

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

# Bright Futures Ahead





**Dear Friends,**

**It is a pleasure to share updates on another year of transformative impact at College Advising Corps. Thanks to your partnership, we are helping to shape bright futures for young people who truly deserve our support.**

While others may debate the value of higher education, most of us know that college remains a watershed moment in any young life—one that is still central to the American Dream, and one that can change the trajectory of a family for generations.

Too many high school students today do not have the support system they need to plan for life after high school. These promising young people deserve someone in their corner who sees their potential. A role model who has overcome barriers of their own and understands the challenges they face. Someone who looks like them, from their community. An advocate who will go above and beyond to ensure that they take the right steps to achieve their dreams.

This is where our College Advising Corps advisers come in.

Last year alone, over 750 talented advisers opened the doors of opportunity for more than 200,000 high school students across the nation. Our advisers are committed to helping students from all backgrounds and walks of life to access meaningful educational and career pathways. They work tirelessly to prove to students from our nation's most resource-deprived communities that they are not bound by their circumstances—that they are qualified and worthy of a postsecondary education, and that funding is available to them so they can afford it.

As we look to the future, we are thrilled that we will soon reach our goal of helping one million students enroll in college by 2025, just in time for our twentieth anniversary.

We are equally committed to finding the right fit for our students who choose to enter the workforce directly by helping them to identify the credentialing programs that are right for them.

We are excited to launch a new Life After the Corps program that will provide advisers with the same professional development and career support that they provide to their students. And we are encouraged by our continued success in addressing the needs of today's students and families with human-centered artificial intelligence. I hope you will enjoy reading more about all of this work in this report.

It is often said that “it takes a village to raise a child.” But it is also true that it takes a village to help young people find their way in our complicated world—especially those whom society often overlooks. Thank you for being an important part of their village.

**Ekaterina Struett, CEO**



We envision a world where students' backgrounds do not determine their destinies.

OUR VALUES

**Equity**

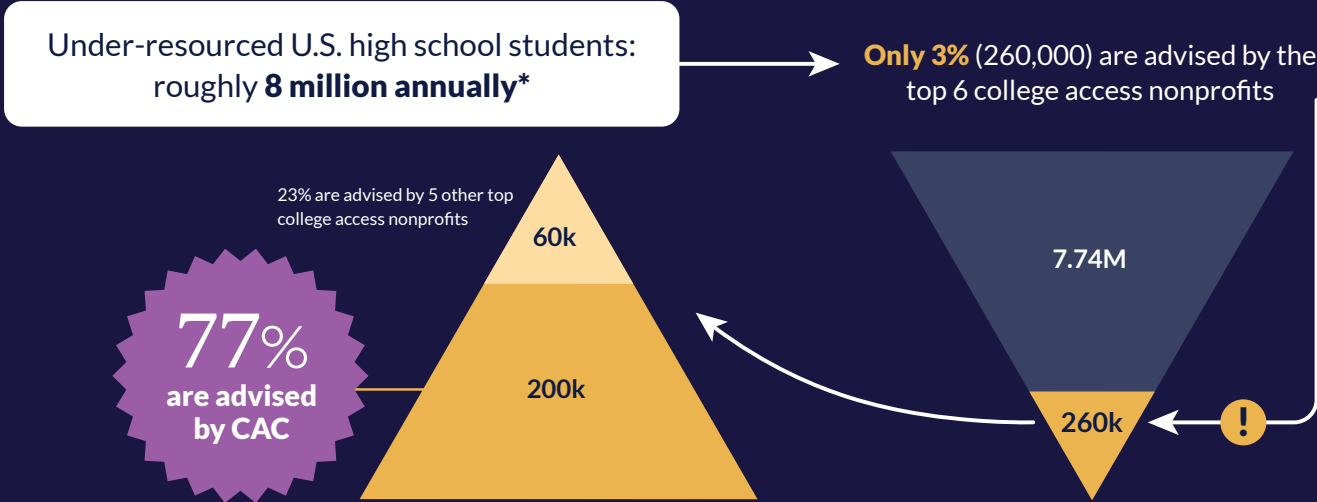
**Integrity**

**Collaboration**

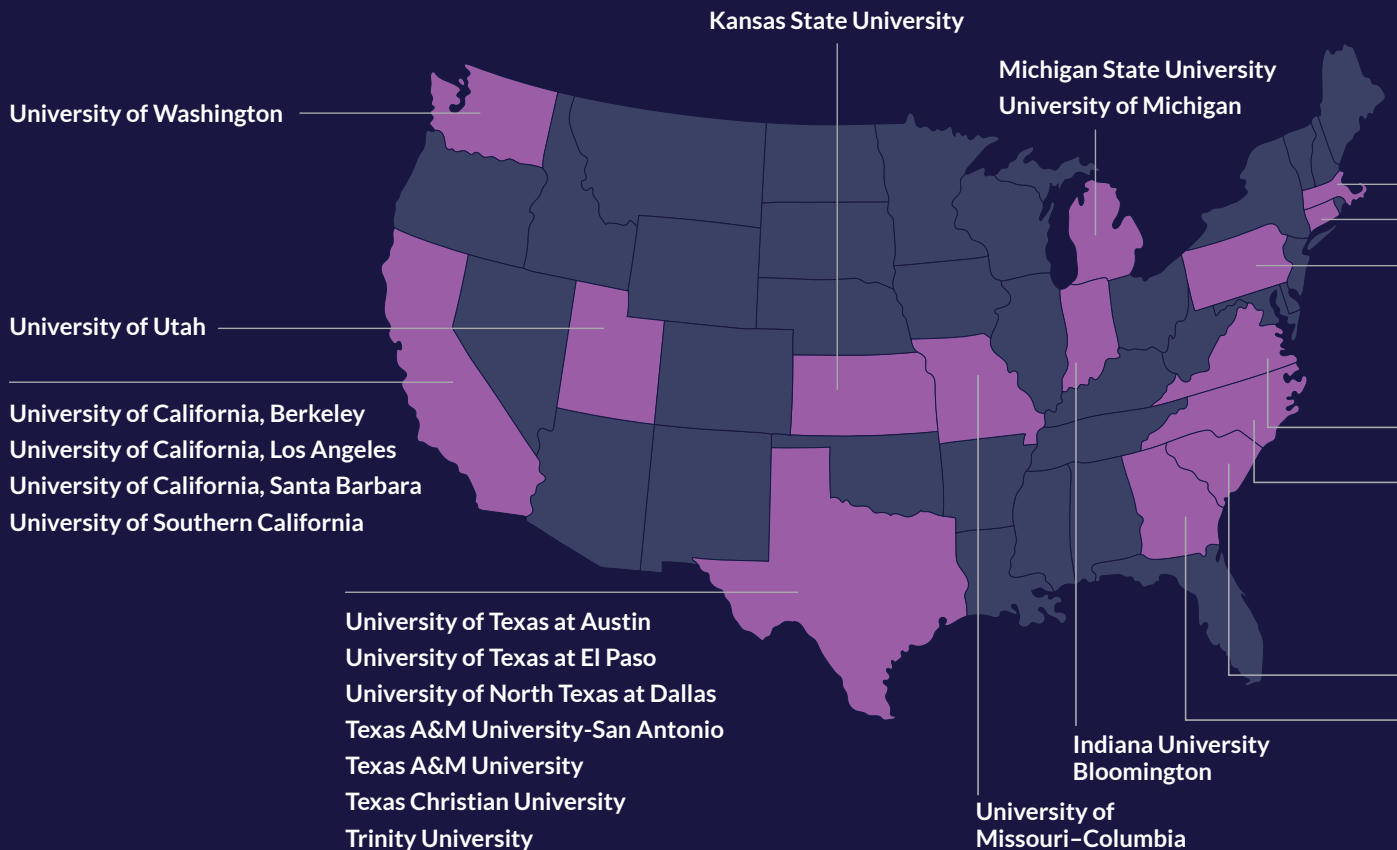
**Innovation**

# By the Numbers

College Advising Corps leads the nation in serving under-resourced high school students through advising programs.



\* McKinsey & Company analysis. Under-resourced high school data based on National Center for Education Statistics (2019), percentage of public high school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Nonprofit advising percentages based on publicly available data (2021-2022).



**OUR NATIONAL NETWORK**

15

States

30

University Partners

691

High Schools

- Boston University
- University of Connecticut
- **Pennsylvania Consortium:**
- Franklin & Marshall College
- Gettysburg College
- Millersville University
- University of Virginia
- Appalachian State University
- Duke University
- North Carolina State University
- University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
- University of North Carolina-Wilmington
- Furman University
- Georgia State University
- University of Georgia

Students see themselves in their advisers, which builds a powerful, supportive connection and trust.



759

Advisers

68% Pell-eligible as college students

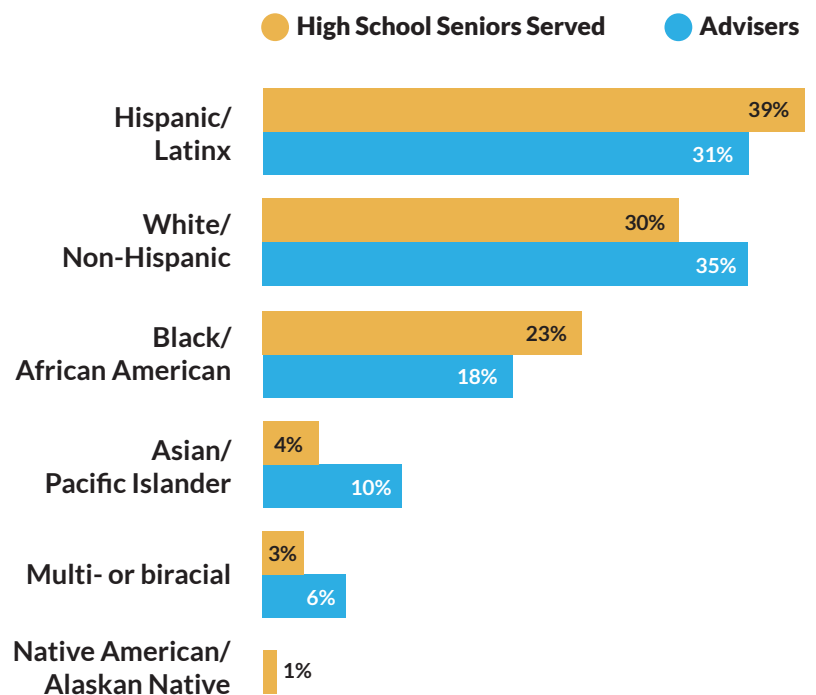
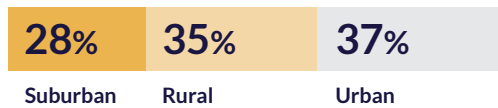
56% First-generation college graduates



200k+

High School Seniors

70% eligible for free or reduced price lunch

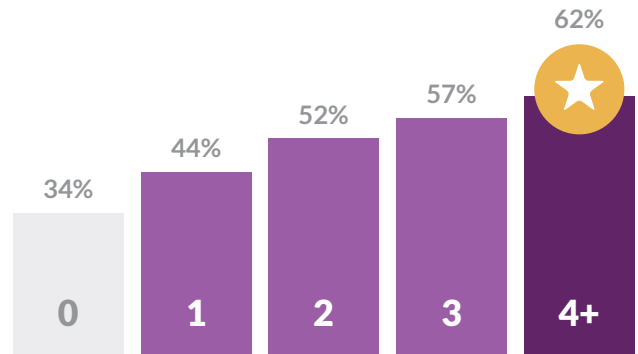


# CAC advisers help students knock down barriers to higher education and meaningful jobs.

## Advisers increase college enrollment

**53%**

increased likelihood of enrolling in college for students who met with their CAC adviser, compared to students at the same schools who did not



2023 enrollment rates by number of meetings with CAC adviser

## Advisers increase FAFSA completion



**67%**

of seniors served by CAC completed their FAFSA



Nearly half of students who submitted their FAFSA received help from their CAC adviser

## Advisers increase economic mobility

**66%**

faster bachelors' degree ROI for CAC advised students compared to the national average for lower-income college students\*



\*This impact indicator uses P2E, a metric created by Michael Itzkowitz, former director of the college scorecard under President Obama. P2E measures how many years on average it takes a student from a family in a low-income bracket ( $\leq$  \$30K) to recoup their cost of attending/graduating from that college.

# Our Goal: One million high school students enrolled in college by 2025.

860k+

students enrolled in college

1M+

by 2025

2005



2023



“Deciding what comes after high school can be incredibly challenging for students these days. Having an experienced support system anchored in your community makes all the difference! CAC’s powerful network of universities and local partnerships helps our nation’s communities amplify the very best in our young people.”

—Cary Claiborne, Chief Program Officer



“I am not going to let anyone put me in a box or keep me in one.”

## Gabriel T. Smallwood, Jr.

CLARKE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL,  
ATHENS, GA

**Gabriel Smallwood is no stranger to facing challenges. Born in Côte D'Ivoire, and raised in Liberia, Gabriel and his family immigrated to the U.S. when he was 9 years old. He was excited to experience the learning opportunities available in the U.S. “I always heard that in America you have a chance to go to college and climb the ladder.”**

But just a few short months into the school year, his class was called to the auditorium to listen to a guest speaker. “The speaker was talking to us about our futures,” said Gabriel, “and she turned to a few of my classmates and me, and said ‘three of the six of you will end up in jail, and two of you might get lucky and end up with a job somewhere, and one of you, which is very, very unlikely, might end up in college, but that’s unlikely since you’re black men.’”

Heartbroken and confused, Gabriel was determined to not let the odds get him down. Deciding to use those statistics as motivation to go to college, he studied hard and worked various jobs to help his family make ends meet, while also volunteering at his church mentoring young students. But when it came time to apply to college, his counselors told him he wouldn’t make it into any selective schools, so why apply? Remembering the guest speaker’s words, Gabriel refused to give up and was accepted to the University of Georgia (UGA).



“When I got to UGA, I told myself I can’t just let things stop here.” Coming from a low-income home and faced with the challenges of being part of the 8% of black students at UGA, Gabriel searched for ways to succeed. He applied to the Georgia Commitment Scholarship Program, a scholarship program for low-income students, and was accepted as a mentee. Gabriel’s mentor, also a black male, related to Gabriel’s struggles, saw his potential and empowered him to persevere.

At his mentor’s recommendation, Gabriel joined the Georgia Commitment Scholarship Program inaugural Executive Board and started mentoring incoming freshmen. He then served as a Continuing the Legacy of African-American Student Success (C.L.A.S.S) Advocate, a program that mentors black students in the residence halls. So, when Gabriel came across the opportunity to serve as an adviser for CAC after graduation it was a perfect match. He saw the profound impact that advisers were having on their students and decided to apply.

When asked about what he is learning as an adviser, Gabriel said “being able to wear multiple hats—event planner, collaborator, presenter and working with diverse groups of people. I’m currently working with one of my students to start a mentorship program for young black males in our school.”



The faculty at Clarke Central recognized Gabriel’s hard work by honoring him with the award **Developer of Students Individual Talents**, presented to an individual who draws out the best in students, assisting them in self-discovery and growth.

Law school is next on Gabriel’s agenda. He intends to advocate for the underserved and help others realize their potential. “I’ve come a long way and I’m going to continue to prove that guest speaker wrong.”

**“He [Gabriel] has been so diligent in offering opportunities and resources for students to prepare them for college and otherwise. His great insight into student interests around post-high school goals plus his continuous eagerness to learn from and participate in classroom spaces, makes him easily one of the best college advisers I’ve worked with.”**

—Erin Horton, English teacher at Clarke Central High School



Scan to access more adviser stories. ▶



# “Worth its Weight in Gold”

Vice-principal Brian Iezzi says deciding to collaborate with College Advising Corps was a “no brainer.” The former school counselor has a unique perspective having both advised students and worked in school administration.



“Three years in and I am already seeing a culture shift. Students often bring up our adviser’s name and title in conversations, and we even hear it with kids walking down the hall.”



## Brian Iezzi

**NORTHEASTERN HIGH SCHOOL,  
MANCHESTER, PA**

A few years ago, faced with lagging graduation rates and college enrollments, Northeastern High School administrators united behind an ambitious goal to improve their graduation rate and focus on preparation for postsecondary education. “Our vision is 100 percent of our students will graduate fully prepared for postsecondary education. So, when administrators learned about College Advising Corps, it was a slam-dunk to decide to move forward,” said Iezzi.

He easily recognized CAC’s value and introduced the program to the school. “The benefits of bringing in a CAC adviser were immediate. Having gone through such extensive training, they come to the district highly skilled and prepared to start.”

The one-on-one attention has been incredibly impactful in reaching a broader student population, especially seniors. “Resources are limited. Each counselor has at least 350 students and is pulled in so many different directions. It’s impossible to have the necessary facetime.”

“CAC is paying off,” stated Iezzi. “Three years in and I am already seeing a culture shift. Students often bring up our adviser’s name and title in conversations, and we even hear it with kids walking down the hall.”

Iezzi also noted the benefit of having a CAC adviser on campus to interface with family and staff. “It’s especially pertinent at the high school level to have a young, highly skilled counselor on hand who is acutely prepared to have conversations about the culmination of a child’s life in public education. It’s worth its weight in gold.”

He said another key to CAC’s success is the amount of time and attention spent gathering data. “There are so many metrics advisers are required to track. I can’t overstate how important those data points are for the organization and feedback to our stakeholders, our families, our board members and my superintendent. The CAC program is simply phenomenal.”



## Q&A with Tobi Kinsell

CHIEF IMPACT OFFICER

**“Our goal is to use technology and AI, not to replace our advisers’ personal connection with the students but to enhance the process and outcomes.”**

### What does innovation mean at College Advising Corps?

We keep a pulse on how technological trends impact our students. In 2015, we were first in our field to create a proprietary CRM and data management platform, which allowed for direct texting and comprehensive data collection. So, we were able to communicate with students via text outside of in-school communication earlier than other groups.

Our model is based on placing advisers in schools to work 1:1 with students. But over the last 8-10 years, we’ve been piloting virtual advising and hybrid advising programs. When the pandemic hit, this accelerated our ability to transition our advisers successfully from in-school to virtual engagement. As a result, we were able to provide uninterrupted support to students during this challenging time, which they’ve shared was an important lifeline.

### How did using AI and chatbots come into being?

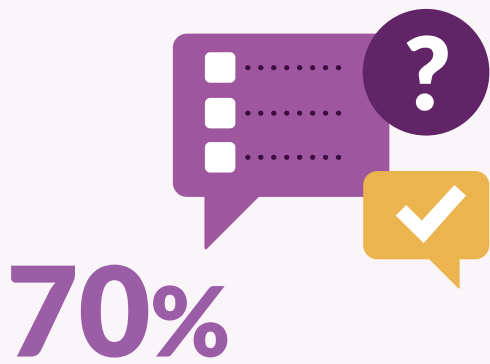
In the early days of the pandemic, CAC partnered with Mainstay and Common App to launch an AI-powered chatbot to support students through their college enrollment journey. Through that project, which was experimental at the time, we began to see the value that AI and chatbots can bring to college advising.

In 2021, we began to consider how we could use chatbots as a resource for in-school advisers. We launched a pilot program in North Carolina that spring. We continued that pilot for the entire 2021-2022 academic year in North Carolina and in Atlanta, GA, allowing us to develop an entire year of college admissions content. Building on this success, we then launched our chatbot with students in Texas and Michigan in 2022.

Our investment in an AI-powered chatbot to support students complements existing texting programs. Family Academy, a texting program we have implemented for 8 years in North Carolina, Atlanta Public Schools and Boston helps to increase family engagement in the college application process. Through the program, offered in both English and Spanish, 15,000 family members receive text messages that share resources and nudge them to connect with their student to complete postsecondary milestones.

**“You guys have made my college experience a little less daunting. As someone with ADHD, it’s hard to keep track of the necessary things such as scheduling new classes and renewing my FAFSA. The constant reminders helped keep that in the forefront of my thoughts.”**

—High school senior, 2022-2023



**of students who received chatbot messages submitted the FAFSA, versus just 50% of students who did not receive chatbot messages**

## How do you see the future of chatbots at CAC?

We capture a wide range of student data through the chatbot. Our goal is to use predictive analytics and apply this data to predict future trends and events. We hope to improve our advisers' ability to manage caseloads and meet the specific needs of each student more effectively and efficiently. At the same time, we are upholding a human-centered approach in all our work, to ensure that students and families both trust our use of AI and know we are always here to help them.

Our research has shown that 70% of students who received chatbot messages submitted the FAFSA, versus just 50% of students who did not receive chatbot messages. They also scheduled more one-on-one meetings with advisers and submitted college applications at a higher rate.



## Students who received chatbot assistance were:



**more likely to meet 1:1 with a CAC adviser**



**more likely to submit 1 college application**



**more likely to submit 3+ college applications**



**more likely to submit a FAFSA**

# What Lies Ahead: Investing in our Double Bottom Line

## Career Pathways for Students

CAC's "Best Match/Best Fit" approach identifies "personal best" options for each student—college, community college or certification programs that lead to successful and meaningful careers.

CAC takes a whole school approach to advising by helping all students, not just a small selection of top-performing students. To meet the needs of such a diverse student body, our advisers receive extensive orientation and pre-service summer training in addition to monthly webinars, tutorials and other group sessions throughout the year.

This past year, we piloted a Career Pathways training series, which acknowledges that not every student goes directly to college. The series equips advisers with the tools, knowledge and resources they need to advise students on all postsecondary and career pathways, including workforce credentials.

With the goal of raising student knowledge about alternative career paths that lead to equitable and fulfilling employment, year one proved to be a resounding success. Given this positive response, Career Pathways will become a permanent component of CAC's adviser training program, ensuring that *all* students receive relevant and personalized advising, and helping to support local workforce needs.



Results based on student responses to the Adviser Postsecondary and Career Advising Assessment.

# 85%

**of students reported that their adviser was a valuable resource for career pathways in the program's first year**

**"As advisers, our role is to look at everything our students bring to the table, empower them to believe in their capabilities and advocate for them in every way and space we can. We provide choice to the choice-less and voice to the voiceless. Our students, typically described as "at-risk," often don't realize they are truly "at-promise."**

—Aiyah, former adviser





## Career Pathways for Advisers

Many advisers go on to service-oriented professions like education, policy and law and become impactful agents for positive change in their communities. Being an adviser gives them the leadership experience, problem-solving skills and confidence to do so.

Launching officially in the 2023-2024 academic year, **Career Pathways** will expand our adviser training and provide learning opportunities and coaching for career pathway exploration and graduate education preparation. Opportunities will include panel discussions and mentorship from corporate volunteers who will be able to engage meaningfully with adviser and program leaders through panel discussions, coaching, videos, recruitment events and professional organization touch points.

The program also includes a focus on adviser well-being and mental health. As frontline workers, CAC advisers support students dealing with some of society's most intractable problems: poverty, violence and racism are unfortunately common themes in their day-to-day work. This heightened level of stress underscores the need for mental health support in schools, and the need for CAC to provide intentional support to advisers as they serve these communities.



**“Serving as a College Advising Corps adviser has helped me to understand how systems work, the policy behind systems and how to navigate bureaucratic processes. I continue to be inspired by my time in the Corps to continue to serve people.”**

—Preston Kilgore, former adviser and current Legislative Aide at the San Francisco Board of Supervisors

SUPPORTED BY



# Leadership through Service

**For 30 years, AmeriCorps has been turning moments of impact into a full-blown national service movement. CAC has been a proud AmeriCorps partner for 14 years, with uninterrupted AmeriCorps service since 2010.**

“National service is part of our DNA at College Advising Corps,” notes CEO Ekaterina Struett. “Our advisers come to us with a strong desire to ‘pay it forward by giving back’. They apply this values-based lens to all of their work with us and carry it forward into their careers after the Corps.”

Steady support from AmeriCorps has helped CAC to become the nation’s largest nonprofit service organization dedicated to increasing postsecondary opportunities for all students. “Through our partnership with AmeriCorps, service with CAC provides members with skills that position advisers for leadership careers and key competencies that employers seek,” says Struett.



## Our Partnership

2010-2024

**4,500+**

CAC advisers served as AmeriCorps members (56% of alumni)

**7.6M+**

hours of national service

**\$25M+**

in Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards available for advisers’ further education

## OUR AMERICORPS TEAM



**Maggie Rudd**  
Director of AmeriCorps Programs & Grants Management



**Marilyn Ramos**  
AmeriCorps Associate

**“We create a complete service experience for CAC’s AmeriCorps programs. As AmeriCorps members, advisers are part of a national movement to improve lives and strengthen communities. Our goal is for advisers to see how their AmeriCorps service complements their CAC experience, and create program supports tailored to their AmeriCorps service.”**

—Maggie Rudd, Director of AmeriCorps Programs and Grants Management



**“I’ve always been interested in policy and education. But I knew long term if I wanted to get into education policy, I needed some on-the-ground experience working in school systems before going to D.C.”**

—Lee Bernstein, CAC Adviser and AmeriCorps Volunteer



**“The depth of knowledge Lee brought was invaluable to our staff and students.”** —Dani Pond, School Counselor

▶ Read Lee's full story!



Adviser Lee Bernstein (left), who recently completed three years of service with CAC's program at the University of Virginia, worked closely with high school counselor Dani Pond (right). Bernstein was named the AmeriCorps Member of the Year for Virginia in May 2023.



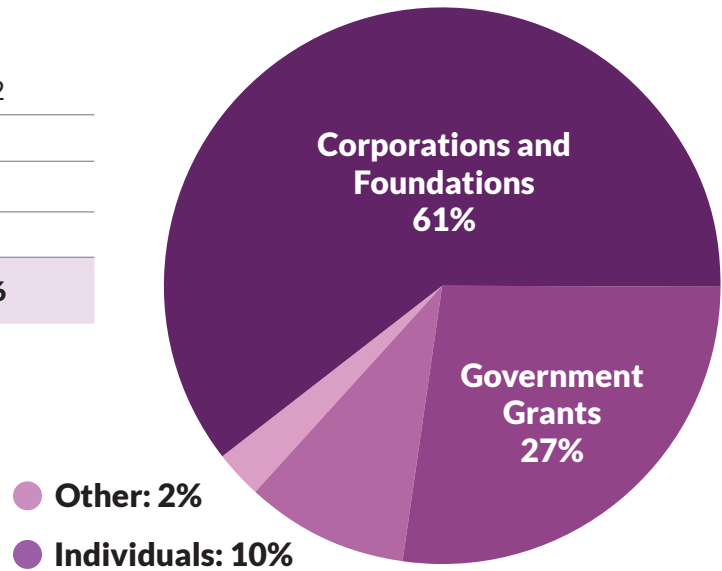
**“College Advising Corps’ advisers serve over 18,000 students across the state of Texas. The work their corps members do to increase enrollment of students in post-secondary education is vital to the state’s success. OneStar is grateful to be a partner of College Advising Corps and support their impact in Texas communities.”**

—Kailee Selzer, Program Officer at the OneStar Foundation, AmeriCorps Texas

College Advising Corps remains deeply grateful to everyone who makes our work possible. Thanks to your support, CAC closed out Fiscal Year 2023 in the strongest financial position in the organization’s history as an independent nonprofit.

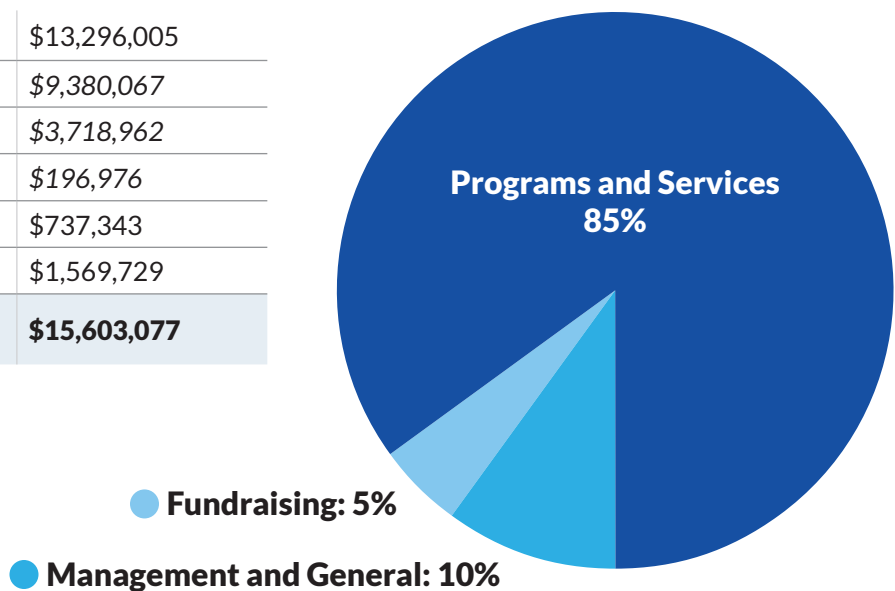
## Support and Revenue

Corporations and Foundations	\$13,223,232
Individuals	\$2,066,521
Government Grants	\$5,903,395
Other (Contracts, Interest Income)	\$537,578
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,730,726</b>



## Expenses

Programs and Services	\$13,296,005
<i>Support for Regional Partners</i>	\$9,380,067
<i>National Office Programs and Services</i>	\$3,718,962
<i>Educational Conferences</i>	\$196,976
Fundraising	\$737,343
Management and General	\$1,569,729
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,603,077</b>





## Assets

Bank	\$8,225,433
Contributions and grants receivable	\$7,169,443
Other current assets	\$86,681
Fixed assets	\$116,667
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$15,598,224</b>

### LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Current liabilities	\$2,388,583
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>\$2,388,583</b>

### NET ASSETS

Net assets without donor restrictions	\$396,922
Net assets with donor restrictions	\$12,812,719
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>\$13,209,638</b>
<b>Total liabilities &amp; net assets</b>	<b>\$15,598,224</b>

CAC's fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30. Financials reflect the operational results of our national office and do not represent consolidated financial information of partners in our network.



▶ Visit our Financials page to learn more.



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PMB 41997  
Raleigh, NC 27606-8012

CAC's Adviser Summit 2023 in  
San Diego, CA was a great success!



◀ [CollegeAdvisingCorps.org/Summit](https://CollegeAdvisingCorps.org/Summit)

SAVE THE DATE  
**Summit 2024**  
**Philadelphia**  
DECEMBER 3-6, 2024



Personal • Peer-based • Equity-driven • College & Career Advising