College opportunity for all
The growing college degree divide

A scholar’s future should be determined solely by their aspirations, motivation and effort, not by their family’s income

Yet throughout Milwaukee, there’s a widening gap between the aspirations of scholars from under-resourced communities who want to earn a college degree and their degree attainment, due to the systemic, unfair barriers they face. In fact, only 11% of scholars within Milwaukee go on to complete a college degree.¹

While there is no single cause, contributors to this “degree divide” include inequitable academic prep, fragmented resources, complex college systems and resource-constrained staff. Early evidence indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has widened these barriers, putting the diversity of our future workforce and equitable economic mobility at continued risk.

² Pew Research Center analysis of 1996 and 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAAS), National Center for Education Statistics, “A Rising Share of Undergraduates Are From Poor Families, Especially at Less Selective Colleges.”
During my high school and college years, my College Possible coach never hesitated to support me in anything I wanted to do and I knew my coach believed in me. In the midst of the stress of studying for the ACT exam and applying to colleges, I always knew I had support and motivation from my coach."

Gladys, Alverno College

**Strong communities start with college equity**

When scholars from under-resourced communities earn a bachelor’s degree, especially those who are the first in their family to attend college, they are 24% more likely to be employed and 3.5 times less likely to live in poverty when compared to peers who don’t attend college. Evidence shows that college graduates earn upward of $1.2 million more in their lifetime, and have higher rates of civic engagement than their high school graduate peers.

Evidence also shows that removing barriers to college access and success can create a more diverse and richer educational experience on college campuses. Removing these barriers also contributes to building a more diverse workforce, a critical factor in fueling greater innovation, stronger communities and more equitable economic mobility.

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We empower the college dream

At College Possible Milwaukee, we’re working to close the college degree divide. Since 2008, our college access and success programs have helped empower more than 4,000* scholars from under-resourced communities on their path to a college degree. Our pioneering model matches eligible scholars with near-peer coaches and an intensive curriculum designed to help them overcome the most common barriers to getting into college and completing their degree—all at no cost to scholars or their families.

Through our partnerships with area high schools and college institutions we are advancing college equity for the greater Milwaukee community.

WHAT SETS US APART:

Near-Peer Coaches
Scholars benefit from the relatability, recent experience and trusted relationships with our near-peer coaches who offer an intensive curriculum of personalized interventions.

Support for Unenrolled Scholars
Scholars who unenroll or stop out of college continue to receive coaching support to help them get back on track toward their college degree goal.

Free to Scholars
Thanks to the generous support of our funders and partners, our college access and success programs are offered at no cost to scholars or their families.

6+ Years of Support
Scholars enrolled in our Core Program receive one of the longest support cycles available, starting their junior year in high school and continuing through degree completion.

A PROUD AMERICORPS PROGRAM
AmeriCorps is a federal agency that brings people together to tackle the country’s most pressing challenges through national service. Our AmeriCorps members commit to a year of service as College Possible coaches in communities throughout the country. Many represent the identities of the scholars they serve, and each brings a commitment to social justice and closing the college equity divide.

* Fiscal year 2021
“College Possible was a place where my doubts and concerns about attending college were comforted. [They] made the idea of college less daunting and more obtainable. Without College Possible, I don’t think college would have ever been possible.”

Sienna,
St. Thomas More High School,
High Point University

College access and success programs offered in Milwaukee

Core Program
Our most comprehensive college access and success program. Eligible scholars receive at least six years of near-peer coaching support to navigate and overcome the most common barriers to getting into and through college.

Navigate
A hybrid, tech-connected version of our Core Program. Partner high schools located outside urban centers are matched with trained near-peer coaches to support eligible scholars to get into college and succeed while they’re there.

Connects
Customized college partnerships to match, recruit and support the college persistence and degree completion of College Possible scholars on partner campuses.
College Possible helped me identify strengths that I thought were weaknesses growing up. They were instrumental in my growth as an individual, a scholar and now a professional. I’m grateful for all the support I received during my college journey.”

Yee, College Possible scholar alum and college access coach

Over 20 years of national, evidence-based results

As one of the largest college access and success organizations in the country, our evidence-based programs have earned national credibility. Compared with their peers from similar backgrounds, College Possible scholars are 30% more likely to enroll in college the year after high school graduation, and three times more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree after graduating from high school.1

30% more likely to enroll in college the year after high school graduation

3x more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree after graduating high school

“Although college was always in my plans, College Possible completely changed my trajectory. I would not have been a recipient of a highly competitive scholarship and I probably would not have been able to get into my dream school without the help of College Possible. Today I am debt-free because of that and was able to experience so much in college.”

Richard, University of Wisconsin–Madison
THE COLLEGE POSSIBLE SCHOLAR JOURNEY

1. Explore and prepare
   HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR YEAR
   - ACT prep
   - College research and fit exploration
   - Preparing for college applications
   - Understanding the college process

2. Select, apply and finance
   HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR YEAR
   - Financial aid and scholarship applications
   - College application and essay prep
   - College visits and selection
   - Plan for housing and transportation
   - College enrollment tasks

3. Transition to college
   SUMMER BRIDGE
   - College enrollment tasks
   - Transition to school

4. Persist through graduation
   COLLEGE YEARS
   - Navigate complex college systems
   - Access campus and community resources
   - Form supportive peer and campus relationships
   - Adjust to the rigors of the first year
   - Stay on track academically
   - Renew financial aid and scholarships
   - Budget and manage time
   - Transfer and re-enrollment support

5. Transition to career
   GRADUATION
   - Explore internships and jobs
   - Resume and interview prep

Near-peer coaches provide proactive, personalized support to help scholars navigate and break through the most common barriers on their path to a college degree.
Learn more or get involved

PARTNER
To explore how a College Possible Milwaukee partnership can empower your scholars, contact our program team at MKEinfo@CollegePossible.org to schedule an informational meeting.

GIVE
Your financial support helps us continue to expand our coaching and support throughout Milwaukee at no cost to enrolled scholars or their families. To make a donation, or to explore a broader funding partnership, visit CollegePossible.org/DonateMKE.

SERVE
If you know a current college scholar or recent grad interested in making a meaningful difference in the lives of youth, encourage them to explore a life-changing year of service as a College Possible Milwaukee AmeriCorps coach at CollegePossible.org/Serve.

APPLY
If you know an eligible scholar who dreams of attending college and would like free support to find their best-fit colleges, build strong college applications, finance their education, and persist through graduation, refer them to CollegePossible.org/Apply.