



Nguyen Duong,  
University of Virginia '23



Caps off to  
College Possible  
graduates!



400  
Reading & Grammar

500  
Math & Science

NON

600  
Medicine & Tech

COLLEGE  
POSSIBLE





Dear Supporter,

At College Possible, we love to talk about the ripples of hope that a college education creates for students and their communities. **When they pursue a bachelor's degree, students not only grow personally and professionally, they talk about college with their siblings and friends, discover new passions, and create an impact for generations to come.** This year, I am proud to celebrate the class of 2023, whose graduates have persisted through a pandemic and countless challenges on their education journey to become alumni of Oregon State University, Portland State University, Willamette University, and many more post-secondary education institutions across the country.

As I step into this role, I am eager to increase student engagement in College Possible's programming with creativity and sustainability. The class of 2023 has inspired us to boldly ask: ***What more can we tangibly offer to support greater student success?*** As we set out to answer this question, we are excited to partner with you to empower College Possible scholars through college completion and career readiness.

Yet with this desire to support a growing body of students in Oregon, we recognize the pressing need to provide relevant college access and success programming. Nearly every aspect of education has shifted in recent years, and now more than ever, College Possible must be innovative, as students confront growing disparities in education outcomes. **We are committed to ensuring that every College Possible student can pursue postsecondary opportunities with confidence and excitement for the future.**

I am abundantly grateful to Alex, Grace, Qilin and Keven for sharing their stories. As we conclude the 10th-anniversary year of College Possible Oregon, I hope you'll join me in commending the hard work and accomplishments of these graduates.

College Possible Oregon's transformational impact would not be possible without you. We are incredibly appreciative of your ongoing investment, and we look forward to the next program year with great anticipation of what we will accomplish together.



With gratitude,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Chang". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being more prominent.

**John Chang**

College Possible Oregon Executive Director



# 2021–2022 Oregon student results

## COLLEGE ACCESS



**454**

high school  
students  
served



**88%**

admitted  
to college<sup>1</sup>



**80%**

enrolled  
in college<sup>1</sup>

## COLLEGE SUCCESS



**1,186**

college  
students  
served



**100+**

colleges  
attended by  
our students



**89.66%**

persisted  
from first to  
second year  
in college<sup>2</sup>



**60.49%**

graduated  
from college  
within 6 years

*compared to 26% national  
demographic average<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Fiscal year 2022; to any degree-granting institution.

<sup>2</sup> Fiscal year 2022; represents fall-to-fall enrollment to any degree-granting institution.

<sup>3</sup> Fiscal year 2022; of students who enrolled in a BA-granting institution the first fall after high school. For peers from similar backgrounds, the comparative graduation rate is 26% (Pell Institute 2018).

A close-up portrait of a young man with dark hair and a goatee, smiling broadly. He is wearing a black graduation cap with a tassel and a green stole over a blue gown. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a graduation ceremony.

# Alex

Gresham High School '19  
Portland State University, '23

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I never would've imagined that I would attend college, much less obtain a bachelor's degree. Growing up, I had only a few family members that had graduated from high school. It was challenging to think about what college would look like and if I'd find something that interested me in obtaining a degree. I was fortunate to have parents who were active advocates for education. They could not go far in their own education because of the circumstances in which they grew up, but I saw all of the sacrifices my parents made as they settled their life here in the U.S., and I was motivated by their persistence.

Because of this, I knew that I had to put my all into everything I did. In my freshman year of high school, I wasn't sure what to do after graduation. It seemed strange to think about that question when I had three years left, but time flew by unexpectedly, and I was naturally curious. I always asked my teachers questions. I wanted to understand *why* a chemical reaction or math equation works the way it does. My curiosity fueled my desire to learn about college, and I just happened to stumble upon College Possible during my sophomore year. Through information sessions and talking with a trusted teacher, I knew I had to take advantage of this opportunity. Before being involved with this program, I had no idea what the ACT or SAT was, or the financial aid process or the college application timeline. College Possible was pivotal in educating me and my family on the steps needed to matriculate into a college.

After weighing my options, I enrolled at Portland State University, majoring in public health studies with a focus on pre-medicine. Since I had taken dual enrollment credits throughout all four years of high school, I had a strong start and saved a lot of money. All of my College Possible coaches played an instrumental role in my success in college. I was able to obtain significant research and internship opportunities; through my coach's mentoring, I was able to put myself out there as a strong, confident candidate.

**“All of my College Possible coaches played an instrumental role in my success in college. I was able to attain significant research/internship opportunities; through their mentoring, I was able to put myself out there as a strong, confident candidate.”**

Fast forward to the last term before graduation. I knew I wanted to take a few gap years to prepare for the medical school application process and obtain clinical experience; however, I wasn't sure how to achieve this. I learned about the Respiratory Care program at Mt. Hood Community College. When I saw the admission details, applications had already closed. However, I scheduled a meeting with an advisor at MHCC to see what I could do in preparation for the next application cycle, and in that meeting, I learned that the deadline was extended. I took initiative in the situation and applied with my coach's support. I was invited for an interview, and a few days later, I was notified that I was accepted into the program.

I'm incredibly excited to get started! I'll have the opportunity to learn about the cardiopulmonary system in an intensive medical environment where I'll play a pivotal role in a patient's healthcare team. There's so much that I don't know and want to learn. I'm looking forward to connecting with my instructors and utilizing their extensive experience as respiratory therapists to pedal my career. I'll carry all that I have learned from College Possible with me as I traverse the path I once thought impossible.



A young woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a black graduation cap and a maroon gown, is smiling at the camera. She is holding a large bouquet of flowers, including red and yellow roses, wrapped in clear plastic. In her left hand, she holds a maroon diploma cover with the Willamette University logo and text. The background shows a green lawn, trees, and a body of water.

# Qilin

David Douglas High School '20  
Willamette University '23

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As a twelve-year-old who immigrated to the United States from China, I would not have seen myself taking Spanish classes one day. Twelve-year-old me would've thought that I wanted to major in political science and attend law school — after all, it was a narrow path that my parents would also approve of. Because of College Possible's support, I had a better understanding of what my school could offer me, such as a small class size that allowed me to explore different subjects with the attention of professors. It wasn't immediate, but gradually I discovered that I had a love for learning languages, diving deep, and getting outside of my comfort zone.

At Willamette University, I had the opportunity to study hard with the support of College Possible and various scholarships. Because of their support, somebody was always there to show me that I belonged in college, that I deserved a more diverse college experience, and that I could confidently and freely explore what I wanted. Studying different languages really opened up my worldview about what going to college can offer. It wasn't just pure academics; I enjoyed attending all the cultural events, like the Dia de los Muertos celebration and Lunar New Year event. Ultimately, my interests compelled me to double major in philosophy and global cultural studies.

I discovered many of my passions and who I am from college. When I arrived at Willamette in the fall of 2020, I fell in love with the many diverse topics the philosophy department offers; from Ancient

Greece to Philosophical Ethics, from Philosophy of Language to Nietzsche and Philosophy. I opened myself to a world of rich scholarly thought. Much like Spanish, philosophy was not something I'd ever had on my radar as a field of study. I had surprised myself with this interest and got even more involved by working for the philosophy department as an embedded tutor. This, in turn, kick-started my passion for working with students.

Through my college journey, I was inspired by many people who were my mentors. Because of the pandemic isolation — finishing high school and

starting my first year of college as the first in my family — I was anxious. I wondered how to fit in and how I would manage to live with a roommate. My freshman-year colloquium associate was there to help me navigate college life, and three years later, I became a colloquium advisor to mentor first-year students. I was also heavily involved in community service learning at school and was a Language in Motion facilitator, Service Learning assistant facilitator, and Tiger Club assistant coordinator. In particular, my College Possible coaches supported me in finishing my bachelor's degree, and I am beyond grateful.

**“From College Possible coaches to supervisors, peer mentors, and more who supported me in finishing my bachelor’s degree, I am beyond grateful I received mentorship and role models from these people.”**

This summer, I am working as a College Possible summer coach to mentor incoming college students, because I want to reciprocate back to the program that helped me understand higher education better as a first-generation, low-income student. Because of College Possible's encouragement to pursue my studies, I know I want to work in foreign affairs and gain some experience right after graduation. I never envisioned myself caring so much about languages and cultures, including my own. I owe this to attending Willamette and taking classes like Spanish.





# Grace

St. Helens High School '19  
Portland State University '23

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At my workplace, we tell students, “Opportunity begets opportunity,” and although they roll their eyes because it’s clichéd, I know how important that piece of advice is to live by as a first-generation student. I’ve lived it. I was raised by a single parent who never had the opportunity to attend a university or get a degree. Every opportunity I have taken on has led to another opportunity to obtain security and success.



From a young age, acquiring some form of post-secondary education was expected of me, and I wanted it too. However, the thought of affording and navigating higher education was a nightmare and sometimes felt impossible to tackle. I was raised by a single parent who never had the opportunity to attend a university or get a degree. I knew if I wanted a job that could support me and my family, I would need to get an education. The finances were the concerning part. My mom and I didn't have nearly enough money to put me through college, and I was reluctant to take out loans.

After some internal debate, I applied for College Possible, which would be one of the best decisions I could have made for my education and financial wellness. I set the goal to complete my undergraduate degree with zero student debt and made it happen. My high school coach, Hannah Imrem, helped me apply for the scholarship that allowed me to complete my undergraduate degree with no debt. The Renaissance Foundation Scholarship. A few months later, she also encouraged me to apply for Carpe Mundi, a program that awarded me a year-long mentorship experience and a scholarship to study abroad. I never would have imagined it, but during my first year at Portland State University, I was able to study in India and build community with my Carpe Mundi peers. Because of my experience studying abroad and interning with Carpe Mundi, I was introduced to Financial Beginnings Oregon. I took

**“I am lucky enough to get to work with students who are just like I was — entering a world of uncertainty, but embracing the opportunities that are waiting for them.”**

on a fellowship with them and later worked in program development for St. Helens Parks and Recreation. As I look back on these experiences, it's truly amazing how each event seemed to naturally lead to the next. I couldn't have planned it, but now I truly believe it: opportunity begets opportunity. Through my experiences, I learned how much I value having creative freedom in my work. I realized that it's okay to ask for and even cultivate opportunities to be creative, and I'm so grateful for that.

Based on the experience I gained and the opportunities I took hold of, I have become a full-time community outreach and recruitment specialist for Carpe Mundi. I'm so grateful to have had a job lined up before graduating with my bachelor's degree from Portland State. Today, I'm lucky enough to work with students who are just like I was — entering a world of uncertainty, but embracing the opportunities that are waiting for them.

A portrait of a young man with dark, curly hair and a light beard, smiling at the camera. He is wearing a black polo shirt. The background is a solid grey color.

# Keven

## **College Possible graduate, four years later**

Reynolds High School '15

University of Oregon '20

Digital communications associate at Good Reason Houston

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Attending college was the “American dream” that my parents instilled in me as I began my education. As the son of immigrant parents from Mexico and Guatemala, I needed to pave a new path. My parents did not know how to help me apply to college, but they empowered me with a foundation of faith and a dream that I would one day walk from the double doors of my high school and into the lecture halls of a four-year university.

**“College Possible played an essential role in helping me navigate life as I headed toward graduation.”**

My story began in 2013 at Reynolds High School when a College Possible coach visited my class to introduce the program and the goals for preparing students to be college-ready. That day, I walked out realizing this program had all the knowledge I needed to make my dream a reality.

The following year, I was officially accepted into College Possible. My coaches walked me through applying to FAFSA, exploring colleges, building a solid resume. I truly felt them holding my hand on this path that seemed daunting. As mentors, they shared their experiences for making the most of college-school-work balance, social life, school clubs and more.

During my senior year, I received a large package with the Western Oregon University letterhead stamped on the top right. Upon opening it, I could not believe my eyes. I ran out of the room to show my parents, and we filled my home with celebration that day because the university had accepted me. College Possible was essential in helping me navigate my first college year. They also helped me when I transferred to the University of Oregon one year later.

College Possible played an essential role in helping me navigate life as I headed toward graduation. A pivotal learning moment in the program was a lesson about the importance of having internship experience. During college, I worked as a marketing intern with an education nonprofit, which introduced me to cross-functional collaboration, project management and understanding branding strategies

— all very important skills needed to build a successful career in the communications field. That internship eventually helped me land interviews during the competitive year of 2020, in which many recent graduates like me experienced job loss because of the global pandemic.

Luckily, entering the workforce was a journey I had already begun preparing for even before I attended college, although I did not know it then. While applying to universities, receiving rejection letters, applying more, and tailoring my resume, I learned the valuable life skills of consistency, networking, patience and determination.

Today, I'm working with Good Reason Houston, a nonprofit that advocates for improving public schools and empowering students. Here, I help with digital planning and strategy within the communications department. I love my job and wake up excited for it every day. When I reflect on my journey, I have an extraordinary amount of thanks for the team at College Possible. I'm grateful for the support they passed down to me and the financial backers who believe in the power of this program. Thanks to this mighty village, I became the first in my family to graduate from a four-year university and make our “American dream” a reality, one in which I can contribute positively to society through my work, while achieving financial freedom.









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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/Oregon](https://CollegePossible.org/Oregon)**

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