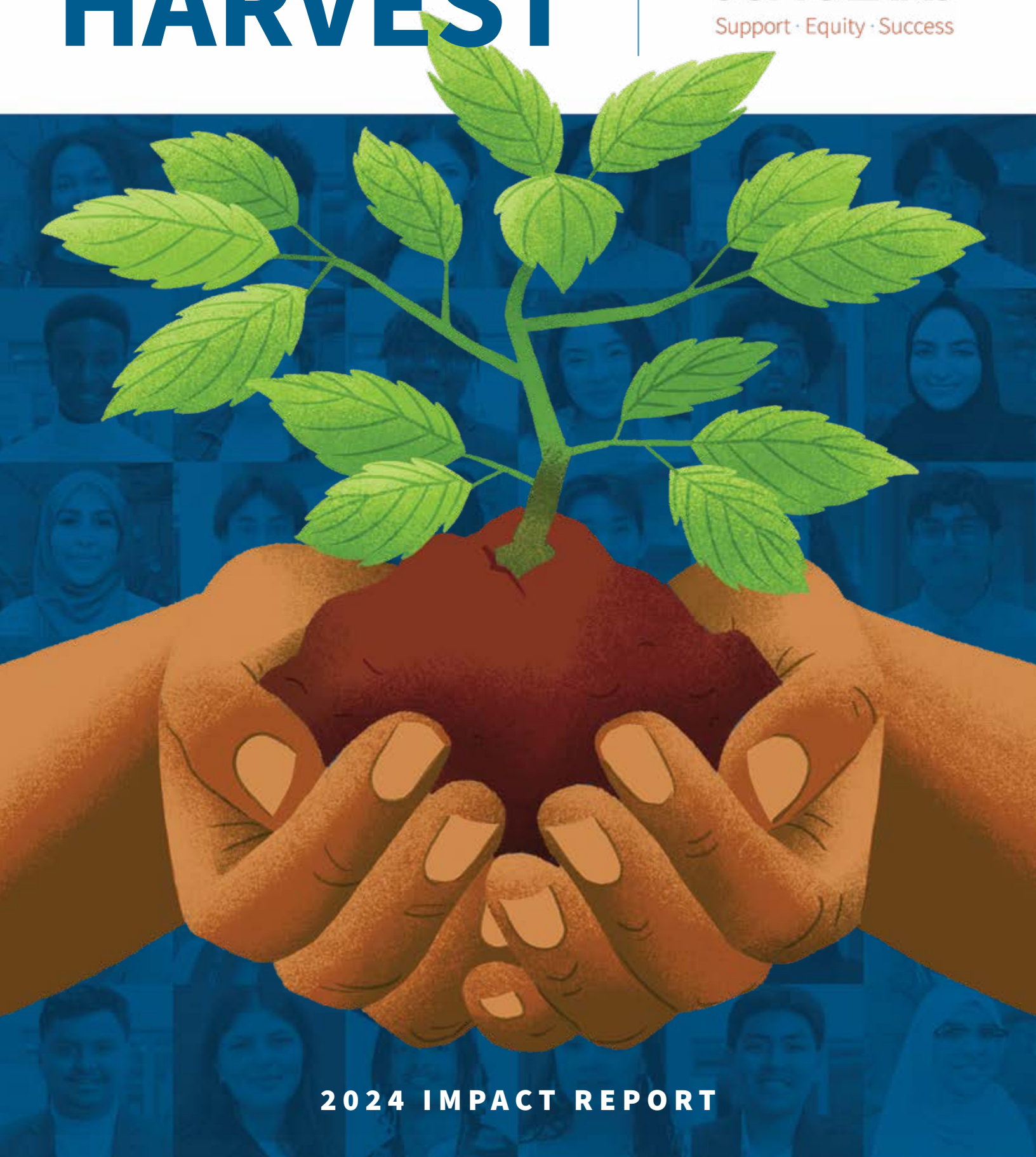
FROM SEED TO HARVEST

BERKELEY COMMUNITY SCHOLARS

Support · Equity · Success



2024 IMPACT REPORT

LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

24 new college graduates. An 80% graduation rate. Over $5 million in scholarships. 475 BCS scholars in our community. These are the milestones we celebrate as we reflect on the 2023-2024 year.

This impact report's theme, "From Seed to Harvest," reflects the long journey of BCS scholars—beginning with a spark of potential and nurturing by the community so they can grow. Each scholar represents a seed planted with care, growing into a resilient individual ready to create meaningful impact. Every community member has contributed to cultivating this growth, and now, we celebrate the harvest—our graduates stepping into their roles as critical thinkers, leaders, and change-makers.

While the past year presented immense challenges—chaos in the federal student aid process, rising living costs, and the impact of the Supreme Court's decision to end race consideration in college admissions—the BCS community came together, walking alongside our scholars every step of the way. As the first in their families to earn a college degree, BCS scholars embody the spirit, diversity, and values of our community. They are our next generation of leaders and critical thinkers. Their success is our shared future. We are grateful to our community of mentors, donors, and supporters, whose generosity makes it possible for BCS scholars to pursue their college dreams.

Though our community has one of the highest rates of educational achievement—nearly 75% of Berkeley residents hold a college degree—local students from groups historically underrepresented in higher education continue to face significant obstacles to getting to, and through, college.

BCS bridges these gaps with a hands-on, evidence-based blend of college and career advising, mentoring, scholarship funds, and a community of support. Through consistent nurturing, we help students successfully navigate the complex path from planting the seed of a dream to harvesting the rewards of college graduation.

And the results are clear: 80% of BCS scholars graduate within 4.5 years—whether they start at community college or at a bachelor's degree institution. This stands in stark comparison with the national average, where only 30% of students from households in the lowest economic quartile earn their degrees. Your support makes these successes possible.

In this 2023-24 Impact Report, you will learn about who we serve, how we do our work, and why it matters. We share our strategic goals, accomplishments, and finances. You'll hear from some of our mighty team staff members, board members, and over 100 mentors and volunteers who supported more than 120 active scholars during the 2023 - 2024 academic year.

At BCS, we believe that all Berkeley youth deserve the opportunity to achieve success, security, and joy—with the backing of a community that believes in them every step of the way. From seed to harvest, we know our four-tiered approach works (see pages 6-7)! These diligent, creative, and courageous young adults inspire us every day. Their journeys are a testament to what we can accomplish when we work together. We could not do this without you!

Thank you for your support and commitment to BCS!

With gratitude and hope,



Gwyneth Galbraith
President



Sherry A. Smith
Executive Director

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Mission Statement

Berkeley Community Scholars empowers Berkeley youth who face racial, economic, and other barriers to achieving their college dreams by providing a unique experience of scholarships, advising, mentoring, and a community of support.

Our Values

These core values inform our mission and guide our actions:

Community. We are a caring and generous community that is built upon inclusion and belonging, respects our diverse heritages and experiences, and shares the joy and responsibility of supporting the success of our youth.

Equity. We believe our scholars deserve the opportunity to access the knowledge, networks, and resources that will empower them to define their own pathways to achieve their goals. We respect the experiences of—and engage our community in—the creation of our programs to ensure they are inclusive, effective, and relevant to our students' lives.

Education. We believe that a college education is a powerful force and a doorway to opportunity for students seeking a pathway to success, security, and joy.

Racial Equity Statement

The BCS board of directors commits to advocating for racial equity, cultivating a sense of belonging, and dismantling the white supremacy that is inherent in the structures in which we operate. By intentionally placing racial equity and inclusion at the center of our mission, we will actively work to dismantle the racist structures, attitudes, behavior, and biases that cause harm to our scholars and community.

BCS STAFF

SaVannah Hudson, Operations & Program Manager

Emily Maciel, College Success Advisor

Ralph Nubla, College Success Advisor

Terrance Powell, College Success Advisor

Sherry Smith, Executive Director

Colleen Sparks, College Success Advisor

Lynn Walker, College Success Manager

THE WHY BEHIND OUR WORK

Empowering Scholars to Grow & Thrive on Their College Journeys

In 2008, a group of concerned community members came together to change the trajectory for students—specifically those from marginalized racial and economic backgrounds—who were being left behind on the path to a college degree. In a city that aspires to equal access to college and the chance to earn a degree, the reality did not align with these hopes. Berkeley Community Scholars (BCS) was created to help students succeed in college and earn their degrees.

In 2023-24, we worked with over 120 active scholars–who started their college journey from a Berkeley public high school to make their college dream a reality. When students are accepted into our BCS **four-tiered program—college success advising, community volunteer mentoring, career readiness, and scholarships**—it brings them one step closer to completing their degrees. Our approach helps every scholar understand how to nurture their own growth and overcome challenges with the right support at every stage. Our scholars are the first in their families to attend college, come from the lowest economic quartile, and identify with ethnic groups that are underrepresented in higher education.

A college degree represents a life-changing trajectory—not just for the individual but also for their family and future generations. Like a well-tended garden, education creates lasting value that touches every part of life and community. Stronger educational attainment improves job stability, healthcare access, and the ability to support future generations in their education. It also fosters personal growth, stable relationships, and a greater understanding of the world.

BCS SCHOLARS
80%
Graduate within 4.5 years

NATIONAL PEERS
30%
Graduate within 6 years

"As I finished my first year at UC Davis as a transfer student it really allowed me to reflect on how the process has been and everything I've done in the year. Being able to complete the year made me really grateful for the resources that I am surrounded by and hope to continue making new relationships and keeping the ones I already have." — *Emanuel*



The State of Higher Education

College campuses are experiencing their greatest upheaval in decades, leaving our scholars to navigate their educational journey with even more uncertainty. While some of these challenges have been taking root on campuses for years, our scholars are encountering them for the first time. They thought they were playing by one set of rules, only to find out that the playbook had been rewritten.

Financial Aid Chaos

In 2024, the newly overhauled financial aid process was particularly chaotic. FAFSA delays, legal battles, and a transition from the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) to the Student Aid Index (SAI) left students and families in a chaotic state—confused and deeply disappointed. Scholars arrived on campus without finalized financial aid packages, not knowing how to cover tuition, housing, and basic needs. BCS advisors, too, are grappling with how to assess economic status under these new metrics.

Even the traditional college admissions timeline has splintered. Instead of the usual common and agreed-upon deadlines, students were met with multiple dates for decisions, housing deposits, and tuition payments. Some even needed to wait to register for classes. Financial aid delays have left scholars without funds for food or housing at the start of the term, compounding stress for first-year and returning students.

Unique Pressures on BCS Scholars

The challenges facing our scholars are not limited to financial aid. They now find themselves in environments that are not only new and confusing, but also politically and socially polarized. While most students have positive hope for their future, they often feel trepidation and disappointment when attending college. From debates on women's health rights to immigration and climate concerns, students are navigating complex social landscapes while juggling academic, family, and work responsibilities.

The weight of these pressures is overwhelming. For some, the fear of speaking out—or being on the "wrong side" of an issue—comes with the risk of losing everything they and their families have worked for. Imposter syndrome, cultural isolation, and the challenge of balancing school and beliefs can make it difficult for scholars to stay focused on their goals.

The debate over standardized testing is constantly evolving. What was once a hard and fast requirement for admission to college, during the years of the pandemic was all but completely eliminated from most schools' admissions process. Students, expecting testing to be gone for good, now find that some schools have reinstated them. Our current seniors are caught in the confusion: Should they prepare for these tests or not? Will they matter? At the same time, California's public colleges continue to omit tests from the process, leaving students wondering how these tests will be used at other institutions—yet another uncertainty in the complex application process.

The Supreme Court's decision to end race-based affirmative action has created significant uncertainty for all students, but especially those who come from underrepresented backgrounds. While colleges can no longer use race as a factor in admissions decisions, they are still allowed to recruit diverse students intentionally, and students may share their personal stories in their applications. This ambiguity leaves many scholars asking: Should I tell my story? Will it help or hurt my chances?

Our early data suggests a troubling sign: Some campuses are reporting declines in African American and Latino student enrollment, ranging from 3% to 15%. On the other side, enrollment is rising at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), where students may feel a greater sense of welcome and belonging. However, other campuses are struggling—some with overcrowding, others with declining enrollment. Since 2020, 64 U.S. colleges have merged or closed, adding to the volatility of higher education. And for the first time since 2020, freshmen enrollment has declined.

The Future of BCS Support

Despite these immense challenges, BCS remains a cornerstone in our scholars' lives, guiding them and helping them succeed. Through our four-tiered approach—advising, mentoring, career readiness, and scholarships—we provide the academic, financial, and emotional support students need to stay on track. We invest over $650,000 each year to provide the services they need to succeed. Each scholar receives an average of $5,600 per year. Over their college career, they have access to a minimum of $22,400.

College tuition has increased 40 times since 1963.

With tuition costs skyrocketing—nearly 200% when adjusted for inflation—we know we must do more. To meet the rising cost of education and help scholars reduce their workload of 20-40 hours per week, we are exploring ways to increase our current scholarship funds from $4,000 to $8,000 per scholar per year. This will allow students to focus more on their studies and less on filling financial gaps. We will figure it out with your help!

BCS will continue to guide scholars through these obstacles (read on for more about our program), ensuring they reach the finish line with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to succeed. **With the right support from our community—even through uncertainty—our scholars will grow through these challenges and achieve the harvest of their hard work: a college degree.**

THE BCS PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

COLLEGE SUCCESS ADVISING

Whether it is financial planning, course selection, registering for classes, or the first day of college, our scholars are overwhelmed with myriad choices, and the BCS team is by their side. Our college advisors meet with scholars one-on-one throughout their entire college journey. Together, they build a plan to help students work toward a manageable progression that includes:

- Academic growth and success
- Social and emotional well-being
- Guidance from a community volunteer mentor
- College Success Workshops
- Financial Literacy Education
- Career Readiness
- Academic Course & Major Selection

CAREER READINESS

Our Level Up program is a partnership with RepresentED, an organization in the East Bay that prepares high-potential, historically underrepresented students and early-stage professionals for leadership roles in internships and jobs. In collaboration with RepresentED, BCS offers this eight-week series to prepare scholars for their entry into post-collegiate work. Through Level Up, scholars learn:

- Job and Career Searching
- Resume Writing
- Presentation Skills
- Growing Self-Esteem
- Networking
- Financial Literacy



Our Four-Tiered Approach Explained

SCHOLARSHIPS

In addition to the wide net of support delivered, BCS also provides each scholar with money to take care of educational expenses, including:

- Tuition and Fees
- Room and Board
- Books and Supplies
- Technology
- Transportation
- Personal Needs

Our High Hopes Scholarship supplies between $500 and $2,000 per term, depending on whether they are attending a community college or a bachelor's degree-awarding institution.

BCS has two additional funds to support scholars throughout college that can be used to pay for additional class supplies, health care services, repairs or purchase of technology, or to fill a gap after losing a job:

- The **Finish Line Fund** enables scholars to extend their college journey an extra term to participate in a worthwhile program or experience.
- The **Emergency Fund** is available throughout the year and provides scholars access to additional resources in as little as 7 to 10 days to address unexpected financial needs and emergencies.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER MENTORS

Our Community Volunteer Mentor program matches each scholar with a mentor from the community when they join BCS. A diverse group of over 100 mentors work with our scholars to support them through their college and early career experiences. Mentors reach out to scholars approximately once a month to lend an ear, a voice, or a hand.

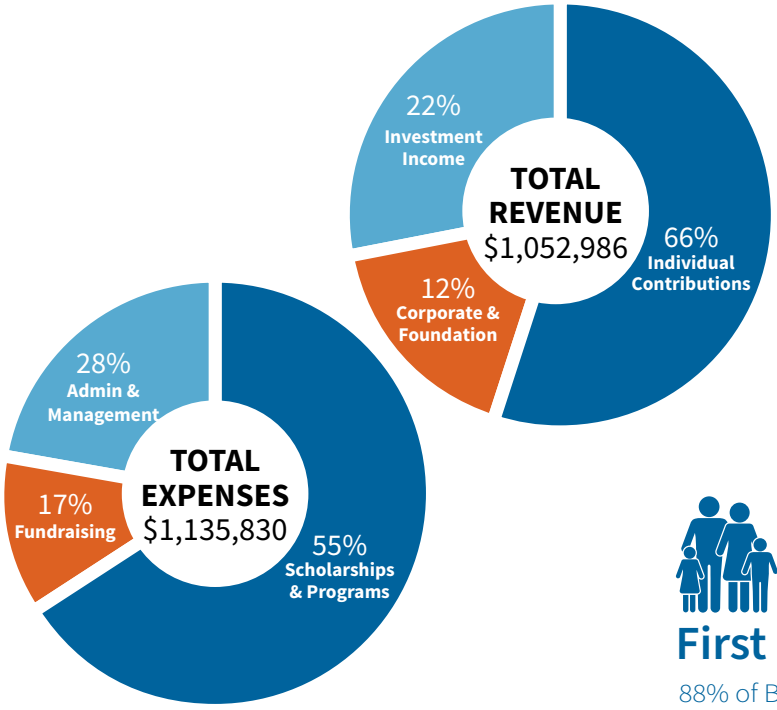
Mentors work alongside their scholar's academic success advisors to create a cohesive support system lasting between two and four years. They receive training from BCS and participate in quarterly peer-mentor meetings, where they can share resources and be part of a caring community who supports the success of a young adult's life.

Evolving Support Systems

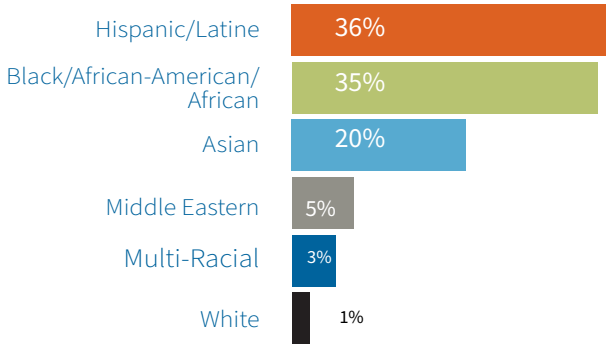
For over 15 years, Berkeley Community Scholars (BCS) has continuously refined its program model to best support young people facing multiple hurdles as they work toward earning a college degree. We've learned that, apart from a student's determination and abilities, having a strong support system is crucial. Students with access to dedicated people and resources are far more likely to succeed in completing their college degrees.

The BCS program model serves as a guiding star in higher education, helping young people navigate their path to college success and graduation. Our program offers a comprehensive framework built on four foundational pillars: college success advising, community volunteer mentoring, career readiness initiatives, and scholarships. At its core, this model acknowledges the many resources required to achieve success.

BY THE NUMBERS



SCHOLAR RACE/ETHNICITY



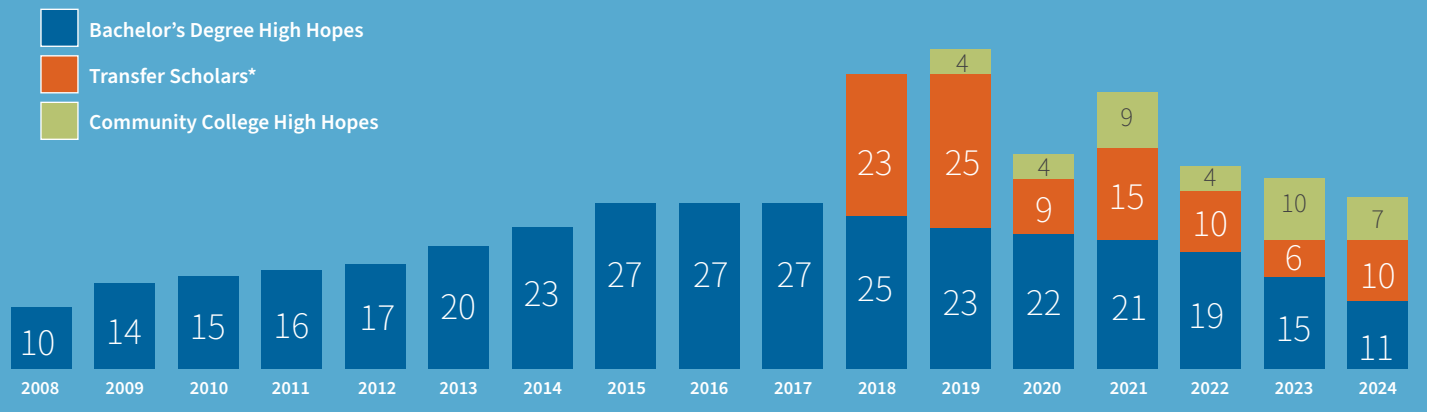
88% First Generation

80% Graduation Rate

88% of BCS scholars are the first generation in their families to go to college. 80% of BCS scholars have earned their degrees in 4.5 years compared to 30% of their national peers.

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED, 2008-2024

The BCS college success program began in 2008 by supporting just **10** scholars. By the 2023-24 school year, the program has supported **468** scholars on their path to earning a college degree, spanning both community colleges and bachelor's degree-awarding institutions. From 2018 to 2021, we piloted a community college program to support scholars starting their higher education journeys at two-year institutions.



* From Community College High Hopes to Bachelor's Degree High Hopes

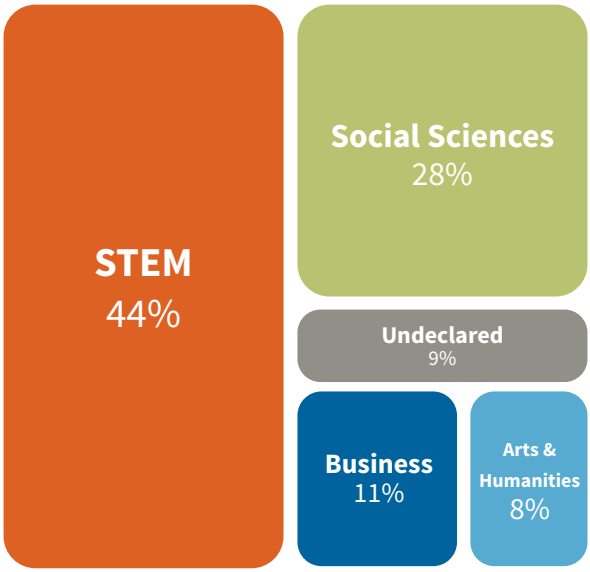
"A highlight from my time as a BCS scholar was securing an internship with Sumeru as a solutions consulting intern at one of their portfolio company's, Firstup. ***This opportunity, made possible by the support of BCS,*** *allowed me to gain hands-on experience. The guidance and support from my mentor were invaluable, helping me develop crucial skills and deepen my interest in operations and management consulting."*

—Hameed, BCS Scholar

Colleges & Universities Attended

- Barnard College
- Berkeley Community College
- California State University East Bay
- California State University Dominguez Hills
- California State University Fresno
- California State University Humbolt
- California State University Long Beach
- California State University Los Angeles
- California State University Monterey Bay
- California State University Northridge
- California State University Sacramento
- California State University San Francisco
- California State University San Jose
- California State University Sonoma
- Drexel University
- Howard University
- Parsons School of Design
- Stanford University
- Texas Southern University
- University of California-Berkeley
- University of California Davis
- University of California Irvine
- University of California Los Angeles
- University of California Merced
- University of California Riverside
- University of California San Diego
- University of California Santa Barbara
- University of California Santa Cruz
- University of Chicago
- University of Denver
- University of Illinois
- University of LaVerne
- University of San Diego
- University of San Francisco
- University of Southern California
- Xavier University

COLLEGE MAJORS



"Because of BCS allowing me to afford paying for college supplies and materials like textbooks, fees, and transportation, ***I was able to earn 2 degrees*** *so far with a third on the way. This is because BCS provided me with resources to focus on my academics!"*

—Manuel, BCS Scholar

IN GRATITUDE

We are grateful for those in the community who supported our scholars' access to our four-tiered approach of advising, mentoring, career readiness, and scholarships.

Lisa Aliferis & John Storella
Carole Allen
Nanette & Rex Andrews
Anonymous (6)
Rosemary Arca & John Germano
Ann Armstrong
Deborah Arthur & Jeffrey Soller
Laura Babitt
Linda & Mike Baker
Skip Battle
Lila Beckford
Benevity Community Impact Fund
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Carol Bieri & Joel Sanders
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Karen & Warren Bird
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Ragna Boynton
Todd & Helena Brantley
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George Buffington
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Jennifer Burroughs & Michael Rowe
Marilyn & Lawrence Capitelli
Tim Carroll
Indu Chandrasekhar
Cindy Chang & Christopher Hudson
Helen & Paul Chapman
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Louise & Jacob Epstein
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Molly & Harrison Fraker
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William Helvestine
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Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
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Robin Packel
Ann & Michael Parker
Deron Pease
Pettus Foundation
William Pettus & Stevie Kaplan
Joan & John Phillips
Alan & Teresa Pricco
Rebeca Rangel

KEY PARTNERS

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NPI - Financial Management
Janelle Shum Ng
Mia Georgiu
Sharon Hawkins Leyden
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Dilys & Saul Winegrad
Jane Wise
Evelyn & Gordon Wozniak
Becky & Morris Wright
Ursula Rodriguez
Karen Yencich & Kyle Davy
Scott Young

Mentors & Volunteers

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Sandy Alegria Hernandez
Jose Alfaro
Paola Alonso
Natnael Amare
Philip Arca
Rosemary Arca
Juan Azuara
Lila Beckford
Allison Bernstein Paillant
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Floyd Watson
Ryan Wineman
Elisha Wood-Charlson
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Adem, UC Los Angeles, Material Sciences & Engineering

Alani, UC Merced, Psychology

Aracely, UC Davis, Biological Sciences

Aryan, CSU Northridge, Public Health

Daijah, CSU Sacramento, Political Science

Daniel, UC Berkeley, Political Science

Dest, CSU San Jose, Design Studies & Graphic Design

Ella, Middlebury College, Neuroscience

Fares, CSU San Francisco, Broadcast & Electronic Communication Arts

Gema, UC Berkeley, Psychology

Giang, UC Merced, Chemistry

Hanyang, CSU San Francisco, Computer Science

Jaali, Louisianna State University, Mechanical Engineering

Khalil, UC Los Angeles, Sociology

Kiara, UC Santa Cruz, Psychology

Luis, CSU San Francisco, Computer Science

Mario, Stanford University, Biology

Muwazu, Mills College, Human Services

Natalie, Wesleyan, Film, Sociology minor

Nathan, UC Berkeley, Economics

Paola, UC Santa Barbara, Political Science

Salaah, UC Berkeley, Political Science

Shahm, UC Los Angeles, Economics

Shahmir, UC Davis, Economics

