ALLIANCE
College-Ready Public Schools
Where **Exceptional** is the **Rule**

REPORT **2019**

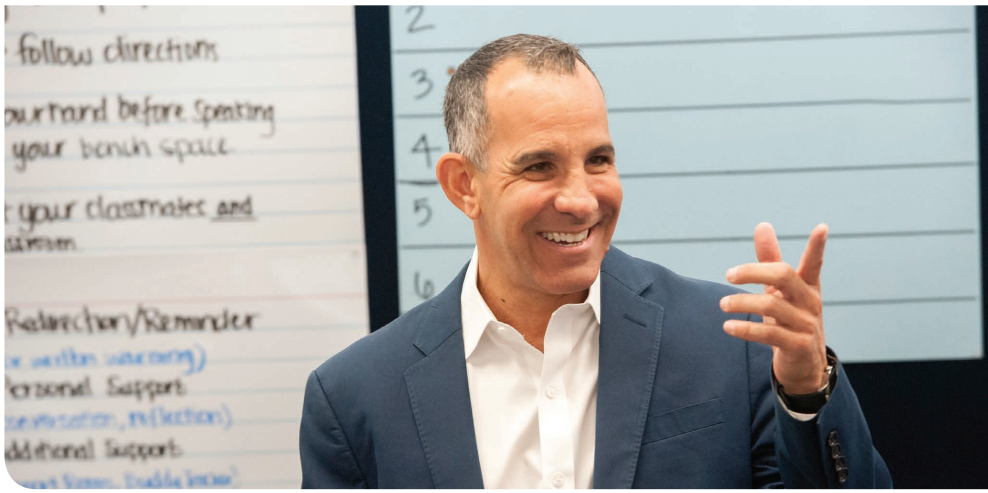
CHARTING A COURSE TO COLLEGE COMPLETION:
The Power of College Matching

POWER 150™ INDEX

To increase the college graduation rate for its scholars, Alliance has identified the 150 U.S. colleges and universities with a graduation rate of 75% or higher for underrepresented minorities. Armed with powerful insights from this analysis, counselors are better able to match Alliance scholars with the colleges and universities that will support them to college completion.

American University
Amherst College
Babson College
Barnard College
Bates College
Beloit College
Bentley University
Boston College
Boston University
Bowdoin College
Brandeis University
Brown University
Bryant University
Bryn Mawr College
Bucknell University
California Institute of Technology
Carleton College
Carnegie Mellon University
Chapman University
Claremont McKenna College
Clark University
Colby College
Colgate University
College of the Holy Cross
College of William and Mary
Colorado College
Colorado School of Mines
Columbia University
Connecticut College
Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art
Cornell University
Dartmouth College
Davidson College
Dickinson College
Duke University
Elon University
Emerson College
Emory University
Fairfield University
Flagler College-St Augustine
Florida State University
Franklin and Marshall College
Furman University
George Washington University
Georgetown University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Gettysburg College
Gonzaga University
Grinnell College
Hamilton College
Harvard University
Harvey Mudd College
Haverford College
Hobart William Smith Colleges
James Madison University
Johns Hopkins University
Kenyon College
Lafayette College
Lehigh University
Loyola Marymount University
Macalester College
Marist College
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Miami University
Middlebury College
Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Mount Holyoke College
Muhlenberg College
New York University
Northwestern University
Oberlin College
Occidental College
Ohio State University
Pepperdine University
Pitzer College
Pomona College
Princeton University
Providence College
Quinnipiac University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rhode Island School of Design
Rhodes College
Rice University
Saint Johns University
Saint Michael's College
Santa Clara University
Sarah Lawrence College
Scripps College
Seattle University
Skidmore College
Smith College
Southern Methodist University
Spelman College
Stanford University
SUNY at Binghamton
Swarthmore College
Syracuse University
The College of New Jersey
The Juilliard School
The New England Conservatory of Music
Trinity College
Trinity University
Tufts University
Union College
University of California-Berkeley
University of California-Davis
University of California-Irvine
University of California-Los Angeles
University of California-San Diego
University of California-Santa Barbara
University of Chicago
University of Delaware
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Mary Washington
University of Maryland-College Park
University of Miami
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Notre Dame
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of Redlands
University of Richmond
University of San Diego
University of Scranton
University of Southern California
University of Vermont
University of Virginia
University of Washington
Vanderbilt University
Vassar College
Villanova University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Wake Forest University
Washington and Lee University
Washington University in St Louis
Wellesley College
Wesleyan University
Wheaton College (IL)
Wheaton College (MA)
Whitman College
Willamette University
Williams College
Wofford College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Yale University

CHARTING A COURSE TO COLLEGE COMPLETION



Dear Colleagues,

At Alliance College-Ready Public Schools, we believe in the transformative power of a high-quality public education. Since 2004, our nonprofit network of public charter schools has graduated over 12,000 scholars from some of the most educationally underserved areas in Los Angeles. We're proud that for the high school class of 2018, 95% of our scholars were admitted to college, with 73% admitted to a four-year university.

> **Getting our scholars into college isn't nearly enough. Having scholars persist through college and complete college with a four-year degree is our ultimate aspiration—and our goal is for 75% or more of our scholars to earn a bachelor's degree.**

We know we've set an audacious goal, but our scholars deserve no less. It is not only a moral and social justice imperative, it is vital for the long-term health of our economy. By 2020, 65% of the job openings in the U.S. will require a post-secondary education[1] and over 95% of jobs created during the economic recovery have gone to college-educated workers[2].

Over the last three years, Alliance schools have implemented key strategies to move our scholars from college acceptance to college completion, including our Power 150™ Index—a curated list of the 150 U.S. colleges with a graduation rate of 75% or higher for underrepresented minorities. In addition to the Power 150™ Index, we've created a college tiering system to guide scholars to apply to colleges with the best outcomes. With this tiering system in place, Alliance counselors can better match our graduating seniors with colleges and universities that will enable them to flourish, and ultimately graduate with a bachelor's degree.

In this report, we share our lessons learned on the impact of college matching and the strategies that other public schools and nonprofits serving a similar student population can implement to help more students successfully complete a four-year college degree.

Dan Katzir

Dan Katzir
Chief Executive Officer

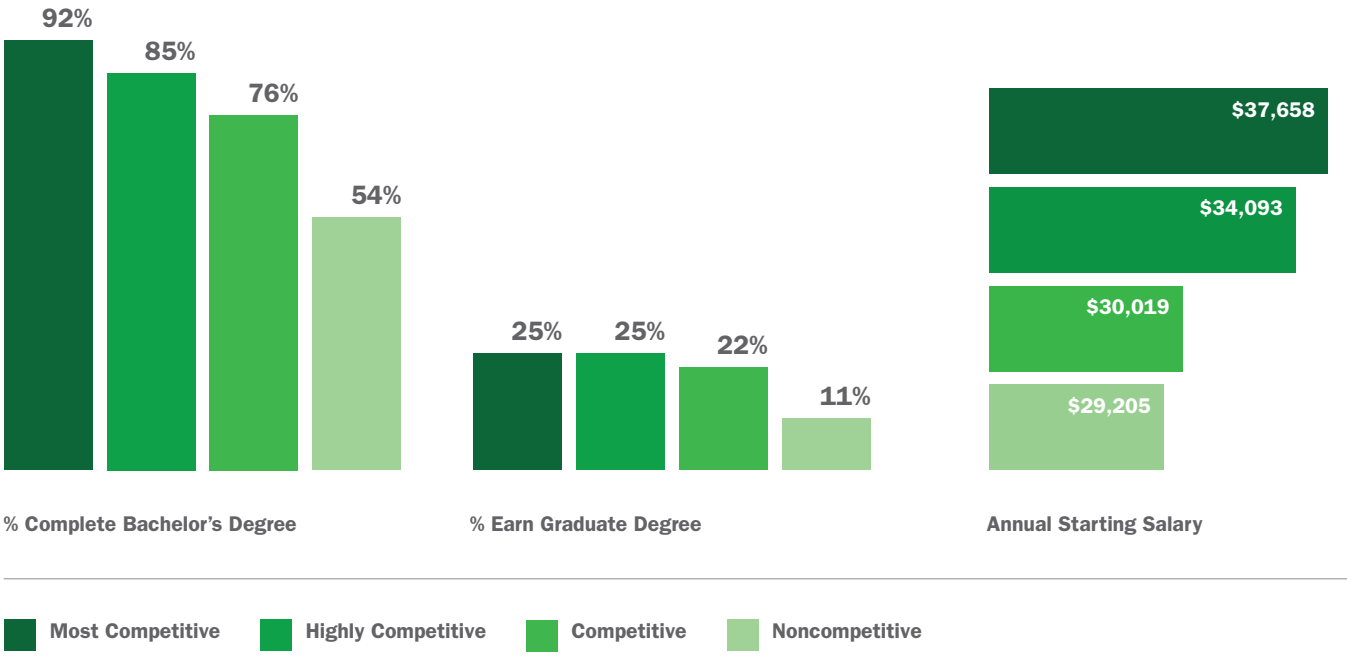
[1] https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.ES_.Web_.pdf
[2] https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/california-forum/article215978490.html

SETTING OUR SIGHTS ON THE RIGHT DESTINATION

Lifelong Benefits of Accurate College Matching

In a National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) report[3], the data clearly shows the short-term and long-term impact of students attending colleges that match their academic abilities. Not only is it more likely that these students will complete college, but their starting salaries in the workforce are significantly higher. The opposite is also true: If students "undermatch," they significantly reduce both their chances of earning a bachelor's degree, and their ability to command a higher starting salary.

High-Achieving Students Who Attend More Selective Schools Have Better Outcomes[4]



The college graduation gap between low-income and high-income students is significant. On a national level, students in the highest socioeconomic quartile complete college at a 77% rate, while students from the lowest quartile have a graduation rate of only 9%.[5]

[3, 4] https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/professional-development/essentials/montgomery-cty-pd-day/undermatching.pdf

[5] "Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States." The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, Penn Ahead-Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy (2015).

What is Undermatching?

Undermatching is when a student, who is academically eligible based on his or her GPA and SAT/ACT score, does not apply to—or when accepted, does not attend—a competitive four-year college. Undermatching is a significant issue with students from low-income communities, with students of color[6], and with those who are first in their family to attend college.

Through a robust data tracking system, Alliance follows our 12,000 alumni from high school graduation though their college experience. Here's what we have found:

The Good News

Our data tells us that our college completion rates mirror the completion rate of the colleges and universities our scholars attend. If a college's graduation rate is 75% for minority students, we can anticipate that roughly 75% of our scholars who attend that university will actually graduate. Conversely, if a college has a graduation rate of 30%, Alliance scholars have roughly a 30% chance of earning a four- year-degree from that institution.

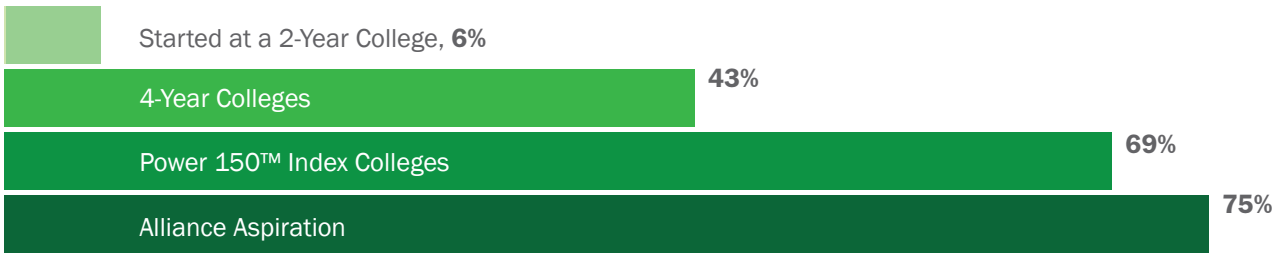
The Challenge

Our research uncovered that too many of our scholars were either undermatching at the application stage or undermatching at the matriculation stage. In other words, scholars were either not applying to the best college for which they qualified or not attending the best college at which they received an acceptance letter. For Alliance's high school Class of 2017, 30% of our scholars eligible for a four-year university didn't apply to the best universities for which they qualified. Of the scholars who were accepted to a four-year university, an additional 30% did not matriculate to the best colleges to which they were accepted.

The Opportunity

By simply improving college matching at Alliance high schools, we can increase college completion rates by 41% without changing the academic profile of the scholar. At Alliance Cindy & Bill Simon Technology High School, located in Watts, the expected college graduation rate for scholars has tripled in three years—just by improving college matching.

College Graduation Rate of Alliance Alumni[7], Classes of 2008-2011



[6.] https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2018/04/16/study-finds-undermatching-remains-major-problem-especially-black
[7.] *Attainment of bachelor's degree within six years.*

MAPPING THE JOURNEY

The first step in a successful college journey is applying to, and then attending a college that matches a student's academic achievements—also known as college matching. Alliance has sought solutions to help identify the best schools for supporting our scholars and has put programs in place to encourage, inform, and match our scholars to the most selective colleges for which they're eligible. It's at these well-matched schools that they are most likely to earn a four-year college degree.

The Power 150™ Index & College Tiering Program

Central to these initiatives is our Power 150™ Index and College Tiering Program, Alliance's ranking of colleges with the highest completion rates for students with a similar profile as those served by Alliance.

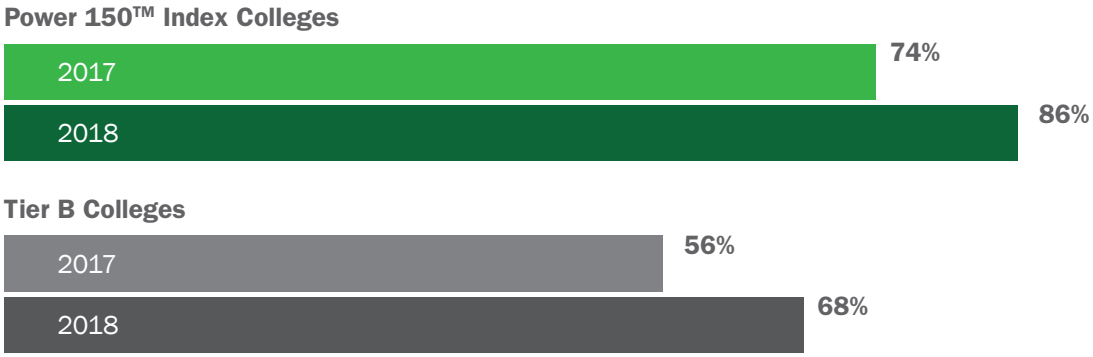
Using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Alliance analyzed and ranked 4,200 U.S. four-year colleges and universities based on their six-year completion rates for underrepresented minorities. Shockingly, only 150, or 3%, of those colleges and universities had a minority completion rate of 75% or higher. We then ranked the remaining colleges and universities in three additional tiers (Tier B, C, and D) based on their minority student graduation rates.

To encourage Alliance scholars to apply to colleges that best match their abilities, our counselors now use the Power 150™ Index and College Tiers to recommend colleges that may have otherwise been overlooked. **Within one short year, we've seen a 12% increase in the number of eligible Alliance scholars who applied to Power 150™ Index colleges and Tier B colleges, the next highest tier.**

Alliance College Tiers

	Power 150™ Index (Tier A)	Tier B	Tier C	Tier D
Graduation Rate of Underrepresented Minorities	75% or higher	60-75%	51-60%	50% or lower
Examples	Brown University (RI) Dartmouth College (NH) Pomona College (CA) Seattle University (WA) Spelman College (GA) Syracuse University (NY) University of California, Los Angeles (CA)	Baylor University (TX) Rutgers University (NJ) Hampton University (VA) Louisiana State University (LA) Purdue University (IN) Temple University (PA) University of California, Merced (CA)	California State University, Long Beach (CA) Colorado State University (CO) Drexel University (PA) Oklahoma State University (OK) Springfield College (MA) University of Tulsa (OK) William Carey University (MS)	California State University, Los Angeles (CA) Carroll University (WI) Hofstra University (NY) Kettering University (MI) Southern Oregon University (OR) University of Alabama (AL) University of Charleston (WV)

Percentage of Eligible Alliance Scholars Who Applied to Power 150™ Index and Tier B Schools



MAPPING THE JOURNEY

College Matching—A Multi-Step Process

In addition to the Power 150™ Index and College Tiers, Alliance offers personalized support for scholars and their families throughout the college application, selection, and matriculation process. The multi-step support consists of the following four steps:

Step 1: Establish a College-Going Culture

Alliance schools emphasize college success as soon as young scholars arrive at our doors. College awareness is ubiquitous on Alliance campuses: college pennants hang throughout the halls and classrooms, college representatives regularly hold information sessions, and alumni come back to discuss their college experiences.

In addition, scholars are encouraged to establish college goals and create a pathway to make progress each semester toward them. Counselors meet one-on-one with each scholar to create an initial estimate of where a scholar may be eligible based on his or her current academic results. The conversation is designed to encourage scholars to stay on track, or realign their academic progress towards getting into the college of their dreams. Also discussed are the non-academic requirements—like volunteer work, extracurricular activities, leadership and work experiences—needed to write a well-rounded college application.

Counselors also work with families to instill confidence, understanding, and belief that their children can attend selective colleges and universities. Alliance exposes families to a range of colleges by bringing them on college tours, and introducing them to parents of Alliance alumni who attend schools on the Power 150™ Index or Tier B college list.

Foundational to all of this work is a high-touch and personalized approach to college counseling that requires a significant investment in counseling staff at each school. Alliance schools average a 170:1 scholar-to-counselor ratio, which compares quite favorably to the California average of 945:1[8], and the national average of 477:1[9].

[8, 9] https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/rh/counseffective.asp

Step 2: Guide Scholars to Develop a List of Best-Matched Colleges

In order for students to attend a college with a high minority completion rate, students must first apply to, and be accepted by those schools. Alliance has created an algorithm that produces a personalized matching list of Power 150™ Index and/or Tier B colleges for each scholar based on factors such as a college's six-year minority completion rates, diversity of the student body, availability of financial aid, historical acceptance rates for Alliance scholars, and the scholar's GPA and SAT/ACT scores.

Alliance scholars and their families receive a customized College Matching Letter—in English and Spanish—that indicates the top 10 universities where scholars have the highest chance of both admission and, more importantly, success in college. Scholars then review their list with their counselor, who uses it to expose juniors and seniors to colleges they may be unfamiliar with, or which they may not have thought they were capable of attending.

Alliance scholars and families receive their College Matching Letters in the spring of junior year and receive an updated letter in the fall of their senior year, in advance of the college application window. In spring 2019, we will expand the scope of the college matching work by providing these letters to our sophomores, offering a motivational tool to our younger scholars, while exposing them and their families early to the breadth of "best fit, highest success" college opportunities.

Although scholars are not obligated to apply to the schools on their College Matching Letters, counselors work closely with our families to make the best college decisions. Activities include the following:

- Review the list of colleges with scholars and their family to explain the Power 150™ Index and College Tiering, and how the choice of a particular university directly impacts a scholar's ultimate success in college.
- Discuss the differences between private and public colleges as well as the non-academic aspects of the school such as housing options, on-campus resources, distance from home, and urban versus suburban or rural settings.
- Organize campus visits, or host an admissions event for Power 150™ Index and Tier B colleges.
- Discuss financial aid opportunities and explain the financial aid process and paperwork.

Step 3: Support Scholars To Make Best-Match Decisions During the Application Process

Alliance staff, as well as volunteers from the community, work individually with scholars, reviewing their college application multiple times to produce a competitive package that increases the chance of being accepted. Alliance scholars finish their junior year with a head start on their essays and personal statements. As a result, they are ready to apply to the best-match universities on their personalized College Matching Letter at the beginning of their senior year.

In addition to providing step-by-step guidance on filling out and reviewing the actual application, counselors provide guidance to scholars and their families through the financial aid application process. A number of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Dream Act workshops are held during the school day, after school and on weekends, providing multiple opportunities for scholars and their families to understand the various financial aid offerings, take note of upcoming deadlines, and get the assistance they need to complete the forms. In 2018, 90% of Alliance seniors completed a financial aid application.

Step 4: Encourage Best-Match College Matriculation

Once accepted to college, Alliance counselors encourage scholars to matriculate to the scholar's best-matched college where they will have the highest chance of completing a bachelor's degree. This support includes meeting with scholars and their families to pursue scholarship opportunities, reviewing college financial aid packages, discussing college graduation rates at each of the accepted colleges, and evaluating additional factors that enter into the scholar's decisions, such as housing, summer bridge programs, on-campus support, and other aspects of campus life at each school.

This is also a time when counselors ensure scholars understand the next steps and deadlines for their chosen college, including housing deposits and waivers, financial aid verifications, and the course-selection process and deadlines for first semester of freshman year—to avoid any missteps that would hinder the scholar's ability to attend in the fall.

Finally, counselors strongly encourage scholars to take part in the college's admit day events to help them make a final decision about attending a particular college.

By simply improving college matching at Alliance schools, we can increase college completion rates by 41%, without changing the academic profile of the scholar.

SPOTLIGHTS ON FIRST-GENERATION SCHOLARS, COUNSELORS & PROGRAMS

“I’m so grateful to my counselor for being so hands on and interested in the colleges I applied to, because it led me to the best four years of my life.”

Moises Silva

Moises Silva, Alliance & Dartmouth College Alumnus

Moises Silva was raised in East Los Angeles, the son of Mexican immigrants and the first in his family to go to college. As a scholar at Alliance Marc & Eva Stern Math and Science School, Moises was encouraged to apply to a handful of colleges he’d never even heard of. One of those was Dartmouth College.

Because Dartmouth seemed too far away, too different, and too “elite,” Moises was hesitant to apply—until his school counselor encouraged him to get it done. Now an engineer at Northrop Grumman and a proud graduate of Dartmouth’s Thayer School of Engineering, Moises looks back on his decision to attend Dartmouth as the best choice he’s ever made.

Moises considered several other selective colleges, but what stood out about Dartmouth was its generous financial aid and First Year Student Enrichment Program, a program designed to assist first-generation students like himself get acclimated to their new surroundings. The program enabled Moises to arrive on campus a few weeks before orientation, and gave him, and his fellow first-generation students, time to navigate the campus experience and become familiar with the available academic and social-emotional support resources.

Jenni Gargano, Assistant Director of Admissions at Dartmouth College

A first-generation Dartmouth graduate herself, Jenni Gargano finds support and comfort in Dartmouth's emphasis on building a diverse campus for students from all backgrounds. Jenni shares how Dartmouth supports first-generation students.

"Dartmouth is very mindful of the schools visited during the fall travel season and intentionally includes high schools in traditionally underserved areas.

Once applications are in, Dartmouth's holistic reading process allows its admissions staff to evaluate applications in the context of an individual student's situation. Applicants who are first in their family to attend college often have strong academic results and leadership in extracurriculars. Many of them are also navigating the college application process without the same support or guidance as other students. The admissions team at Dartmouth absolutely take those factors into consideration.

In addition, Dartmouth's need-based financial aid program is among the most generous in the country. Dartmouth guarantees to meet 100 percent of the demonstrated financial need for all admitted students, including free tuition and no loans for students whose families earn less than $100,000.

Lastly, Dartmouth has a number of programs that support students who are among the first in their family to attend a four-year institution. The First Year Student Enrichment Program empowers first-generation students at Dartmouth through a six-day pre-orientation program and provides ongoing support. A dedicated staff advisor provides advising, mentorship, guidance, and targeted programming to connect first-generation and low-income students with resources and support."

"Dartmouth believes it has a duty to demystify the college process, so they talk about Dartmouth with students who may not have considered the school a feasible option."

Jenny Gargano

SPOTLIGHT ON FIRST-GENERATION SCHOLARS, COUNSELORS & PROGRAMS

“It’s no longer about having scholars go to college. It’s about making sure they graduate from college.”
Wendy Salazar

Wendy Salazar, Alliance High School Counselor

Wendy Salazar, College Counselor at Alliance Ted K. Tajima High School and a first-generation college graduate herself, begins working with scholars in ninth grade, setting clear college-going expectations from day one.

With the Power 150™ Index and College Matching Letters at her disposal, Wendy has seen scholars applying to a wider range of schools, and is excited by the opportunity these tools present for raising college completion rates.

While working closely with scholars to ensure they are applying to colleges that match their academic standing, Wendy also educates and counsels parents. She makes sure parents understand not just the ins and outs of the application process and financial aid, but also the differences between college options by bringing college completion rates into the discussion.

“It’s no longer about having scholars go to college, it’s about making sure they complete college. How do we send scholars to the best schools to support them? And for those schools not on the Power 150™ Index, how can those colleges reflect and improve upon what they’re doing to support students of color?”

SETTING SAIL: RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the past decade, high school graduation and college acceptance rates have risen steadily, yet college completion rates have not kept pace. The U.S. economy is projected to increase the number of jobs requiring a post-secondary education; ignoring the high percentage of college dropouts is neither economically tenable nor morally acceptable.

Both secondary and post-secondary institutions can play an important role in ensuring that traditionally underrepresented minority students are aware of, guided toward, and supported in the colleges and universities that will lead to a bachelor's degree. The Power 150™ Index and College Tiering program—designed to match scholars to the colleges that will best ensure their success—is one positive step in that direction.

Our lessons learned and best practices are replicable. We share them in hopes of informing the larger conversation and movement to support the success of all college-bound students.

Recommendations at a Glance:

For High Schools:

- Use the Power 150™ Index and College Tiers with your counselors, students, and families to inform the college selection process.
- Educate your students and parents—as early as ninth grade—on the college matching process.
- During the application process, encourage your students to apply to multiple colleges that are their best academic match.
- Once admission letters are received, meet with your students and families to emphasize the importance of attending a competitive school, evaluate financial aid awards, and encourage matriculation to the colleges that will best guarantee their success in completing a bachelor's degree.

For School Systems and Policy Makers:

- Make the recommended 250:1[10] student-to-counselor ratio a reality on all high school campuses.

For Colleges and Universities:

- Expand college outreach initiatives to reach more students in traditionally underserved communities.
- Develop and expand on-campus support programs for first-generation and underrepresented minority students.

[10] https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/Ratios15-16.pdf

Our Mission

To open and operate a network of small, high-performing high schools and middle schools in low-income communities in California with historically underperforming schools, that will annually demonstrate student academic achievement growth, and graduate students ready for success in college.

Meet Alliance Scholars:

98%

Latino or
African American

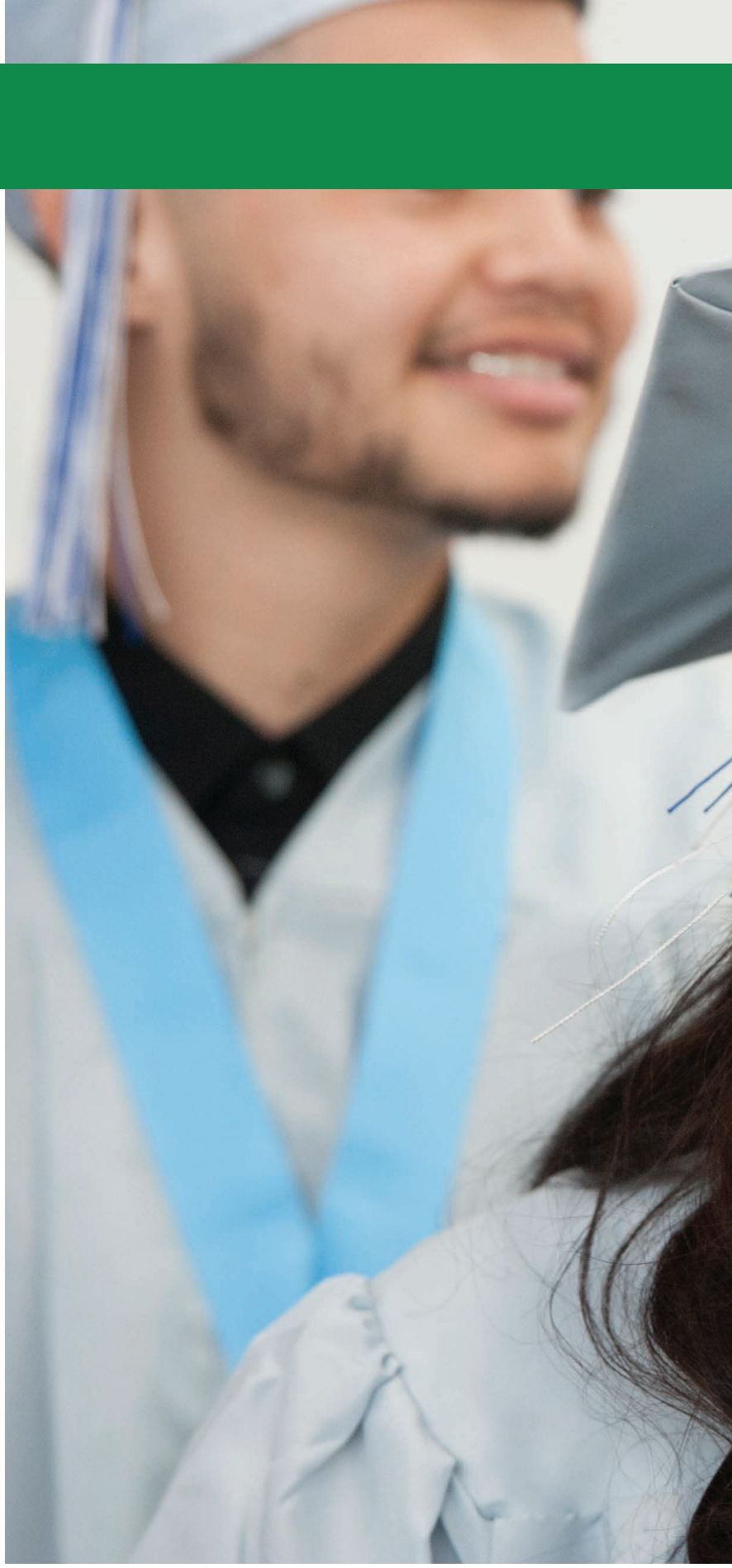
94%

Free and Reduced-Price
Meal Program

85%

First in their Family
to Attend College

Alliance College-Ready Public Schools
601 South Figueroa Street, 4th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

213.943.4930

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