10 years

college beyond

2025

impact report

Our students have an 80% average first year persistence rate

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executive summary

Ten years ago, a group of educators at Cohen College Prep came together to confront a challenge facing countless Louisiana students: staggering college dropout rates. The previous year, Cohen had celebrated a milestone achievement, having 100% of its senior class admitted to college. Yet within months, many of those same students began to drop out at alarming rates.

For most, it wasn't a lack of talent or motivation that stopped them. It was the obstacles that no one had fully prepared them for: a $300 book bill, an unexpected transportation cost, a struggle to balance full-time coursework with full-time work. Their success depended not only on academic preparation but on navigating the complex, often unforgiving realities of the college transition.

From this realization, College Beyond was born, with a simple but powerful mission: to close the gap between college access and college success.

Today, our work stands at the intersection of equity, persistence, and economic mobility. In Louisiana, only 12 percent of low-income students earn a bachelor's degree, yet the data is clear: a college education remains one of the most effective drivers of long-term economic opportunity. Over the past decade, we've learned that the value of higher education extends far beyond earnings; it also includes about exposure, understanding, and shared humanity.

In an era marked by polarization and isolation, college remains one of the few places where young people encounter perspectives vastly different from their own. It's where a city kid befriends a classmate from a rural parish, and where students from different racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds learn together, debate ideas, and begin to see the world through each other's eyes. These experiences shape not only our workforce, but our democracy.

At College Beyond, we believe universities hold profound power, not only to uplift communities through economic opportunity, but also to shape an informed, empathetic, and engaged citizenry.

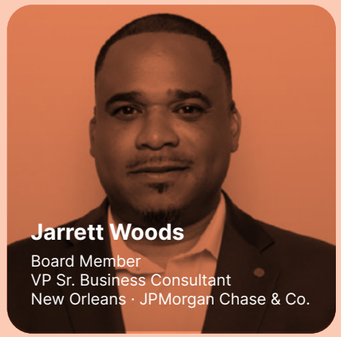
Over the past decade, we've supported thousands of students on their journey through higher education, partnering with institutions such as the University of New Orleans, Southeastern Louisiana University, Loyola University, and Northshore Technical Community College. This past year, we expanded our reach to include high school and community partners like InspireNOLA, Benjamin Franklin High School, and Son of a Saint, and launched innovative scholarship programs such as the McCollum Scholars Program, the Tolmas Scholars, and our Persistence Scholarship. Together, these initiatives strengthen the pipeline of prepared, confident, and well-supported students across the region.

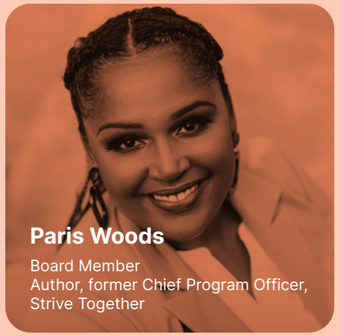
In 2024, we launched an ambitious strategic plan that will triple the number of students we serve over the next three years. As we enter our second decade, our vision is clear: to expand access, deepen impact, and ensure that every student in southeastern Louisiana, regardless of income or background, has the opportunity not just to attend college, but to graduate and thrive.

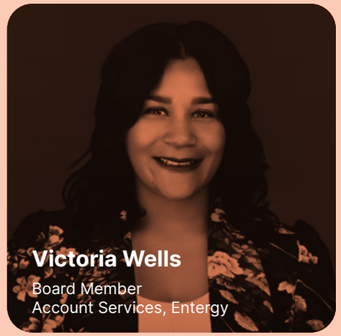
College Beyond's first ten years have proven what is possible when we invest in both access and belonging. The next ten will be about scaling that impact, transforming systems, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that every student's potential becomes Louisiana's future.

Clara Baron-Hyppolite
Executive Director
College Beyond

board of directors







Dear College Beyond Community,

When I joined the Board of College Beyond, I was drawn to the organization's deep commitment to students and its clear understanding of the realities they face. In Louisiana, the path to and through college is rarely straightforward, especially for first-generation and low-income students. College Beyond exists to walk alongside students through that complexity, and to do so with consistency, trust, and care.

Since joining the Board, I've had the opportunity to see this work up close. I've watched staff build meaningful relationships with students, meet them where they are, and help them navigate academic, financial, and personal challenges that too often go unseen. This work is not about quick fixes. It's about showing up consistently, asking the right questions, and staying committed even when the systems students are navigating fall short. As College Beyond marks its tenth year, this moment feels both reflective and forward-looking. What began as a small, educator-led effort has grown into a trusted partner for students and institutions across our region, while staying rooted in the belief that student success requires both care and accountability.

At the same time, College Beyond has continued to build momentum. We've strengthened our university partnerships and invested in programs that respond directly to what students tell us they need to persist and succeed. The outcomes shared in this report reflect that steady, intentional work, and the dedication of a team that believes deeply in the potential of every student it serves.

I've had the privilege of working closely with our Executive Director, Clara Baron-Hyppolite, as she leads the organization forward with clarity, thoughtfulness, and vision. Under her leadership, College Beyond remains grounded in its mission while thinking intentionally about how to build a stronger, more effective future for postsecondary student success across our region.

To our partners, funders, and supporters, thank you. Your belief in this work makes it possible. And to the students who trust College Beyond with their stories and their goals, we are honored to walk alongside you. The work of expanding opportunity and advancing equity in higher education takes all of us. I'm proud to be part of this community and excited about what lies ahead.

With gratitude,

Maricio Sierra
Board Chair
College Beyond

student survey outcomes

Our Student Success Survey provides coaches with data-driven, predictive insights into the challenges students may face as they transition into college. The survey captures information across three key areas: academic and soft skills preparation, financial readiness and responsibilities, and students' socio-emotional wellbeing.

Together, these insights give our team a more complete understanding of each student's circumstances, allowing coaches to deliver more targeted, proactive support that addresses potential barriers before they become obstacles to persistence.

12%
of students without reliable internet

16%
of students without reliable technology i.e. working laptop or computer

28%
of students support their families financially

37%
of commuter students without reliable transportation

31%
of on-campus students reported limited access to healthy meals

45%
of students do not have enough funds to cover the cost of additional supplies needed for college

$34,700
awarded to students

- Oscar J. Tolmas & College Beyond Persistence Scholarships
- First Year Transition Awards
- Monthly Incentives

26
monthly sessions

- Chase Workshops: Building Credit

78%
of students agree they are aware of resources & contacts available to them when seeking an internship

300%
increase in Emergency Fund applications

41%
of students have already used / plan to use
Our Pop-up Pantry

63%
of students already have resumes
Career Readiness

our support model

senior year

- Application Workshops
- Parent Engagement
- FAFSA Support
- College Exposure
- Counselor Training

summer prep

- Summer Melt Prevention
- Enrollment Support
- Orientation

freshmen year

- 1-1 Trauma-Informed Coaching
- Microgrants
- Scholarships

graduation

- Career Exposure & Development
- Ambassador Leadership Development Program

HIGH SCHOOL

COLLEGE

our impact at a glance

students we've served

337

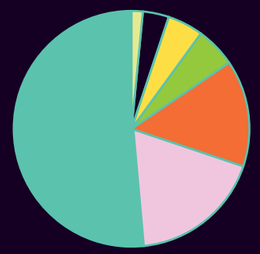
of meetings

1073

demographic breakdown

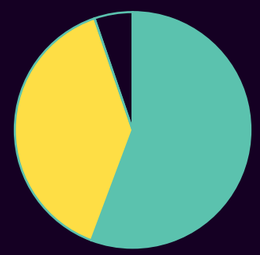
BY RACE

- 52% African American
- 7% Asian
- 14% Caucasian
- 16% Hispanic
- 4% Multi-Racial
- 1% Native American
- 6% Other



BY GENDER

- 58% Female
- 38% Male
- 4% Prefer not to say



"Whenever I need guidance in my next steps or whenever I have a question, **I can always turn to my coach** and she will provide me with the information, encouragement, and plans I need."

COLLEGE BEYOND STUDENT TESTIMONY

list of supports

WE OFFERED STUDENTS

- Coaching
- Community Circles
- Food Locker
- Grief Workshops
- Study Groups

scholarships awarded

$45,868

microgrants awarded

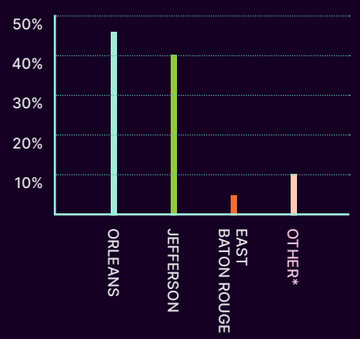
$32,550

helping students pay for gas,food, books, and other school-related expenses

BY PARISH

geographic breakdown

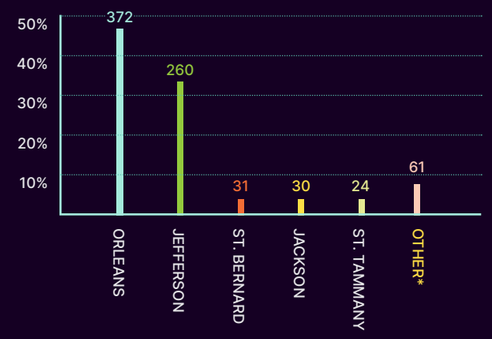
2024 COHORT



* Other Parishes in Southeast Louisiana including St. Bernard, Washington, Lafayette, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany & Franklin

NUMBER OF ACTIVE STUDENTS BY PARISH

STUDENTS COME FROM 23 PARISHES ACROSS LOUISIANA



* Other Parishes in Southeast Louisiana including East Baton Rouge, St. Bernard, Washington, Lafayette, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany & Franklin

student satisfaction

99% of students agree that their coaches challenge and encourage them

99% report that their coach provides a safe space

98% reported that overall College Beyond has met their needs well

98% report feeling connected to their coach*

* Connected to their Coach: this includes fairly, very & extremely and very & extremely = 74%

Sanaya McNeil

For Sanaya, psychology with a premedical concentration was never just an academic choice. It was a reflection of who she is. With a natural curiosity about people and a deep desire to understand both herself and those around her, she found her calling in the pursuit of knowledge. “I love learning, and I know the money will follow,” she says confidently. As a first-generation college student with roots in Metairie and New Orleans, Sanaya has embraced every opportunity to grow academically and personally.

Navigating college as a first-generation student came with its challenges, chief among them simply knowing what steps to take. Learning to take initiative, seek out resources, and build a support system became essential. “You really have to make it happen for yourself,” she reflects. Balancing adulthood with academic life is an ongoing process, but giving herself grace and putting her best self forward in all aspects has been key.

A chance hallway encounter with College Beyond’s Coach Cam became a turning point in Sanaya’s college journey. She does not believe in coincidences, and finding College Beyond proved to be a crucial support system. From helping her organize her schedule to building her confidence, the program has been a steady presence. “Coach Cam taught me how to double dutch, and Coach Carolyn is holding the ropes,” she shares, illustrating the invaluable guidance she has received.

As she prepares for the next step, applying to graduate programs, she wishes for even more time with her coach.

As president of her Delta Sigma Theta chapter, Sanaya has taken on leadership roles that allow her to serve others. Organizing events, volunteering, and shadowing professionals have given her a deeper understanding of social issues and strengthened her ability to lead. She is proud to create opportunities for her peers while giving back to the community.

For students considering College Beyond, her advice is simple: “Do it! There’s nothing to lose and everything to gain. The earlier you get involved, the better foundation you build for yourself.” With her ambition, heart for service, and dedication to learning, Sanaya is creating a future where she can make a meaningful difference, both in the psychology field and beyond.

“Do it! There’s nothing to lose and everything to gain. The earlier you get involved, the better foundation you build for yourself.”

Sanaya McNiel
Psychology, Pre-Medical Concentration,

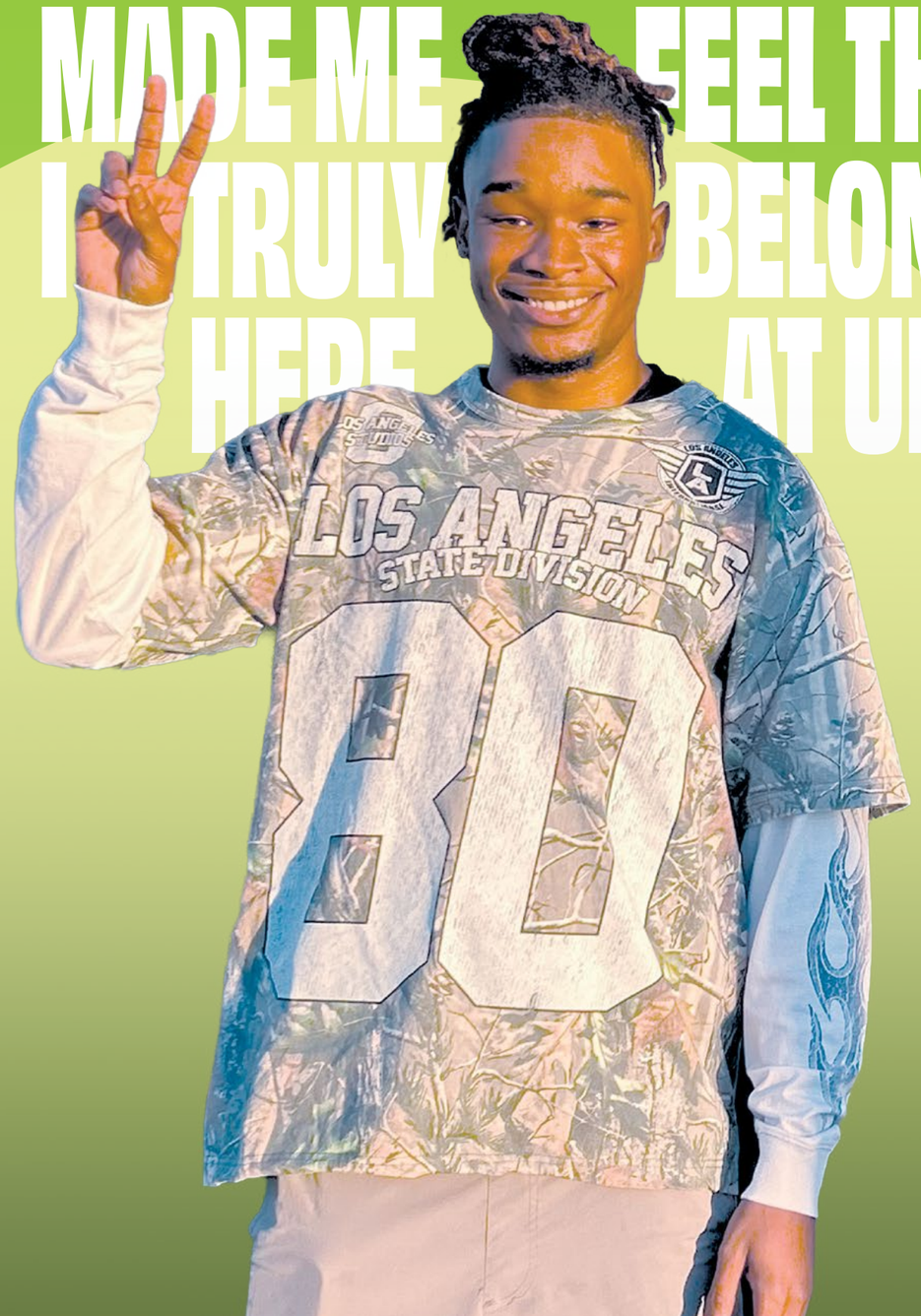
Class of 2026 University of New Orleans
Delta Sigma Theta Chapter President

DO IT! THERE’S NOTHING TO LOSE & EVERYTHING TO GAIN.

UNO Class of 2026 * Delta Chapter President

College Beyond students have performed **20 percentage points higher in first-year persistence over the past four years**

COLLEGE BEYOND HAS MADE ME FEEL THAT I TRULY BELONG HERE AT UNO



UNO Class of 2027 * Justin Johnson

persistence scholarship

THE AFFORDABILITY CRISIS

The College Beyond Persistence Scholarship provides up to $3,000 to active College Beyond students facing enrollment holds due to outstanding balances. The loss of a part-time job, an unexpected car repair, or a mistake in paperwork can present an insurmountable financial hurdle for some students. The Persistence Scholarship provides both financial support as well as intensive coaching and budgeting sessions to ensure recipients have a clear and actionable plan in place to fund their education moving forward. During our first year, College Beyond was able to provide $30,248 in Persistence Scholarships, enabling 13 students, who would have otherwise been unable to enroll, to continue their educational journey.

JJ

Justin Johnson

How has receiving the scholarship impacted your ability to pursue **your academic goals**?

Receiving this scholarship has 100% helped me continue this semester without issue. My original plan was to take out student loans but with this scholarship I was able to save a lot of money.

How has **College Beyond** helped shape your college experience and personal growth?

Since the day I signed up College Beyond has helped me grow so much in so many ways as an individual. **My coach Ms. Destiny specifically walked me through my financial situation time after time.** She and the other coaches also give great feedback and encouragement. **College Beyond has made me feel that I truly belong here at UNO.** I think the coaches are great when it comes to asking for advice or guidance in any way. College Beyond is great in helping their students navigate their academic journey. **The Coaches are all really great. For students who are lost and looking for where they belong - they offer a space to be vulnerable and be open - they offer that.**

What have you **learned or accomplished** so far that you feel proud of, **thanks in part to receiving this scholarship**?

I am really trying to be more open. I realized that **experience is what's gonna bring me closer to my career and myself and I can't run from it**. [...] feeling a lot of different emotions and gaining the self-awarness to explore why [...] **but I still push forward to challenge myself.**

The McCollum Scholars Program

Launched in partnership with CJ McCollum, the McCollum Scholars program pairs up to $80,000 in need-based scholarship support with sustained, trauma-informed advising to ensure students not only enroll in college, but persist through graduation and into meaningful careers.

McCollum scholars program

summary of impact

The McCollum Scholars Program represents College Beyond's most comprehensive investment in college access and long-term success for high-achieving, low-income students in New Orleans. Launched in partnership with CJ McCollum, the program pairs up to $80,000 in need-based scholarship support with sustained, trauma-informed advising to ensure students not only enroll in college, but persist through graduation and into meaningful careers.

What sets the McCollum Scholars Program apart is its long-term design. Rather than limiting support to tuition alone, scholars receive flexible funding and four years of wraparound coaching that responds to the real barriers students face once they arrive on campus. This combination of last-dollar financial support and consistent relational guidance reflects College Beyond's belief that talent is universal, but opportunity is not.

applicant pool snapshot

169 Qualified applicants

93% Low-income

73% 1st-Generation college students

80% Identify as Black

Applicants represented public high schools across Orleans Parish.

our support model

one full year of pre-college advising

four years of postsecondary support, including

- **one-on-one coaching**
- **mental wellness resources**
- **career exploration & internship support**
- **emergency microgrants**

scholar cohort

11 McCollum scholars selected

Scholars earned admission to selective and high-opportunity colleges and universities, including:

Vanderbilt, Tulane, Trojans, Providence, Macalester, LSU, Lehigh University

nationally competitive awards

1 Posse scholar

2 QuestBridge scholars

Juan Gomez

Juan Gomez's journey from Colombia to earning his Ph.D. acceptance at UC Riverside is a powerful testament to his resilience, ambition, and passion for scientific discovery. A first-generation college student, Juan moved to the U.S. in ninth grade, graduated from high school in Metairie, LA, and became a U.S. citizen during his sophomore year of college. His path has been defined by a deep commitment to using science to improve humanity's relationship with the environment.

Driven by a desire to create sustainable solutions, Juan pursued Chemistry, seeing it as a tool to analyze and innovate in ways that could lead to greener technologies. While financial challenges often meant sacrificing aspects of the traditional college experience, Juan's determination never wavered. Balancing coursework with flexible jobs, he stayed focused on his long-term goal of contributing to scientific advancements that promote sustainability.

College Beyond played a pivotal role in Juan's journey, offering guidance and accountability at key moments. His coach encouraged him to attend career fairs, explore Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs), and stay on track with his Ph.D. application process. Through an REU at Colorado State University, Juan gained hands-on experience in materials synthesis and electrochemistry, solidifying his interest in research and higher education.

Juan's advice to future students is simple yet profound: "There are no dumb questions, well, maybe there are, but just ask. You won't get anywhere if you stay quiet. And don't be fake. If you don't feel welcome where you are, try something new."

As he begins his Ph.D. journey at UC Riverside, Juan continues to inspire others with his curiosity, authenticity, and commitment to making a meaningful impact on the world.

"There are no dumb questions, well, maybe there are, but just ask. You won't get anywhere if you stay quiet. And don't be fake, if you don't feel welcome where you are, try something new."

Juan Gomez
Bachelor of Science in Chemistry,
Class of 2025
UNO

Ph.D. Candidate in Chemistry at
UC Riverside

JUST ASK. YOU WON'T GET ANYWHERE IF YOU STAY QUIET.

Ph.D. Candidate in Chemistry at UC Riverside

99% of students agree that their College Beyond coaches challenge and encourage them.

JUST TELL THE TRUTH AND PUT YOUR TRUTH OUT THERE

University class of 2028 ✶ Yellena Rodriguez

oscar j. tolmas scholarship

The rising cost of college continues to be a major barrier for students across the U.S., with many facing financial uncertainties that threaten their ability to stay enrolled. The 2024 FAFSA changes created additional challenges, with processing delays and eligibility shifts impacting students' access to aid. At College Beyond, we recognize these challenges and remain committed to ensuring financial obstacles do not stand in the way of student success. In response, we introduced two new scholarships in 2024: The College Beyond Persistence and Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust Scholarships.

YR

Yellena Rodriguez

How has receiving the scholarship impacted your ability to pursue **your academic goals**?

It lifts a huge pressure off of me and my mom. It is really calming to know that **combined with this and FAFSA makes paying for college affordable for us**.

How has **College Beyond** helped shape your college experience and personal growth?

I have made so many new friends and a lot of them I still talk to. **I love talking to y'all.** Coach Destiny is a great listener and at the end **she always asks me "Ok, so what are you gonna do now?"** The way that College Beyond communicates in email, **the way y'all talk, has helped me communicate to people in my life in and out of school**.

What would you say to **other students considering applying for this scholarship** about its impact on your journey?

Just tell the truth and put your truth out there and take risks. It's also ok if you don't get it, because there are always more opportunities and you can see it as an opportunity to apply for other opportunities. **The interview process itself was an experience that taught me a lot about advocating for myself**.

partnerships

College Beyond's mission to support first-generation and low-income students from enrollment through college completion is strengthened through partnerships with organizations that share a long-term commitment to educational access and workforce readiness. Entergy has been a key partner in advancing this work across Southeastern Louisiana.

Entergy invests in education and workforce development initiatives that are grounded in data, measurable outcomes, and long-term economic impact. Through strategic philanthropic support, Entergy partners with College Beyond to strengthen postsecondary pathways and prepare students for in-demand careers, recognizing education as a critical driver of regional economic mobility and workforce stability.

This partnership aligns with College Beyond's holistic model, which combines individualized coaching, targeted financial assistance, and career readiness programming to support students through college persistence, degree completion, and the transition from classroom to career. By investing in College Beyond, Entergy helps ensure students have the guidance and resources needed to translate a college degree into meaningful career opportunities while contributing to a stronger, more prepared regional workforce.

College Beyond is grateful for Entergy's continued partnership and leadership in education and workforce development. Together, we are strengthening pathways to college completion and career readiness that support students today and contribute to Southeastern Louisiana's future workforce.

"By investing in College Beyond, Entergy helps ensure students have the guidance and resources needed to translate a college degree into meaningful career opportunities while contributing to a stronger, more prepared regional workforce."

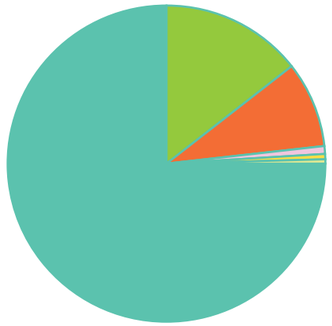
Patricia Riddlebarger
Vice President
Corporate Social Responsibility
Entergy Corporation

our program & funding partners

financials

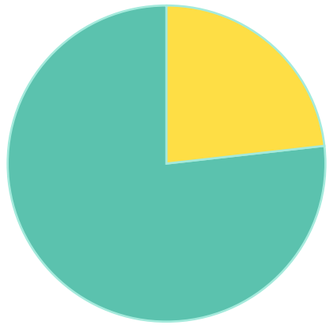
year total revenue

- **74%** Foundation Grants ($755,564)
- **14.7%** Corporate Grants ($150,000)
- **9.6%** Partnershop Income ($98,300)
- **1%** Honorariums ($10,000)
- **.5%** Individual Donations ($5,015)
- **.3%** Other Grants ($3,000)



year total expenses

- **77.4%** Program Investments ($894,000)
- **22.6%** Administrative ($261,000)



PARTNER WITH US

Your students have dreams—let's help them achieve them. Our individualized, trauma-informed coaching tackles the top challenges to college graduation: academic, financial, and socio-emotional. We provide the resources students need to thrive, meeting them where they are and guiding them to their fullest potential.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

cb

collegebeyond.org