Dear ScholarMatch Friends,

I’m pleased to share my first annual report for ScholarMatch since I had the honor of joining the team virtually mid-year in 2021. This report comes at a challenging time as we continue to adapt to a devastating pandemic and increased visibility of the structural inequities that continue to affect higher education—formidable issues that are helping shape the evolution of our organization and inspire new avenues for engagement and action.

The last two years have served as a turning point for many of us, forcing us to rethink our priorities, our values, and our impact. This is especially true for those in our nation’s postsecondary system. The Postsecondary Value Commission’s innovative diagnostic tool, the Equitable Value Explorer, reinforces through its data analysis that a college education is necessary for economic mobility. However, there are persistent inequities in college attainment by race and income. The reality continues to be that the colleges and universities that BIPOC and low-income students attend are more likely to be under-resourced.

We at ScholarMatch understand that Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and low-income students face elevated levels of unmet financial need contributing to lower completion rates; thus, we are focusing on building a more robust infrastructure for continuing our targeted financial support and virtual advising and career mentoring programming.

This past year, we have worked diligently to bolster our network of partners, finding new opportunities for collaboration and problem-solving. We have also increased our efforts to collect and share more accurate data that can inform meaningful conversations around meeting the needs of the population we serve. Additionally, we will continue to find new avenues for thought leadership and community engagement.

After years of learning and building a responsive program model that serves the needs of our first-generation, low-income students, we have now moved to the next phase of our organization’s work. The new pathways forged in 2021 are leading us into the future, to a forward-thinking, collaborative organization committed to access, affordability, and quality for all of our first-generation, low-income students.

This work is only possible thanks to the dedication and determination of the ScholarMatch staff, our community partners, volunteers, donors, and our supportive board. In a year rife with trials and tribulations, we have persevered together (albeit virtually!), and I am immensely grateful for our community’s arduous work and commitment to our mission. I hope you enjoy learning more about our progress and priorities through this annual report, and I look forward to continuing to learn and grow together.

In community,

Karla V. Salazar
Executive Director

About Us

At ScholarMatch, we are committed to supporting first-generation, low-income college students earn a bachelor’s degree within five years. We’re working towards realizing our vision, where all students have access to higher education, support to persist to graduation, and opportunities to succeed in fulfilling careers.

Our ultimate goal is to nurture a community of young people who can successfully navigate the higher education landscape, confronting its challenges, breaking barriers, and redefining success on their paths to graduation and beyond. Education opens doors to opportunity and social mobility by allowing students a chance to build fulfilling careers. However, the road to higher education is paved with challenges that can be particularly daunting for first-generation college students. At ScholarMatch, we strive to change this scenario for underserved young people by offering them comprehensive support services focusing on individualized college and career advising, targeted scholarships, and ongoing mentorship all the way to college graduation and the launch of their careers.

Ever since its founding in 2010, ScholarMatch has served thousands of students in California and nationwide, awarded over $5,000,000 in last-dollar scholarships, and engaged hundreds of community supporters.
Why We’re Needed

First-generation college students face more barriers towards graduation than continuing-generation students:
Nationwide, only 21 percent of first-generation, low-income college students graduate with a bachelor’s degree within six years. ScholarMatch students graduate at a much higher rate: 80 percent of ScholarMatch students who receive our full program model graduate within five years. Source: The Pell Institute and ScholarMatch’s Evaluation Report

First-generation college students usually graduate with mounting debt:
Among college graduates with any outstanding debt for their education, first-generation college graduates tend to owe more. About two-thirds (65 percent) of first-generation college graduates owe at least $25,000 or more, compared with 57 percent of second-generation college graduates. Black and African American college graduates owe an average of $25,000 more in student loan debt than white college graduates. At 46 percent, Black student borrowers were the most likely to put off buying a home. Hispanic and Latino borrowers were the most likely to delay getting married and having children due to student loan debt. Overall, white bachelor’s degree holders make between 19 percent (among women) and 30 percent (among men) more in median annual income than their Black counterparts. Source: Pew Research, Education Data, and Brookings Institution

Low-income students usually attend institutions with the fewest resources:
On average low-income students attend institutions with far fewer resources than their wealthier peers. In 2018, 63 percent of Pell Grant recipients were in broad-access colleges with average spending per full-time enrolled student of $14,945 while 5 percent of Pell Grant recipients were in highly selective institutions with average spending of $52,111. In general, as selectivity increases, Pell receipt declines. Source: The Pell Institute

Students of color continue to be underrepresented in certain higher education spaces and face lower graduation rates:
Black freshmen students in the California State University have dropped from 7.2 percent of the class enrolling in 2007 to only 4.5 percent in 2020. Among eligible Latinx high school graduates, less than half applied for admission to the University of California. While graduation rates have increased for Black and Latinx students at the CSU, the gap has grown for these students compared to their white peers. Source: The Campaign for College Opportunity

Students who are the first in their families to attend college usually need additional support to navigate college’s requirements and expectations. Research shows that individualized advising and ongoing mentorship play a key role in supporting students through college. ScholarMatch’s adoption of a comprehensive support services model is associated with high bachelor’s degree attainment rates for first-generation, low-income college students. Source: ScholarMatch’s Evaluation Report, Sage Journals, Pathways to College Network

Who We Serve

95% Students of color
92% Are the first in their family to attend college
1,072 High school students
430 College students
1,502 Total students served
Beginning in high school, ScholarMatch offers free, virtual support to students who are the first in their families to attend college. Students join ScholarMatch in their junior or senior year of high school and are matched with a volunteer college coach who guides them through the entire college application and financial aid process. Our Destination College program also offers workshops, test prep, webinars with college representatives, and more.

Our program has evolved over the years to best meet the needs of our students. Even before the pandemic hit, ScholarMatch was a pioneer in the realm of virtual college advising. Partnering with the CollegePoint initiative since 2016, our Destination College program team has trained hundreds of volunteer college coaches to remotely support college-bound students with their college application process. When the pandemic and its subsequent lockdown forced us to pivot to a fully virtual program model, our experience with virtual advising made the transition seamless as we kept supporting students during remote learning.

This adoption of a fully virtual program model has proven successful at ScholarMatch, enabling us to serve more students in California and beyond, expanding our reach, and deepening our impact. Virtual advising is not without its challenges, but by leveraging technology and free online tools, such as the ScholarMatcher, we’re able to make our model cost-efficient and scalable. We focus on targeting high schools that struggle with providing the right ratio of college counselors per student.

Despite the challenges of last year, we were able to deliver a successful program that included 16 college access webinars, including two webinars co-led with the University of Southern California and the University of California, San Diego, covering topics ranging from college match and fit to financial aid to scholarship applications. Additionally, we continued to offer virtual ACT/SAT preparation and subject tutoring to our students thanks to our partnership with AJ Tutors.

The most valuable part of the program was the help I received from the coach, especially during the college supplemental essays and personal statement. I’m also very grateful for the technology grant I received. Thank you so much for welcoming me into this program!” – Brenda R.

Thanks to an increase in the number of returning volunteers, we were able to provide unparalleled support to more than 1,000 high school students in California and nationwide. With the guidance of over 400 volunteer college coaches, our students worked on their personal state essays, applied for financial aid, and submitted a total of 3,933 college applications, with an average acceptance of four schools per student. This is an excellent outcome that speaks to the impact of our work and the continued investment of our coaches in supporting our students.
Students in our Destination College program are invited to apply to our Scholars Program to continue receiving robust college advising, career mentoring, and strategic financial support from one of our scholarship partners. Once accepted into the program, students are matched to a professional college advisor on our staff, and receive up to $25,000 in grants and loan repayment. As our scholars approach graduation, ScholarMatch connects students with volunteer career coaches to help with resume building, job search, and professional development goals.

In the 2020-21 program year, our Scholars Program provided virtual college advising and relationship-building support to 430 students—an increase of over 20 percent from the 2019-20 program year. Students in our Scholars Program also received critical support on their paths to career launch, including access to multiple career workshops and other virtual events, a vast internship gallery, and network opportunities in their desired career fields. These valuable resources helped students unlock meaningful internships and other professional development opportunities. Our students landed internships in multiple fields, ranging from environmental engineering research at UC Merced to music theory with YouTube experts to STEM projects focusing on making textbooks more affordable to students.

“...I really couldn’t have graduated without the guidance of my advisor. Just being able to talk to him about my concerns and other things that were going on was super helpful and made my college experience much better!” — Marina H.

When We Engage Our Scholars, They Succeed

Our Impact

Twelve years ago, ScholarMatch began as a San Francisco-based crowdfunding platform for scholarships and quickly evolved into a college access and persistence organization, delivering hands-on support for hundreds of first-generation, low-income students in the Bay Area. In 2013, ScholarMatch shifted towards a comprehensive programmatic model that includes individualized college success and career advising, targeted financial support, and ongoing mentorship and emotional support for students. With a unique, community-centered approach, our programs help change the trajectory of our students’ lives by matching them with trained volunteers and valuable resources for academic and career success.

In 2020, ScholarMatch allocated resources for an external evaluation of the college success program intended to further the organization’s understanding of the program’s performance and outcomes. The evaluation was designed to compare student-level outcomes against the program’s primary mission to support bachelor’s degree attainment within the first five years of enrollment.

When We Engage Our Scholars, They Succeed

GRADUATION PERCENTAGE

80%

21%

ScholarMatch

First-Gen, Low Income

Source: The Pell Institute Fact Sheet

Eighty percent of ScholarMatch students who received the full program model (both financial and non-financial support) graduated with a bachelor’s degree within five years. Nationally, only 21 percent of low-income, first-generation college students attain a bachelor’s degree within six years*. The ScholarMatch program creates an outcome almost four times better for this population of students.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>430</th>
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<td>Students served</td>
<td>Emergency funds awarded</td>
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<td>Average GPA</td>
<td>Dollars awarded for unpaid internships</td>
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<th>97%</th>
<th>$1,510,793</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman retention rate</td>
<td>Total scholarships awarded</td>
</tr>
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</table>

96.7%

ScholarMatch persistence rate (across multiple years)
Community Spotlight

Volunteers, partners, and other supporters are the driving force behind our work. We simply couldn’t reach thousands of students nationwide without the support of dedicated individuals who believe in our work. Teachers, counselors, college advisors, volunteers, and many other members of our community power our work every day, whether by referring students to our program or offering academic and professional development opportunities to our scholars. For Amadis Velez, Mission High School teacher and long-time ScholarMatch supporter, partnering with ScholarMatch means creating avenues for a lifetime of student success.

“ScholarMatch is a cornerstone community partner that provides students with individualized college and career counseling and comprehensive support services, including scholarship aid. Their network of coaches helps students develop the unique journeys and talents they each bring to college while empowering them to persist and succeed.”
– Amadis Velez, Mission High School Teacher

“…”

For Myra Vasquez, whose son Olin Avina was part of the Destination College program and now attends UCSC, ScholarMatch’s support meant a long-lasting connection with their kid’s college coach.

“We appreciate all that the ScholarMatch program has to offer, and it truly shows how the ScholarMatch staff is passionate about getting these students into college.”
– Myra Vasquez, Olin Avina’s Mom

Congratulations, Class of 2021

In the 2020-21 school year, we proudly celebrated the graduation of 57 scholars! Navigating the complexities of college to reach graduation is an amazing milestone in and of itself, but persevering towards one’s goals amidst so much uncertainty in the world deserves a special shoutout and recognition! We know these students have a bright future ahead.

OUR GRADUATES

Mahmoud Al-Arda
Haze Alfaro
Damaris Avila
Rosemary Benuelos
Jesus Caballero
Nani Chambers
Natalie Chavez
Pierre Derbier
Luis Dominguez
Matthew Durousseau
Bryan Garcia
Jorge Gaytan Lopez
Carlos Gomez
Travis Greer
Miguel Guzman
Kimberly Herrera
Wenting Hu
Lily Huang Chen
Roderick Hughes
Kaloni Hurrel
Mia Kennedy
Mandy La
Joyce Li
Lucas Liu
Gladys Lopez
Jonathan Lopez
Alondra Martinez
Silvia Mejia
Eni Mohamed
Oscar Munoz
Lauryn Newsome
Fernie Olmos
Jennifer Oroxon
Josh Padua
Artie Paredes
Karla Paredes
Oliver Penilla
Jayme Perez
Cristhian Pineda Díaz
Michelle Phung
Ernesto Fimientel
Jennifer Ramirez
Jaevion Reed
Andrea Rodriguez
Angel Rodriguez
Anette Ruvalcaba
Ambrocio Sanchez Pineda
Diana Segura
Joseph Silva
Olive Tambou
Xinyi Tan
Justin Tun
Seui Ufau
Jonathan Vasquez
Marlene Vidal
Salvador Villafaña
Sabrina Yerena
Looking Ahead
ScholarMatch’s Investment in Virtual Advising

Even before the pandemic hit, ScholarMatch was a pioneer in the realm of virtual college advising. Partnering with the CollegePoint initiative since 2016, our Destination College program team has trained hundreds of volunteer college coaches from across the country to remotely support college-bound students with their college application process. Our Scholars Program advisors have also worked in a hybrid model to remotely support college students in California and nationwide—meeting in-person, but also connecting virtually and providing real-time remote support via video, phone, email, and text message.

Over the past two years, we have learned a lot from offering a fully virtual program, which prompted us to focus on expanding and enhancing our virtual advising services—from updating our online ScholarMatcher tool to strengthening our College and Career Milestones to expanding our team of remote volunteers and staff advisors. We recognize some of the concerns about supporting students in a fully virtual environment, such as coaches not being able to build effective relationships with students or students lacking access to the needed technology.

On the technology side, last year alone, we provided over $50,000 in emergency funds, including new laptops, phones, and hotspots for students. And the glowing reviews from our students about their coaches show us just how powerful these mentorships can be, even when fully virtual. We also acknowledge that our students may still want—and can benefit from—in-person advising; our programs are designed to supplement the work of high school counselors and college advisors, particularly at high schools and universities that may have more limited resources.

Students and advisors alike can benefit greatly from virtual advising. Since pivoting to a fully virtual model, we’ve seen the number of student/coach interactions increase across different platforms. Virtual meetings and programs allow for more flexibility in students’ busy schedules while offering an opportunity for them to log in from anywhere and receive the crucial support they deserve. Working with a virtual advisor also helps students build confidence navigating other online resources and events, such as virtual career conferences.

As an organization committed to educational equity, we strive to stay at the forefront of evidence-based best practices around college access and virtual advising. We are even involved in the research efforts in the field. A recent working paper on the CollegePoint initiative highlights the randomized controlled trials in which ScholarMatch and three other organizations provided virtual college application advising to high-achieving low- and middle-income high school students. The study shows that virtual advising did have a modest positive impact on students applying to higher-quality institutions. Importantly, this positive effect was amplified during the COVID-19 lockdown, which prevented many students from accessing in-person school or community-based advising services. We know many of the students we work with at ScholarMatch may not have access to high-touch, in-person college counseling or academic advising, and our team can help fill that gap.

Our goal is to be at the forefront of providing high-quality virtual advising and for the research to show an even stronger positive impact on our first-generation and low-income students. We hope you will partner with us on this journey and hold the virtual doors wide open for even more students to access and benefit from the ScholarMatch model of support.

“ScholarMatch has been a constant source of support for me throughout my college experience and I am incredibly grateful.” – OLIVE T.
Income

- Unrestricted donations $961,544
- Unrestricted service fees $306,820
- Restricted donations $82,555
- Restricted program $341,800
- Scholarships $661,441
- Grants $504,255
- Rent income $16,551
- Investment income $11,472

Total Income $2,886,438

In 2020, in response to the pandemic, the ScholarMatch donor community gave very generously to our program so we can keep supporting first-generation students from low-income backgrounds. Thanks to their generosity, we distributed a total of $1.5 million in scholarships in 2021, $544,000 more than in 2020. The surplus of 2020 consists of restricted program donations designated for future years and accrued scholarship payments, which will be paid to students during their college journey. As a result of leadership transitions, inability to hold fundraising events, and a decrease in scholarship donors, ScholarMatch was not able to raise funds at the same rate as previous years. Also, please keep in mind that this year increased expenses are associated with the 2020 accrued revenue. ScholarMatch, under its new board and staff leadership, has once again strengthened its programmatic metrics and fund development goals.

Expenses

- Salaries & benefits $2,475,905
- Scholarships $1,510,793
- Occupancy $235,740
- General & administrative $512,087
- Direct program $50,607
- Staff development $10,285

Total Expenses $4,795,414

Donors
With gratitude and appreciation, we acknowledge our donors and partners for their generous support during the 2020-21 program year. Individual donors are listed on our website.
Get Involved

**VOLUNTEER**
Check out [scholarmatch.org/get-involved](http://scholarmatch.org/get-involved) for a comprehensive list of ways to support our work.

**GIVE**
Visit [scholarmatch.org/donate](http://scholarmatch.org/donate) to make a tax-deductible donation to our program.

**FUND A SCHOLARSHIP**
When you donate to ScholarMatch, you’re connecting first-generation students with the tools, support, and community they need to get to and through college.

Visit [scholarmatch.org/contribute](http://scholarmatch.org/contribute) to learn more about different ways to support our students.

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