



# Dream Big Dinner

Thursday, April 20, 2023

A CELEBRATION OF THE CLASS OF 2023



Jamie Gonzalez,  
College Possible alum

# TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

## **Welcome**

Amanda Porterfield, CBS 58  
Dr. Isabelle Cherney, Mount Mary University

## **State of College Possible Milwaukee**

Marco Morrison, Executive Director

## **Patricia Wilmeth Award**

Peter Hitler

## **Lifetime Achievement Award**

Dr. Chris Her-Xiong, Hmong American Peace Academy

## **Graduate Speaker**

Nurhasanah Harun, UW-Milwaukee

## **Community Impact Partner of the Year**

All-In Milwaukee

## **Graduate Speaker**

Maria del Carmen Rosales, UW-Madison

## **Live Appeal**

## **Kohler Scholars Announcement**

Ginger King, Kohler Co.

## **Thank you**

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#DreamBigDinner

# WHAT WE DO

Since its founding in 2008, College Possible Milwaukee's college access and success programs have helped put more than 4,100 students from low-income backgrounds throughout Milwaukee on the path to a college degree. Our pioneering model matches eligible students with a near-peer coach and an intensive curriculum designed to help students overcome the most common barriers to getting into college and completing their degree—all at no cost to students or their families.

## College Access

College Possible's high school programming starts at the beginning of the students' junior year. AmeriCorps coaches serving within partner high schools offer personalized after school support, college fairs and optional campus visits to help students with ACT or SAT test prep, find their best-fit schools, apply for scholarships and financial aid, explore transportation and housing options, and complete their college applications. After-school sessions offer students a consistent space to build a supportive peer group, a key factor to students' academic success.

## College Success

Beginning the summer after high school, College Possible coaches continue to support students across each milestone of their college journey, from their transition to college, to navigating their first year, persisting through graduation, and their transition into the workforce. AmeriCorps coaches receive in-depth training to help students navigate the most common academic, social/emotional, financial and personal barriers that first-generation students and students from underrepresented backgrounds face. Coaches provide tech-connected, proactive, personalized support in one-on-one and group sessions, while also helping students access the wealth of campus and community resources available to them.

# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Marco Morrison**

Dear Believers in Dreams:

Thank you for joining College Possible in celebrating our 9th annual Dream Big Dinner. This event highlights the commitment and impact that you provide to our scholars who have benefited from your unwavering support of our mission. I would also like to thank Mount Mary University for hosting this event in honor of our scholars, five of whom will be graduating from



Mount Mary University this spring. Last but not least, I want to say thank you to our academic partners and the staff of College Possible, who ensure our scholars have the support and resources needed to persist through attaining their dream of earning their college degree. Without all of you, none of this work would be possible.

While this event is a celebration of the successes of the 82 College Possible college graduates and 137 high school graduates this school year, it is also an opportunity for us to hear from our scholars and to acknowledge some of the great partnerships that allow us to impact the lives of so many young people who seek to change their lives and the lives of their families. Tonight is also an opportunity for College Possible to raise funds to continue to support scholars who are motivated and committed to achieving their college degree.

This evening, we will hear from Nur Harun and Maria del Carmen Rosales. These scholars have been a part of the College Possible family for six years. Soon, they will share their personal journey to

attaining their degree and the impact that College Possible and our partners have provided along the way. We will also acknowledge influential donors and partnerships, which have allowed the dreams of our scholars to materialize.

One of these recipients is All-In Milwaukee. All-In Milwaukee has been a partner of College Possible since they were established in 2018 and has provided our scholars with additional mentorship, career exploration opportunities, and financial support. This partnership exemplifies the success we can have when we work together to achieve our common goal: to support scholars in maximizing their newly attained knowledge and skill sets with workforce opportunities that will have positive economic and generational ramifications. We are honored to award All-In Milwaukee with our Community Impact Partner of the Year Award as they celebrate their first cohort of graduates, six of whom are also College Possible graduates, including one of our scholar speakers, Maria del Carmen Rosales.

We also have the pleasure of recognizing Dr. Chris Her-Xiong, CEO and founder of the Hmong American Peace Academy. She has served Milwaukee's education system for over 30 years, impacting the Milwaukee and Hmong community. Through our partnership and under the leadership of Dr. Her-Xiong, 13 Hmong American Peace Academy alums earned their college degree this year. We are grateful to honor Dr. Her-Xiong with our Lifetime Achievement Award.

It is our pleasure to present Peter Hitler with the Patricia Wilmeth Award. This award is in recognition of his kindness, caring, generosity, and commitment to College Possible scholars for nearly a decade. Through this award, our hope is to honor Peter through Pat's memory and the difference they both have made not only to College Possible but also to countless youth across Milwaukee. Thanks to the care and compassion Peter has shown, together we are ensuring that a scholar's future is determined solely by their talent, motivation, and effort.

The Dream Big Dinner is our largest fundraiser and the secondary reason for our gathering. Tonight, we hope to raise \$50,000 so we can continue to offer programming to 426 students across 19

partner high schools, in addition to 1,400 college scholars across 153 colleges.

Thank you to all of you who have already helped us reach a significant portion of our fundraising goal before tonight's event even began. And for those who've not yet had a chance to contribute, thank you in advance for your support this evening.

Your continuous support of College Possible Milwaukee is appreciated more than you could possibly know. As donors, you give our scholars the hope and inspiration to know that they have individuals who are advocating, providing resources, and establishing opportunities for their current and future success.

I also want to thank the amazing College Possible Board of Directors and our dedicated staff for making tonight a dream come true for our scholars and for planning an evening you all will remember.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marco Morrison". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Gratefully,".

**Special thank you to our host,  
Mount Mary University!**





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# TONIGHT'S EMCEE



## Amanda Porterfield

Anchor, CBS 58

Amanda Porterfield is an award-winning journalist with a career spanning more than 15 years across four states. With a passion for investigative journalism and highlighting social issues in the community, she has received several awards for her work covering social justice and community involvement.

Porterfield's career began as an intern at a local television station while completing her bachelor's degree in liberal arts, sociology, and English writing at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. After graduating, she worked as a production assistant before reporting for weekend newscasts. Porterfield continued to build a career as both a reporter and anchor working in Tennessee, Illinois, and Wisconsin. She currently handles noon and 4 p.m. anchor duties at CBS 58.

Porterfield has helped CBS 58 receive several awards including coverage of the Sherman Park Unrest. She also helped the station receive a Chicago/Midwest Emmy nomination for anchoring and producing an hour primetime special called, "Milwaukee at a Crossroads," which spotlighted Milwaukee families who had lost children to gun violence.

A Milwaukee native, Porterfield has deep roots in the community from growing up in the Rufus King Neighborhood. She serves on several community boards and has been named one of Wisconsin's Most Influential Black Leaders. Porterfield is also a founding member of Milwaukee Crime Stoppers.

# SPEAKERS



## **Maria del Carmen Rosales**

**UW-Madison '23**  
**St. Thomas More '19**

Maria del Carmen Rosales is a senior graduating this spring in health promotion and health equity with certificates in Chicana and Latina studies and gender and women's studies at UW-Madison. Her interests are community health/wellness, health education, and community-based participatory research. She hopes to return to school after two gap years to pursue a master's in public health. She has been supported by both College Possible Milwaukee and All-In Milwaukee throughout her college career.



## **Nurhasanah Harun**

**College Access Coach, 2022-23**  
**UW-Milwaukee '22**  
**Casimir Pulaski High School '18**

Nurhasanah Harun graduated in December from UW-Milwaukee, earning her bachelor's degree in criminology. With interests in both science and law, she intends to return to either pursue medical or law school. Currently, she is serving with College Possible Milwaukee as a college access coach supporting high school juniors.

# AWARD RECIPIENTS

## Patricia Wilmeth Award

The Patricia Wilmeth Award is named in memory and in honor of one of College Possible Milwaukee's early and generous benefactors, Patricia Wilmeth. Wilmeth's commitment to higher education, to students and to helping those less fortunate than she, has had a long-lasting impact both on our organization and throughout the greater Milwaukee area. Through this award, our hope is to honor Wilmeth's memory and to thank her for the difference she has made not only to College Possible, but also to countless Milwaukee scholars. This year, we honor Mr. Peter Hitler for his commitment to youth serving organizations in Milwaukee for over four decades, nearly a decade of which has been spent supporting College Possible Milwaukee.

### Peter Hitler

Peter Hitler grew up near Akron, Ohio. He came to the Midwest by attending Northwestern University. There he met his wife, Sue, who had grown up in Fox Point. He majored in marketing which served him well in his real estate career. After working for a couple of companies he went into commercial real estate and created his own firm in 1982. He primarily sold apartment buildings and eventually gravitated into self storage. Today he owns several facilities and apartment buildings with partners.



Hitler credits his late wife Sue for generating his interest in nonprofits. She spent 50 years as a volunteer, board member and executive director in the nonprofit world. He enjoys giving to organizations which improve the future of young adults.

# AWARD RECIPIENTS

## Lifetime Achievement Award

### Dr. Chris Her-Xiong

Founder/Chief Executive Officer,  
Hmong American Peace Academy

The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented in recognition of Dr. Her-Xiong's extraordinary service to the Hmong American Peace Academy (HAPA), and her advocacy for education equity in the city of Milwaukee.

Thanks to her leadership, care and compassion, Dr. Her-Xiong's work at HAPA is helping ensure that a scholar's future is determined solely by their talent, motivation, and effort.

As a refugee herself, Dr. Her-Xiong knows firsthand the barriers students can face. When she came to the United States as an 11-year-old, she had no English skills. Her hard work and dedication to education shone through at a young age, and eventually she earned a BA from Central College, an MA from Alverno College and went on to receive her PhD from Cardinal Stritch University.

In 2004, Dr. Her-Xiong opened the Hmong American Peace Academy with 200 scholars. The college and career preparatory school is a high-performing and award winning K4-12 public charter school which provides rigorous academics, character development, and Hmong cultural values. It focuses on preparing students to excel in colleges, universities and in their careers. To date, HAPA has attracted over 1,800 scholars.



As the founder, she challenged and changed the face of educational equity for the underserved Hmong children in the city of Milwaukee. Under her leadership, HAPA has been named Wisconsin School of Recognition by the Department of Public Instruction, and the Charter School of the Year by the Milwaukee Charter School Advocates.

Dr. Her-Xiong has been a trailblazing educator and influencer. She was the first Hmong teacher and principal in the city of Milwaukee. She was named Wisconsin Hmong Woman of the Year in 2009. In 2014, Dr. Her-Xiong was the recipient of the Outstanding Alumna of the Year Award by Alverno College. She was named the 2016 Milwaukee Business Journal's Woman of Influence. In 2019, she was a recipient of the Doug Jansson Leadership Award honoring inspirational leadership in the nonprofit sector by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. For decades her commitment to education and desire to stand as a beacon of hope and inspiration has been unwavering; and we are honored to bestow this award to a wonderful community leader.

# AWARD RECIPIENTS

## Community Impact Partner of the Year

### All-In Milwaukee

The Community Impact Partner of the Year Award is presented to All-In Milwaukee in recognition of their commitment to supporting students from low-income backgrounds seeking a college degree. For too long, far too many college-capable students have failed to earn admission to — and graduate from — college because of their limited income. Thanks to the care and compassion of their organization, together we are working to reverse that trend.



All-In Milwaukee is a college completion program that includes financial aid and extensive advising, program and career development support for Milwaukee students to excel through college and matriculate into the Wisconsin workforce.

They are a coordinated collaboration of students, families, pathway partners, universities, and companies committed to providing comprehensive support including maximized financial aid, customized advising, and career readiness to ensure limited-income students complete college and matriculate into the workforce. Student by student, they are developing the future pipeline of talent to improve the state of Wisconsin.



## All-In Milwaukee by the numbers:

- By May, they will have 415 college students from Milwaukee (freshman through senior) — they are 100 percent limited-income, 99 percent students of color and 95 percent first-generation college students.
- Ninety-one percent of all scholars that have started college with All-In Milwaukee are persisting and are fully enrolled in college for the spring of 2023. Ninety-three percent of the first cohort are set to graduate in May of 2023 or May of 2024.
- Ninety percent of students have no student debt thanks to the “All-In” university packages that we negotiate and the “last dollar” scholarships we provide.
- As a comparison, 14 percent of Milwaukee high school graduates will earn a two or four-year degree within six years.
- Twenty-seven College Possible Milwaukee students are also supported by All-In Milwaukee, with six graduating within four years this spring of 2023.

# HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

**College Possible Milwaukee and our high school program partners are delighted to highlight our cohort of 137 class of 2023 high school graduates!**

Casimir Pulaski High School: 8

Hamilton High School: 10

Hmong American Peace Academy: 11

Kingdom Prep Lutheran High School: 6

Milwaukee Academy of Science: 21

Milwaukee High School of the Arts: 20

Milwaukee Lutheran High School: 16

Pathways High School: 5

South Division High School: 12

St. Anthony High School: 13

Wisconsin Lutheran High School: 15

# THE KOHLER SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Last year, College Possible Milwaukee and Kohler Co. partnered to create the Kohler Scholars Program. This one-of-a-kind program aims to provide high school students who are the first in their family to attend college with annual scholarships, mentorship from Kohler leaders, career exploration and internship opportunities.

# KOHLER®

## 2022 KOHLER SCHOLARS:

### **Toluwanimi [Excel] Olatunji**

Milwaukee School of Engineering

Milwaukee Marshall High School '22

Mentored by Michael Brooks, Sr. Staff Quality Engineer

### **Cecilia Mercado Martin**

Marquette University

Saint Anthony High School '22

Mentored by Christine Perkins, Dir –

Employment Brand & HR Communications

### **Susan Thao**

New York University

Hmong American Peace Academy '22

Mentored by Elisa Spadaccini, Staff Engineer – Program  
Management & Services

In partnership with Kohler, we are pleased to announce the expansion of the Kohler Scholars Program to support an additional five high school seniors this year. In total, eight scholars will be supported by the Kohler Scholars Program during the 2023–24 academic year.

## **2023 KOHLER SCHOLARS:**

**Sang Cung**

Hamilton High School '23

**Kyla Chester-Hopkins**

Pathways High School '23

**Zing Hnem**

South Division High School '23

**July Tun**

Milwaukee High School of the Arts '23

**Da'Sharia Williams**

Milwaukee Academy of Science '23



**COLLEGE  
POSSIBLE™**  
MILWAUKEE

## **Congratulations to this year's high school and college graduates!**

The commitment of College Possible scholars and coaches is truly inspiring.

To all of our sponsors, supporters, attendees, and our Milwaukee Leadership Team and Board of Directors, thank you for all that you make possible.

With appreciation from,  
**Shelly and Dick Seesel**



## **Congratulations!**

To the scholars, AmeriCorps members, College Possible team, and tonight's awardees: we are proud of you for dreaming big and for making Milwaukee a better community. Here's to futures full of possibility!

**Lindy Yeager and John Florsheim**

# COLLEGE GRADUATES

**College Possible Milwaukee is proud to  
recognize 82 college graduates!**

**Mohamed Abdi\***

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Allie Baranek**

*University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point*

**Rusbel Bautista**

*Milwaukee Area Technical College*

**Jazmin Benitez-Del Angel**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Dayjon Benson**

*University of Wisconsin-Stout*

**BriYiana Bohannon**

*Milwaukee Career College*

**Valencia Bridges**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Daijah Brooks**

*University of Wisconsin-Whitewater*

**Adriana Carter**

*Mount Mary University*

**Stephany Castaneda**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Julie Chin**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Karen Cortez**

*Saint Norbert College*

**Stephanie Demarcos-Carrillo**

*Marquette University*

**Emmanuel Dominguez**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Adrianna Drury**

*Milwaukee Area Technical College*

**Joel Efang**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Chassity Eichenbaum**

*Empire Beauty School-Milwaukee*

**Alissa Evans**

*Huston-Tillotson University*

**Hamidah Ezhar**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Zach Fakaruddin**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Larry Flowers**

*Marquette University*

**Brandon Geluk**

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Kamyria Gray-Dillard**

*University of Wisconsin-Platteville*

**Keasia Gray**

*University of San Francisco*

**Timesha Gray**

*The Institute of Beauty and Wellness*

**Evan Harper**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Nur Harun**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Melvin Hood**

*Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design*

**Ka Fruit Her**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Michael Her**

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Najaris Hernandez-Martinez**

*Marquette University*

**Sinyetta Hill**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Rebecca Hnem**

*Milwaukee Area Technical College*

**Boast Ike**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Emma Janssen**

*Waukesha County Technical College*

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**Emily Lomphackdy**

*University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point*

**Malee Lor**  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Marinelle Manuntag**  
*Alverno College*

**Sui Mawi**  
*University of Wisconsin-Whitewater*

**Jarod Mccoy**  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Estefany Mercado**  
*Gene Juarez Academy of Beauty*

**Lee Morgan**  
*Northland College*

**Eme Na**  
*Mount Mary University*

**Daquan Nathaniel**  
*University of Wisconsin-Platteville*

**May-June Paw**  
*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Shanya Payne**  
*Milwaukee Area Technical College*

**Nasib Perkins**  
*University of Wisconsin-Whitewater*

**Delisa Person**  
*Cardinal Stritch University*

**Kong Pheng\***  
*University of Wisconsin - Madison*

**Victoria Poindexter**  
*Mount Mary University*

**Samari Price**  
*Marquette University*

**Emily Jimenez Quezada**  
*Marquette University*

**Sharon Mendieta Ramirez**  
*Washington and Lee University*

**Lemont Robinson**  
*University of Wisconsin-Platteville*

**Alvaro Rodriguez**  
*Carroll University*

**Andrew Rodriguez\***  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Ivan Rojo**  
*Marquette University*

**Maria Rosales\***  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Ayanna Rose**  
*University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley*

**Chaivon Rowe**  
*University of Wisconsin-Stout*

**Elijah Santiago**  
*Lakeland University*

**Kara Speakman**  
*Mount Mary University*

**Corena Smith**  
*Marquette University*

**Kerryon Taylor**  
*University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff*

**Samiah Taylor**  
*Mount Mary University*

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*University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh*

**Adrian Vang**  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Hli Dra Vang**  
*Milwaukee Area Technical College*

**Nou Vang**  
*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Thaokang Vang**  
*University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh*

**Pa Cha Vue\***  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Alicia Webb**  
*Northwestern University*

**Nyjeria West**  
*University of Wisconsin-Whitewater*

**Keshawn Williams**  
*University of Wisconsin-Whitewater*

**Kao Yang**  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Houa Yang**  
*Mid-State Technical College*

**Mai Xee Yang**  
*University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh*

**Congratulations graduating class of 2023!**

*\*All-In Milwaukee recipients*

# FEATURED BUSINESSES

Thank you to these Milwaukee businesses  
for making tonight so special!



## CBS 58

CBS 58 is Milwaukee's Hometown station. While other local news stations continue to focus in on the negative parts of our community, CBS 58 focuses in on the good. Our newscasts highlight what works in Milwaukee and in Wisconsin.

## Dan Herda Photography



Dan Herda has been photographing people, places, and events for over 20 years. He loves to capture the moments and memories that make life special.

Learn more and see images at  
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## Patricia O'Brien & Co

“In the 16 years since I started this specialty baking business in my Milwaukee area home kitchen, it has grown into a full time venture requiring a commercial production kitchen and

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[www.patriciaobrieninc.com](http://www.patriciaobrieninc.com)





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*Congratulations to  
the College Possible  
Class of 2023.*

***Your future is bright!***

Warmest wishes,  
**Beth and Josh Smith**



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BETTER HOMETOWN**

Northwestern Mutual believes in Milwaukee  
and we are proud to support this event.

 **Northwestern Mutual**

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# CONGRATULATIONS 2023 GRADUATES!

As you begin your new journey, remember ...

*“Seek patience and passion in equal amounts.  
Patience alone will not build the temple.  
Passion alone will destroy its walls.”*

— Maya Angelou

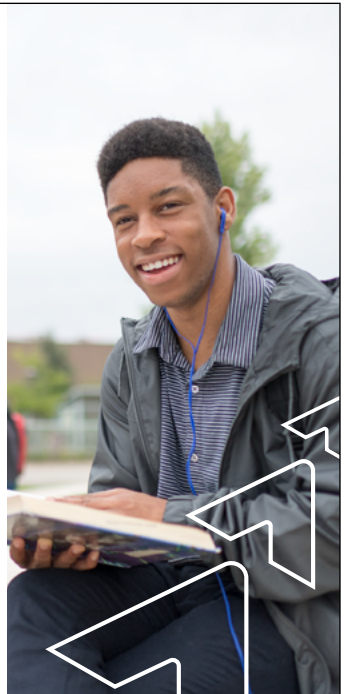
All the best to you!  
**Christine and Barry Holloway**



## Making Education and Training Beyond High School a Reality for Everyone

Earning a credential, certificate or degree has the power to transform lives. It can lead to financial stability, a fulfilling career and a stronger community. Ascendium's goal is to elevate opportunities for learners from low-income backgrounds to experience that transformation.

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## We support the minds of tomorrow

When it comes to our future, education is everything. That's why we're proud to help realize the dreams of aspiring students by supporting causes like the College Possible Milwaukee Dream Big Dinner. Together, the sky is the limit.

Learn more at [cibc.com/US](https://cibc.com/US)

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# Congratulations to the College Possible class of 2023!

**Your dedication, perseverance  
and achievements are remarkable,  
and your futures are bright.**

Godfrey & Kahn is proud

# to support

## College Possible Milwaukee and the ninth annual Dream Big Dinner

We applaud and celebrate the success of College Possible.  
Your dedication and devotion to our community is commendable.

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We're dreaming big with College Possible and proud to be a supporter of the 2023 Dream Big Dinner.

**Kim & David Irwin**



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to all the  
graduates!  
We wish you  
a very bright  
future.

**Sangeeta and  
Raman Khanna**

We celebrate all  
the bright students  
supported by  
College Possible.  
They will surely  
help to change the  
world!

**Bob Schwartz &  
Carol Motzel**

# THANK YOU!



College Possible is making college admission and success possible for students from low-income backgrounds through an intensive curriculum of coaching and support.

[CollegePossible.org](https://CollegePossible.org)