



College Access Partnership

Annual Report 2021-2022

Our Commitment

It was with a great sense of hopefulness for our shared future that we launched College Access Partnership, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing support to low-income, college-bound students who need assistance navigating college admissions and paying for their college education. It is no secret that the college admissions process and the high cost of a college education are obstacles for many deserving students. These obstacles often cause students and their families to simply “give up” the pursuit of their dreams or incur burdensome debt if the students attend college. College Access Partnership is committed to providing support to these students and their parents to enable them to achieve their goals.



I am wholeheartedly thankful for the continuous support that I have received in the past year. I was encouraged every step of the way throughout my journey toward furthering my education, which I am incredibly grateful for. From this support, I learned that the SAT's are not as terrifying as I once thought they were and I was able to take my exams with much less stress on my mind. Writing my college essays and applying to college also once seemed like a dreadful process to me, but I was successfully able to apply to my colleges early thanks to your team. Thank you so much Sue, Lisa, Jim and Davida for providing me with amazing support that I would not have had without College Access Partnership.

Kriselle, College Access Partnership Student

A Letter from Sue Slotnick

CEO and Chair, Board of Directors



Dear Donors, Partners and Volunteers,



As we all know, 2021 was a year filled with unprecedented challenges. It was an especially difficult time for low-income families, and as the year came to a close, we were keenly aware of the impact the pandemic had on our students. During 2021, a significant

number of students experienced more anxiety and despair than ever, which was made worse by the food and housing insecurity. Many were unable to receive sufficient in-person guidance from their high school counselors that would enable them to successfully navigate the formidable task of applying to college. It is also important to recognize that in 2021, while our students faced extraordinary obstacles, they proved themselves to be resilient and determined to reach their goals. They simply needed a helping hand.

Fortunately, College Access Partnership was able to give much-needed assistance by providing services and guidance to over 170 students in 2021. Our virtual and in-person workshops, *Funding Your College Education Virtual Conference*, small group meetings, tutoring, one-to-one college counseling, mentoring, and growing scholarship program provided students with the support needed to successfully navigate the admissions process and to find funding to pay for their education. Our students responded by working hard and were able to achieve their goals.

Looking toward the future, we know that no matter what the admissions landscape looks like in 2022 and beyond, College Access Partnership is equipped to serve even more students who need our help. We will continue to work with our partners, offering a full-range of college counseling services, and through our new College Access Program, we will provide college counseling support that begins in January of junior year and continues to the end of senior year. We anticipate serving as many as 200 students in 2022 through all of our programs and feel gratified that we can offer assistance, especially during these difficult times.

It is clear that there are many more students who need our help. This is why we are so grateful for the support we receive from our generous donors, partners and volunteers who make our work possible. This is a team effort and we are convinced that no matter how daunting the challenges may appear, we can all make a difference when we work together.

With Appreciation,

Sue Slotnick

“Thank you for all the resources to help us out with our future. I am forever grateful for being a part of College Access Partnership and the immense impact you’ve had on my life.” *Destiny*



The College Access Program

A Group of Students Who Learn and Grow Together

College Access Partnership has had great success working in partnership with organizations that embrace our mission. We are currently working with several different groups of students, which we refer to as the “cohort model.” This model relies on our community partners to refer students that will join us in small, eclectic groups that learn and grow together, creating a sort of family support. In that some of our programs have limited space, we have found an abundance of qualified students that could not be accommodated. Therefore, this year, we have also formed our own cohort, The College Access Program, as part of a plan to serve even more students. This program implements a yearlong college readiness curriculum that meets twice per month across Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

When we first meet with a new cohort, usually in the early spring of their junior year of high school, we begin an intensive training in the skills it will take to navigate the complexities of college education. Some of the topics included in this comprehensive curriculum are finding the colleges that are the best fit, learning the application process, understanding the financial aid process, and learning how to write a great college essay. We are also steadily growing our curriculum to include financial and life skills, teaching students how to create a budget, balance a checking account, write a cover letter and conduct an effective interview. It is in these latter areas that our mentors and volunteer counselors are essential. It has become apparent that blending the group work, along with providing one-to-one support as needed, is truly a winning combination and a recipe for student success.

The Many Faces of the Hero’s Journey

A Student’s Personal Story

By Jim Westerholm

College essay readers are a tough audience. Every year they face towers of essays, and will be looking for any way to narrow down the number of students they will have to consider seriously. So, our students have just a few hundred words to make a compelling case that they belong. And with the SAT seemingly going the way of the dinosaurs, the essay now shoulders a larger burden in making that case.

One way our students are grabbing the attention of weary readers is to present themselves in the story cycle that has grabbed the ears of listeners since the beginning of time: The Hero’s Journey. The journey that Joseph Campbell mapped can have a million variations, but also some universal themes, such as a call to adventure, trials to test readiness, and a return with some hard-won wisdom or knowledge.

Around the midpoint of the journey, between the ordinary world of the status quo and extraordinary one that the hero seeks, is a line called The Threshold of Adventure. If this line is not crossed, the adventure is never born. The essays we see tell stories of facing difficult trials in approaching this threshold, and of preparing to see the other side.

Most of our students will be the first in their families to apply to college, and so are questing in uncharted territory. Without the luxury of guidance and support from home, their trials have begun long before they begin the application process. But their fire and drive to face any obstacle already show candidates who are both willing to take on college, and worthy of a heroic challenge.

Meet Our Team



Sue Slotnick

*Sue Slotnick, Co-Founder
and Chair, Board of Directors
CEO/CFO*

Sue Slotnick has worked as a K-12 Director of Admissions and Director of School Placement at two independent schools in the Los Angeles, California area for 38 years. She is currently CEO of Educational Test Prep, LLC and works as an independent college counselor specializing in assisting students in obtaining financial assistance for their college education. Sue received her certification in college counseling from UCLA.



Lisa Kurstin

*Lisa Kurstin, Co-Founder
and Secretary/Treasurer,
Board of Directors
Director of Programs*

Lisa Kurstin brings 20 years of experience as a classroom teacher and senior level school administrator in local independent schools. Lisa's administrative experience includes having served as a Director of Studies and Director of Admissions, as well as Education Programs Manager at Descanso Gardens in La Canada Flintridge, California where she received the National Hull Award for Educational Excellence.



Mitchell Butler

*Mitchell Butler, Member,
Board of Directors
Mentor*

Mitchell is a former 4-year letter winner in basketball from UCLA who went on to play 11 years of professional basketball, 8 of which were in the NBA with the Washington Bullets/Wizards, Portland Trailblazers and Cleveland Cavaliers. He spent one year as an Assistant Coach with the Washington Wizards, helping them to the second round of the playoffs for the first time in 30 years, while also working in management as Director of Player Development. He has been a NBPA Certified Agent for the past 14 years. He is the only agent who has played, coached and managed in the NBA. Mitchell is a trustee of his high school alma mater, the Oakwood School in North Hollywood. He served on the Executive Committee and was the Chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.



Davida Koren

*Davida Koren, Director
of Auxiliary Programs
Administrative Associate*

Davida Koren is a 2017 Pitzer College Graduate and Fulbright Research Fellow. She received a Master's Degree in Higher Education and Organizational Change from UCLA. Davida's passion for education reform and experience working with underserved populations inform her unique perspective in guiding College Access Partnership's vision and programs.

“You have been with us since the beginning, and I’m grateful to you. Your team made us feel more comfortable and ensured us we would be ok as you helped us grow.” *Kyra*



Margo Long
*Margo Long, Member,
Board of Directors,
Advisor*

Margo Long is an educator with over 50 years of experience. She has taught in both public and private schools and was Principal of an independent elementary school for 38 years. Margo was a co-founder of the Alliance for Minorities in Independent Schools and served as a Board member for this organization for many years. She currently serves on the Education Board of the nonprofit organization ‘Classic and Contemporary American Plays.’



Ralph Slotnick
*Ralph Slotnick,
Member and Mentor*

Ralph Slotnick has been an international entrepreneur for over 60 years. Ralph is the founder of the Institute of International Commerce (IIC) which offers an online course on global trade for adult learners. Ralph’s expertise in international business makes him the perfect mentor for College Access Partnership students who are interested in this field.



Juliann Rooke
*Juliann Rooke, Member,
Board of Directors
Advisor*

Juliann Rooke is currently the Executive Director of Descanso Gardens Guild in La Canada Flintridge, California. Her experience includes senior management roles at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and St. James’ School in Los Angeles. An active community volunteer, Juliann currently serves on the Board of the San Marino Junior Alliance and is a former board member of the San Marino Schools Foundation.



Jim Westerholm
*Jim Westerholm, Co-Founder
Director of Studies*

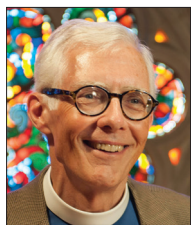
Jim Westerholm brings over 20 years of classroom instruction and private tutoring in standardized test preparation and academic high school subjects. Jim has expertise in essay writing and over his years as a teacher and tutor, Jim has devoted his practice to researching and mastering the art of test taking. He developed the online test-prep program offered by Educational Test Prep, LLC

Advisory Board



Members of the Advisory Board are dedicated individuals who bring their expertise to College Access Partnership, thus enabling the staff and volunteers to best serve our students and their families.

Reverend Canon Gary Hall, Ph.D.



Gary retired in January of 2016 as the tenth dean of Washington National Cathedral where he served on the Foundation Board overseeing the work of St. Albans, Beauvoir, and National Cathedral Schools and worked collaboratively with the heads of school. Prior to serving in Washington, he served as Dean and President of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, chaplain and teacher at the Cranbrook Schools in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and as English Teacher, Director of Studies and Principal at Oakwood Secondary School in North Hollywood, California. Gary has also served parishes in California, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. Gary received his A.B. at the University of California, Berkeley and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He earned his M.Div. with distinction at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts and has M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English from UCLA. Gary has taught both theology and English literature at the seminary, college and secondary levels.

Judith Lu



Judith Lu is Founder and CEO of Blue Zone Wealth Advisors, an independent investment advisory firm. She has over 20 years of experience working with high net worth individuals and families on matters of asset management and comprehensive financial planning. She has been recognized by Forbes as a Best-In-State Wealth Advisor in 2018 and 2019, as well as one of America's Top Women Advisors in 2017 and 2018. She has been a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Los Angeles since 2015 and teaches financial literacy at local high schools around the city. Judith graduated Magna Cum Laude from UCLA with a dual degree in Business Administration and World Arts and Cultures. She has a Global MBA, Magna Cum Laude from Thunderbird, American Graduate School of International Management. Judith is fluent in Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.

Nora Malone



Nora Malone has decades of experience as a teacher and school administrator. She taught English, science and history, and was a Director of Admissions for many years before becoming Head of School at Village School from 1999 to 2020. Nora has served as a member of the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) Board of Directors, Vice Chair and member of the CAIS Board's Executive Committee, and both Vice Chair and Chair of the CAIS Elementary Board of Standards. She has also served as chair or team member on 14 accreditation teams for CAIS since 2000. She is currently working as a Senior Consultant at Carney Sandoe & Associates, a firm dedicated to helping schools recruit and retain exceptional faculty and leaders. Nora received both her B.A. in English and M.A. in Educational Administration from California State University, Northridge; she is pursuing a Ph.D. in Leadership and Change from Antioch University.

“Thank you for the incredible, helpful, and blissful year you have provided for us. I cannot put into words how grateful I am to have met and received as much support as I did from such amazing people.”
A'Lysse



Ira Pianko



Ira has been a partner with an international accounting firm, Arthur Young & Company, predecessor to Ernst & Young, as well as the Chief Operating and/or Chief Financial Officer at Warner/Chappell Music, The Resmark Companies and Oakwood School.

He has served on the Board of Trustees of the Oakwood School since 1992, including his multi-year tenure as Chair of the Board. Ira has been on the Board of Stephen Wise Temple since 2018. He is currently Vice Chairman and a Director of The Resmark Companies. Ira's expertise in finance, business, leadership and strategic planning makes him an extraordinary mentor for College Access Partnership students.

Josselyne Rivas



Josselyne has worked at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) for over five years as the coordinator for an educational pipeline program that focuses on student success and community engagement for undergraduate students. She was the first CSUN recipient of the College

Compact Principal Community Scholar in 2017 for her volunteer and mentorship work in the Canoga Park community. Josselyne graduated with degrees in Child and Adolescent Development and Journalism from California State University, Northridge. She also received her master's degree from CSUN in Higher Education Leadership and Administration in 2019. Josselyne hopes to empower the students with whom she works to feel confident in their abilities and in the pursuit of their educational and career goals.

Services Provided Free of Charge

College Counseling

College Access Partnership offers assistance through every step of the college admission process, including pursuing financial assistance.

Test Prep and Tutoring

Test prep is conducted via one-to-one tutoring sessions, small group classes and/or online instruction. Formal academic assessments of students are also conducted to identify areas of challenge and the tutoring services needed to address those areas.

Workshops

Workshops are offered to college-bound students and their families covering a variety of topics including: an overview of the college admissions process, funding a college education and finding your career path.

Mentoring

Mentors provide valuable guidance during the student's entire journey. This support is available to students during the admissions process, when they attend college and when they are pursuing a career.

Volunteer Program



Our volunteer counselors, mentors, and tutors are invaluable to the work done by College Access Partnership. By generously giving of their time and talents, we are able to offer a level of guidance and support to our students that would otherwise not be possible. We believe that volunteers offer more than admissions guidance and academic instruction. They are also reliable and caring adults who offer their expertise, wisdom, and emotional support. The relationships that evolve from working together are often life changing for all involved—students and adults alike.

We honor and thank each of our valued volunteers for supporting College Access Partnership and our students.

Reejima Agrawal	Laura Olhasso
Mitchell Butler	Amanda Paul
Barbara Card	Heather Peralta
Lani Farar	Brian Pianko
Chris Gonyaw	Ira Pianko
Alondra Gonzalez	Marissa Pianko
Luiza Grigoryan	Robin Pianko
Gary Hall	Lillian Ramos
John Hosey	Juliann Rooke
Deb Kinley	Josselyne Rivas
Margo Long	Ana Sastre
Lucia Logan	Susan Schechtman
Judy Lu	Jake Seijas
Nora Malone	Rama Stagner
Linda Mansolillo	Ricky Whitman
Bryan Miott	Scott Wu

Volunteer Spotlights



Ricky Whitman

Ricky came to College Access Partnership after having held numerous positions including having been an executive at the Pasadena Humane Society & SPCA for almost 20 years, an assistant at All Saints Church in Pasadena, and a child life specialist at Children's Hospital. Ricky's volunteer experiences include museum interpreter at the La Brea Tar Pits, and 1st and 2nd grade tutor for the Literacy Project of the JCC in Manhattan.

Scott Wu

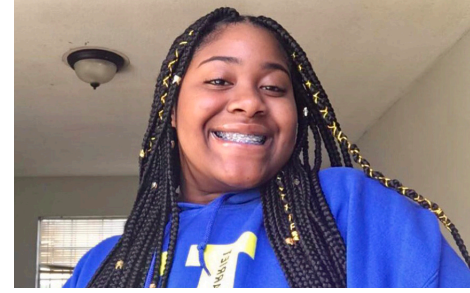


Meet Scott Wu, one of our talented college counselors from First Republic Bank. Scott jumped into his work with both feet, and has developed an ongoing mentorship of two deserving young men from the Mann UCLA Community School. Scott has skillfully guided these students through the application processes and is also serving as essay coach and editor for their admissions essays. We are grateful for Scott's "all in" attitude with his work. He's a perfect fit with our talented and energetic volunteer group.

To students with little or no support system, our volunteers can be the difference between giving up in frustration and getting into the colleges of their dreams. We have nothing but admiration and gratitude for our volunteers!

“Thank you so much for everything you’ve done to help me reach my goals. I’m excited and nervous for college, but I know I have so much support and all the tools I need to achieve my dreams.”

Ameena



The Students We Serve

Ameena, College Access Partnership Student

By Davida Koren

In the nine months I have spent with Ameena discovering the world of higher education and exploring how to invest in her future, I’ve found myself in awe of the knowledge she brings to our weekly meetings. She is wise beyond her years. Through her writing, both fiction and non-fiction, she continually expresses the importance she puts on self-care. She shares about her journey to understanding, accepting, and loving self by writing about her developing relationship with her body, her sexuality, and her family.

Only occasionally does Ameena speak to the adversity she has faced. At a young age, she has moved homes from living with her biological mother in Northern California to moving to Los Angeles with her aunt whom she refers to as “mom.” She has navigated familial mental instability, which left her responsible for both her younger siblings and herself. And while I was shocked by how little Ameena focused on those moments of strife and pain, I quickly learned that it is because Ameena oozes positivity. She does not only talk the talk in regards to the power of positivity, but she truly walks the walk.

Ameena applied to a handful of schools in Southern California and one in Georgia. Her schools ranged from California State Universities, to UCs, to private four-year institutions. Each school provided Ameena with the opportunity to pursue her love of creative writing and desire to care for others. Through studying Screenwriting,

Ameena will work towards her dream of writing a television show “that has a positive impact on people’s lives.” Television has been a “best friend” to Ameena during moments of adversity, and she hopes to create that relationship with her audience via the scripts she creates. She also values the study of the human brain and mental health so that she can know how to best support people throughout her career.

2022 was an extremely competitive year for admissions. Many schools experienced an exponential increase in their number of applicants, which resulted in many rejections as well. But this shift in admissions did not phase Ameena. After Ameena received all of her admissions decisions, she had six superb schools to choose from. Her top choices were Chapman University, CSU, Long Beach, and CSU, Northridge.

We are very excited to see where Ameena decides to pursue her passions for the next four years. I feel immense gratitude that we have been able to experience Ameena’s light and have been a part of her investment in self. I believe the college environment, and her collegiate studies in Screenwriting and Psychology, will allow Ameena to reach a new level of activating her power.

Annual Giving



With deep gratitude, we acknowledge donations made to College Access Partnership in the 2021-2022 academic year. Contributions from our generous donors and partners exceeded \$220,000.00, which made it possible for College Access Partnership to provide support for college-bound students who need assistance navigating the college admissions process and paying for their college education. These gifts reaffirmed the commitment to transforming the lives of deserving young people forever.

Ahmanson Foundation
Renee and Larry Anenberg
Robin and Tom Bales
Eddie Beetschen and Mark Wagner
Mitchell Butler
Barbara and Tom Card
Chapman University
Faith and Jon Cookler
Kyra and Chuck Crisafulli
Michael Donner
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Myra and Art Goethals
Lori and Rob Goodman
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Rachel and Bruce Jeffer
Inara and Jake Kasdan
Davida Koren
Sheila Krasnoff
Lisa Kurstin and Jim Westerholm
Rachel and Greg Kurstin
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Kurstin
Lucia and Ben Logan
Margo Long

Loyola Marymount University
Nora Malone and Bruce Advocat
Sheri and Dan Markus
Vicki Martin
Barbara Marshall
Alison McKee
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Vicki and Jeremy Paige
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Juliann Rooke
Laurie and Mark Rosenthal
Jill and Glenn Schechter
Susan and Howie Schechtman
Ken Singer
Sue and Ralph Slotnick
Paulina and Carlos Smith
Rama Stagner
The Charitable Foundation
The Sharon D. Lund Foundation
University of California, Los Angeles
Beau Yeakel
Nancy and Alan Wiener

College Access Partnership Scholarship Fund

We extend a special “thank-you” to the donors who have supported the College Access Partnership Scholarship Fund.

In Memory of Bert and Colleen Hall
Alison and Phillip Drain
Hillary and Stephen Haas
Laura and William Olhasso
Melinda and Stephen Todd
Davida Koren
Lisa Kurstin and Jim Westerholm
Margo Long
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Kurstin
Sue and Ralph Slotnick

“I hope you know that you helped a group of girls who dream of going to college. Thank you so much Lisa, Sue, Jim and the rest of this important team. With appreciation.” *Lilibeth*



The Value of Partnership

In reflecting on the past year, we take great pride in our partnership with Chapman University and Loyola Marymount University, which resulted in the creation of a year-long college counseling/readiness experience for a group of students who meet regularly on the campuses of both universities. This unique program is an example of the power of collaboration.

We continue to work with students from Mann UCLA Community School and the Women in Entertainment Mentorship Program (WIE), and our ongoing relationships with Business of Student Success (BOSS), Partnership for Success (PFS), and the El Caballero Foundation provide College Access Partnership with the opportunity to offer a myriad of workshops, summer test prep, and individual college counseling services to numerous students. And, because of the support from our partners at First Republic Bank, we have several talented volunteers from the bank who are working with our students as college counselors, essay coaches, researchers, tutors, and mentors.

In looking forward, we are thrilled to announce new partnerships with Tarzana Treatment Center and the Youth Cinema Project, organizations that will refer students to College Access Partnership for college and career counseling support. We celebrate our growing number of volunteers, partners, and supporters, who recognize the importance of our mission and are willing to help us accomplish our goals.

Among the most striking lessons we learned in 2021 is the fact that our community’s underserved students need college readiness support with or without a pandemic. We look forward to a time when our programs can all be in person, but the hopeful news is that we know we can adapt when remote learning is the only viable option and provide much-needed services to College Access Partnership students. Our partnerships enable us to help this growing number of young people who need assistance.

We extend a special “thank-you” to the individuals who have made these partnerships a reality—it is teamwork at its best!

Mark Brooks – *Ahmanson Foundation*

Jon Cookler, Nancy Norris, Barbara Card and

Kristen Charness – *El Caballero Foundation*

Carol Costello – *Loyola Marymount University*

Mary Deckebach and Lena Robinson

First Republic Bank

Ilar Edun and Dr. Tim Petersen

Tarzana Treatment Center

Erika Flores – *Youth Cinema Project*

Stephen Galloway – *Chapman University*

Everett Glenn – *Business of Student Success*

Dr. Liz Hicks, Principal

Girls Academic Leadership Academy (GALA)

Debbie Martinez – *Women in Entertainment*

Jose Melgoza – *Partnership for Success*

Christine Shen – *UCLA*

Making a Gift



You can make a donation now and help us transform the lives of young people forever. The majority of College Access Partnership funding comes from individual donors so your contribution is critical to the success of our programs. We take pride in responsible stewardship of all gifts to maximize the impact of all donations.

Cash

Gifts can be made by cash, credit card, or wire transfer.

Matching Gifts

Many corporations encourage philanthropy by matching employee donations. Matching gifts can double or triple the amount of the gift. More details can be obtained from the participating companies.

Gift of Stock

Donating securities is easy and makes great sense for those highly appreciated stocks that might otherwise incur a significant capital gains tax.

Planned Giving

Donors may wish to consider giving through such means as life insurance, bequests or charitable trusts.

College Access Partnership, Inc. is a 501(c)3; contributions are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by law. We encourage donors to speak with their financial planners when considering any type of planned giving or gift of stock.

For more information about making a donation, visit our website at CollegeAccessPartnership.com or contact Sue Slotnick at SueSlotnick3@gmail.com.



College Access Partnership, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation in the administration of its educational policies and programs.



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