

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

MAKING COLLEGE POSSIBLE

At ScholarMatch, we believe that every student deserves the opportunity to pursue their college and career dreams.



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A Letter from the Executive Director

Karla V. Salazar



Dear ScholarMatch Community,

The past years as ScholarMatch’s Executive Director have reminded me why I chose this work. A passion for education runs deep in my family, shaped by generations of teachers who have inspired me to listen carefully and give back. But the real learning has come from our students.

Every student interaction adds to this wonderful journey that has been nothing short of transformative. It’s been an incredible honor and privilege to get to know our students, listen to their stories, and advocate for funding on their behalf to ensure their needs are met.

As we close this program year, I am pleased to share the highlights of another impactful chapter at ScholarMatch, where we continued to serve first-generation students at every stage of their higher education journey—whether they are applying to college or getting ready to launch their careers, we are here every step of the way.

As ScholarMatch grows to meet this moment, we are proud to expand our services with two new pilot programs designed to support transfer students and underserved youth in Southeast Los Angeles. This work is especially meaningful to me because I was once one of those students. I am a proud alumna of our public education system, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second-largest public school system in the nation. Thanks to my network of mentors, I successfully navigated both college and graduate school.

Today, I am proud to represent the best of California and our great nation, alongside many hard-working families, carrying forward the resilience, talent, and potential of our community in everything we achieve. I am a testament to the love and perseverance of my immigrant family, who worked multiple jobs, and the mentors who guided me toward realizing my college dreams.

Thank you for supporting our work and being part of this inspiring community of changemakers. I am proud to be on this journey with each one of you. Together, we are igniting potential and making college possible one application at a time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Salazar'.

Karla V. Salazar
Executive Director



ABOUT US

At ScholarMatch, we are committed to supporting first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds to earn a bachelor's degree within five years.

Over the past 14 years, we have been working toward our vision of helping first-generation students gain access to higher education, receive support to persist to graduation, and pursue 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.

Since its founding in 2010, ScholarMatch has served thousands of students in California and nationwide, awarded nearly \$8.5M in scholarships, and engaged hundreds of community supporters.



**With the support of
dedicated mentors,
99% of our students were
accepted into college.**

This work is grounded in individualized guidance that meets students where they are. At ScholarMatch, mentors support students every step of the way.

The road to higher education starts here

2023-24 BY THE NUMBERS

ScholarMatch 



Served 
850 STUDENTS
(Across all programs)

Awarded 
\$650,000
in scholarships

3.15
Avg. GPA


96%
Student
Satisfaction Rate


633
VOLUNTEERS




3,714
Total college
applications


99%
College
Acceptance Rate*

Scholars Program
100%
Freshman
Retention Rate



* SELF-REPORTED DATA

WHY WE'RE NEEDED

*1 Source: [American School Counselor Association](#)

Education is fundamental to unlocking students' potential and equipping them with the critical thinking skills needed to successfully navigate the world and engage in our society.

Yet the opportunity gap is widening, particularly affecting first-generation students. While a student's journey to higher education can vary widely, one underlying challenge that still impacts most students, regardless of background, is understanding the complexities of the college application process.



Adding to this issue, first-generation students from low-income backgrounds often attend underfunded schools where counselor ratios can reach 500 to 1*1, making personalized attention nearly impossible.

Organizations like ScholarMatch fill the gap by matching students one-on-one with volunteer mentors who help students feel seen, heard, and encouraged to break barriers. This human connection helps ease the self-doubt and imposter syndrome that many first-generation students experience as they embark on a college journey away from home.



For students who are the first in their family to attend college, navigating college applications is just the beginning.

Once admitted, students must make sense of academic requirements, balance school demands with family and work responsibilities, and address cultural barriers, as many first-generation students are immigrants or unfamiliar with the U.S. higher education landscape. In many cases, the lack of inherited knowledge from college-educated parents and other resources can lead to higher dropout rates and mounting debt.

*1 Source: [FirstGen Forward](#)

*2 Source: [EAB](#)

*3 Source: [National Center for Education Statistics](#)

*4 Source: [Social Security](#)

*5 Source: [Pew Research Center](#)



24%

Nationwide Graduates

Graduation Rates

Nationwide, only 24 percent of first-generation students from low-income backgrounds graduate within five years. *1

Research shows that 33 percent of first-generation students drop out within three years, compared to just 14 percent of continuing-generation students.*2



The Value of a Degree

A college degree remains one of the most powerful tools for economic mobility, often leading to \$1M more in lifetime earnings. For adults who do complete a bachelor's degree, financial outcomes are strongly linked to parental educational attainment.*3*4

59%

The median earnings of those with a bachelor's degree were 59 percent higher than the earnings of those who completed high school as their highest level of attainment.*5

BY 2031

72 percent of jobs in the U.S. will require postsecondary education or training.

"Your belief in students like me doesn't just impact one life—it creates a ripple effect that transforms the future of higher education."

Ambrocio Pineda Sanchez | Class of 2021
University of California, Irvine



THE SCHOLARMATCH DIFFERENCE



Individualized Attention

Our students receive 1:1 support from mentors from high school through college graduation. With the guidance of coaches, students build college lists, apply for financial aid, navigate curriculum demands, explore career interests, and more!



Targeted Financial Aid

Financial barriers are a major reason many first-generation students don't consider college a viable option. ScholarMatch helps reduce this burden by providing flexible financial support through annual grants and scholarships.



Holistic Support

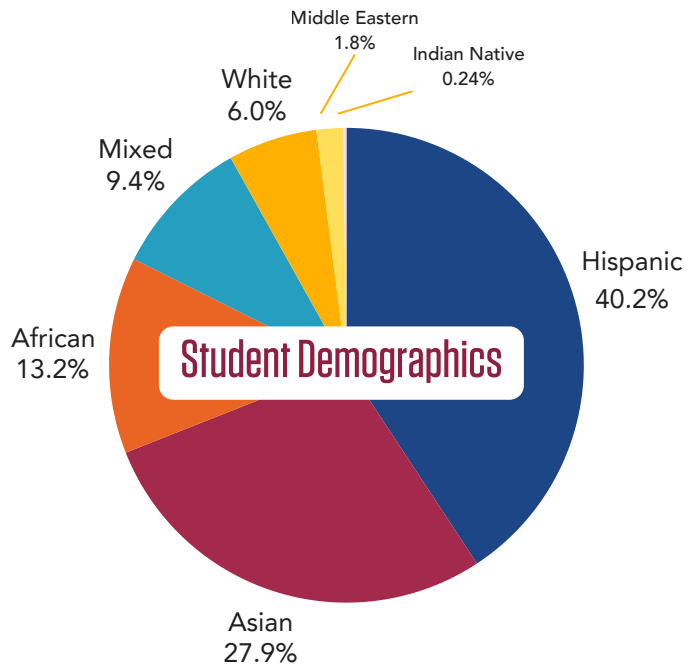
That addresses students' academic, financial, and emotional needs: The core of our student support comes from a 1:1 student-advisor relationship.

ScholarMatch's relationship-first advising model combines personalized support with proven practices for student success.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

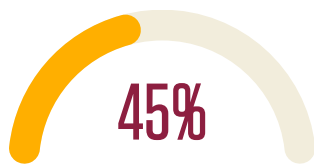
Total Students • 850

- Hispanic • 40.2%
- Asian • 27.9%
- African • 13.2%
- Mixed • 9.4%
- White • 6%
- Middle Eastern • 1.8%
- Indian Native • 0.24%

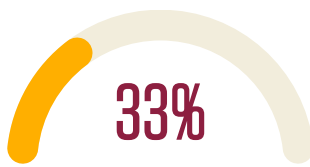


Most Popular Fields of Study

Scholars Program



STEM



Social Sciences



Business



Arts/Humanities



Undecided



Interdisciplinary Major

OUR PROGRAM MODEL

Our Program Model

Our program model spans from junior year of high school through college graduation, providing students with holistic support through three key transitions:



Junior Year of High School

College Graduation



1 – College Access

ScholarMatch’s Destined for College program supports juniors and seniors through a full year of one-on-one college advising. Mentors guide students through key milestones, such as building college lists, completing financial aid forms, and writing personal statements. Students also have access to workshops, test preparations, and college webinars.

2 – College Persistence

Once accepted to college, students can apply to the Scholars Program to continue receiving year-round advising from a dedicated college advisor, up to \$20,000 in targeted financial aid, and access to workshops that support well-being, academic success, and career readiness.

3 – Career Readiness

Through our Career Launch initiative, scholars are paired with career coaches to explore different career pathways, apply for internships, and prepare for career launch. Scholars also have access to professional development workshops, internships, and networking opportunities.



Thank you, ScholarMatch, for all the help and guidance along the way. I look forward to the next chapter in my life as I embark on a career as a financial advisor.

Ashley Toscano | Class of 2024
University of California, Los Angeles

DESTINED FOR COLLEGE PROGRAM

The College Application Process

Beginning in high school, ScholarMatch offers free, virtual support through the Destined for College program to students who are the first in their family to attend college. In the last program year...



638

Students Matched

High school students were matched with volunteer coaches to work one-on-one on college applications.

3,714

College Applicants

With the support of college coaches, Destined for College participants drafted personal essays, applied for financial aid, and submitted a total of 3,714 college applications.

99%

Acceptance Rate

According to preliminary admissions data, our students' hard work has resulted in a 99%*acceptance rate!

* Self-reported data

Available Resources

- **Financial literacy & aid webinars** led by UC Irvine's School of Education Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP)
- **Academic subject tutoring** and SAT preparation with AJ Tutoring
- **Access to courses** to meet A-G eligibility, including college prep, advanced placement, and vocational courses, thanks to a partnership with UC Scout, a University of California Student Academic Preparation and Educational Partnerships (SAPEP) program
- **ScholarMatcher:** Our free in-house college search tool designed for first-generation students
- **College-Ready Milestones:** Our free, comprehensive step-by-step guide to the college application process



Program Updates: College Persistence SCHOLARS PROGRAM

In the 2023-24 program year, students in our Scholars Program received personalized support at critical junctures in their college journeys.

Scholars Program Offerings:

- Robust college advising support from trained staff
- Career mentoring and networking opportunities
- Financial support through flexible scholarships
- Access to internships and post-graduation opportunities

Scholars Program Highlights

Student Councils (first year)



Advisory Council: Focus on program input and feedback and leadership development



Ambassador Council: Focus on scholar representation, outreach, and leadership development



262 scholars
Served

100% Freshman Year Retention Rate

3.15
AVG. GPA

Total awarded in scholarships:
\$649,891



Emergency funds awarded: **\$81,040.23**

\$115,132
Career development funds and unpaid internship stipends awarded



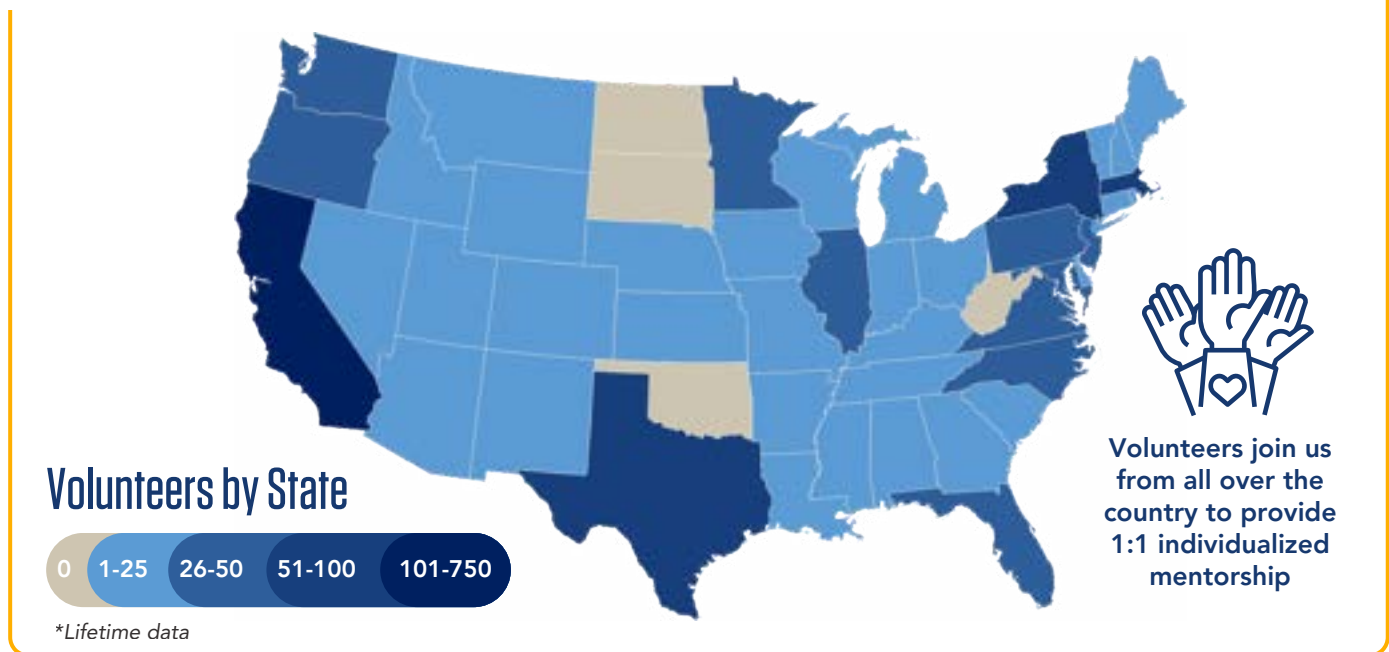
Program Persistence Rate: **98%**
(across multiple years)

SCHOLARMATCH'S NATIONAL REACH

Where Our Scholars Enroll



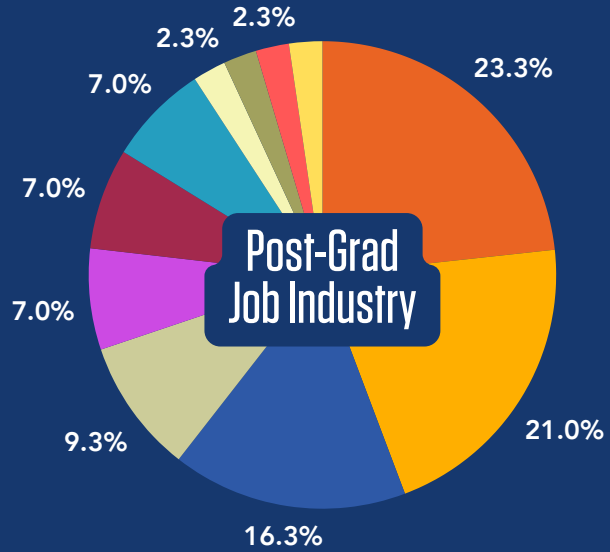
Our Diverse Volunteer Base



LIFE AFTER COLLEGE

Post-Grad Job Industry

- Educational Services: 23.3%
- Healthcare or Social Services: 21%
- S.T.E.M.: 16.3%
- Business: 9.3%
- Financial Services: 7%
- Nonprofit Administration: 7%
- Other: 7%
- Research Services: 2.3%
- Manufacturing: 2.3%
- Management Consulting: 2.3%
- Agriculture: 2.3%



Employment

Six months after graduation



Employed Full Time



Grad School or Employment



Celebrating the Class of 2024

CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2024

In 2024, we celebrated the graduation of 51 scholars!

These hard-working students navigated many challenges to reach the finish line, including attending classes in the hybrid model during the pandemic, financial aid hurdles, and much more.



Celebrating the Class of 2024



Alberto Rodriguez
Alex Luu
Alexei Olivo
Andrea Patino Gomez
Angel Garcia Ballesteros
Ashley Kezia Marie Fumar
Ashley Toscano
Astrid Navidad
Aung Myat
Bobby Magallan
Cely Pablo
Connie Tran
Dani Santillan
Daniel Garcia
Edward Garcia
Elliott Calderon
Emmanuel Fashesin Souza

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Fabiola Eloisa Martinez Rivas
Fayeeza Shaikh
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Minia Ruiz
Nicole Salazar Ramos
Ronaldo Lopez-Tucux
Ryan Tam
Sandy Wu
Steven Chen
Sibgha Shoaib
Vincent Okafor
Vivian Li
Weipeng Wang
Winnie Qi
Xinjian Cen

CELEBRATING ESTEBAN RODRIGUEZ

Celebrating board member Esteban Rodriguez's impact

Since joining the ScholarMatch Board of Directors in 2024, Esteban Rodriguez's support has been instrumental in advancing ScholarMatch's work through multiple initiatives.



An accomplished litigator at O'Melveny, Esteban has handled some of the most complex and highest-profile cases of the past decade. His dedication to the Los Angeles community also shines through the many projects he devotes his time to, including mentorship programs in low-income communities.

Esteban also serves as the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors of Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, one of the largest and most prominent public interest law offices in California, and as the President of the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) Region XVIII (Southern California).

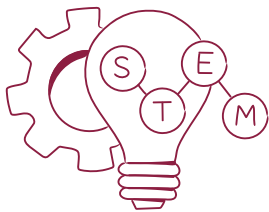
His passion for educational equity led him to the ScholarMatch Board of Directors, where his expertise, generosity, and long-term vision have opened doors to new partnerships and opportunities for our students.

We are deeply grateful for his leadership and guidance and look forward to his continued involvement.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In 2025, we are launching two new pilot programs designed to strengthen our program offerings and expand pathways for students, including transfer students and underserved youth in college-access deserts.

WHAT'S NEXT



STEM Transfer Program:

The STEM Transfer Program was designed in partnership with the Genentech Foundation to help community college students successfully transfer to four-year institutions while pursuing STEM degrees. We are looking forward to serving more San Francisco Bay Area students as they pursue their college education.



LA Scholars Program:

We are also expanding our virtual college persistence services to first-generation students in the Southeast Los Angeles region, thanks to a partnership with the Ballmer Foundation. We are thrilled to serve more scholars in the Los Angeles area in the coming years.



Statement of Financial Position

Assets:

Cash and cash equivalents	\$3,948,173
Contributions receivable	\$2,125,728
Investments	\$1,082,989
Prepaid expenses and other assets	\$0
Total Assets	\$7,156,890

Liabilities & Net Assets:

Liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued	\$357,704
Total Liabilities	\$357,704

Net Assets:

Net assets <i>without</i> donor restrictions	\$2,551,570
Net assets <i>with</i> donor restrictions	\$4,247,616
Total net assets	\$6,799,186
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$7,156,890



Statement of Activities

Revenue & Support:

Contributions	\$3,719,331
Program service fees	\$114,977
Investment income, net	\$240,434
Other income	\$0
Net assets released from restriction	\$0
Total Revenue & Support	\$4,074,742

Expenses:

Student assistance programs	\$1,842,826
Scholarships	\$917,144
Management and general	\$654,067
Fundraising	\$476,272
Total Expenses	\$3,890,309
Change in net assets	\$184,433
Net assets, beginning of year	\$6,614,753
Net Assets, End of Year	\$6,799,186

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With gratitude and appreciation, we acknowledge our donors and partners for their generous support during the 2023-24 program year.

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VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATE - ENGAGEMENT

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COLLEGE ADVISOR

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Sunny Wilson
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Jacqueline Zha
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE



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Volunteer

Visit our [website](#) for a comprehensive list of ways to volunteer to support our work.

Give

Make a tax-deductible donation to our program at scholarmatch.org/donate.

Sponsor a Scholar




When you donate to ScholarMatch, you are connecting first-generation students with the tools, support, and community they need to get to and through college.

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about the different ways you can sponsor a scholar.

Contact Us

info@scholarmatch.org
www.scholarmatch.org

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