE APPROACHES
THE WORK AS WE DO—WITH
A GOAL OF ENABLING STUDENTS
TO MANAGE THEIR OWN JOURNEY.”**

CALIFORNIA SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE

CLOSING THE DEGREE GAP

In partnership with The Education Trust-West and California Student Aid Commission, **uAspire directly supported the passage of Assembly Bill 469**, a measure to ensure school districts and education agencies confirm that all seniors submit a FAFSA or California Dream Act Application before graduating from high school. To identify opportunities to equitably implement this new legislation statewide, we're **piloting a set of completion interventions and designing a unified support system** for students, families, and practitioners.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

The **University of California Office of the President and nine UC campuses partnered with uAspire** to improve the communication of college costs to students on their websites and financial aid offers. We conducted focus groups with 37 undergraduate students and 30 financial aid administrators, and **delivered custom recommendations based on those findings alongside our research**, Beyond the College Bill and Decoding the Cost of College. We're excited to see changes at the systems and campus levels in the year to come.



STUDENT ADVOCACY FELLOWSHIP

27 COLLEGE STUDENTS

1,620+ TRAINING HOURS

44 MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICES

including the offices of Senators Feinstein, Gillibrand, Murray, Toomey, and Warren, Representatives Jones, Keating, Neal, Ocasio-Cortez, and Governor Newsom

4 POLICY MEMOS

4 PUBLISHED OP-EDS

Building on their own experience, Student Advocacy Fellows researched financial aid barriers to educate policymakers and offer student-centered solutions. They advocated for policy changes like doubling the Pell Grant and improving cost communication by sharing personal testimony and offering recommendations to make higher education more affordable and equitable.

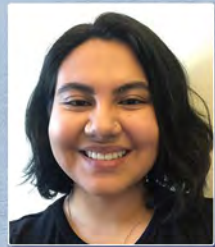
> Learn more about uAspire's Student Advocacy Fellowship

"We see firsthand the obstacles thousands of students across the country face affording college every day.

We experience the problems, we know the needed solutions."

LESLEY BAEZ

PEER LEADER FELLOW



2020-2021 FELLOWS



Jesus Alexander Gomez, Fresno Pacific University

Lesley Baez, Roxbury Community College, *Peer Leader*

Talatou Bah, CUNY The City College of New York

Rochelle Bernarte, University of California, Riverside

Ryen Diaz, Harvard University

Aleina Dume, Swarthmore College, *Peer Leader*

Carlos Jose Figueroa, University of California Los Angeles

Ibeliz Flores, New York University

Tawreak Gamble-Eddington, Union College

Emily Geigh Nichols, Stanford University

Ifrah Gurhan, University of Massachusetts Boston

Ishrat Jahan, CUNY Hunter College

Warley Johnson, Hostos Community College

Haowei Li, Boston University

Debbie Matesun, Shippensburg University, *Peer Leader*

Miryam E. Matute Roca, CUNY The City College of New York

Edgar Oseguera Martinez, University of California Berkeley

Joanne Park, University of California Berkeley

Sarai Perez Camacho, Harvard University

Betsy Pichizaca, CUNY Hunter College

Ruby Portillo, University of California Santa Cruz, *Peer Leader*

Gerald Richardson III, Moorpark College, *Peer Leader*

Bryan Saeteros, CUNY Baruch College

Dixie M. Samaniego, California State University Fullerton

Janelle Sanon, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Aminata Sheriff, University of Massachusetts Boston

Diamund White, City College of San Francisco

OUR SUPPORTERS

Even when the world forever changed with COVID-19, our community kept showing up to prevent college plans from being derailed. We couldn't be more grateful.

\$1,000,000 +

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\$500,000 - \$999,999

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\$50,000 - \$99,999

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Warriors Community Foundation

\$10,000 - \$24,999

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Melissa Williams

Stephen Wong

FINANCIALS

	2021	2020
Contributions	\$6,954,691	\$10,950,535
Program Revenue	\$775,986	\$486,660
Other Revenue & In-Kind	\$294,226	\$306,753
Government PPP	\$1,142,357	—
Total Revenues	\$9,167,260	\$11,743,948
Program Services	\$5,106,790	\$5,483,283
General Administrative	\$1,054,902	\$902,241
Fundraising	\$1,773,342	\$2,155,240
Total Expenses	\$7,935,034	\$8,540,764
Change in Net Assets	\$1,232,226	\$3,203,184
Net Assets at End of Year	\$6,443,234	\$5,211,008

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DESIGN BY RYAN STRANZ