



**Caps off to
College Possible
graduates!**

Dear Supporter,

This year we served **1,836 students**, more than any other year in our history! Your support has been invaluable in this growth, and we are so grateful that you are on this journey with us.

While more and more students are galvanized to pursue their higher education goals by joining College Possible, **they are also enrolling and persisting in college at unprecedented rates** — even when college-going rates in Oregon continue to fall and financial aid applications make it nearly impossible to access the resources they deserve.

Students are capable, resilient and persistent in pursuit of their education and career goals, and College Possible ensures they have access to long-term mentorship and support. We make a promise to students as early as their sophomore year of high school that they will have a near-peer mentor by their side for six or more years, until they earn their degrees. **Our unique model ensures that students will have a network of support during critical transition periods** when many other students fall through the cracks.

I am deeply inspired by the determination and talent of Kim, Tayma, Jaaron and Teo, the students you will get to know in these pages. Each one is at a different stage of their College Possible journey. You will read about a recent high school graduate starting this fall at Harvard College, a current student at Portland State University who transferred from Western Oregon University to study business administration and marketing, a recent college graduate who landed a full-time job in his chosen field, and an alumnus who is dedicating his career to giving back to his community.

College has been and continues to be a transformative experience for the hundreds of students we served this year. **When students earn their degrees, they are building new legacies for themselves and their future generations with the power to lift up entire communities and end generational poverty.** Your support is instrumental in this success, and we are incredibly grateful for your partnership.



In gratitude,

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

John Chang

College Possible Oregon Executive Director

2022–23 Oregon student results

OVERALL

1,836

total students served

Of those students:

69.5%

were Black, Indigenous
or other Persons of Color

70%

were women

100%

were from low-income
backgrounds

90%

were first-generation
to college students



COLLEGE ACCESS

Our College Access program supports high school juniors and seniors with all aspects of the process of getting to college, from college exploration to financing and scholarships to guiding them through enrollment at their best-fit institution of choice.

2022–23 Oregon student results

479
students
served

90%
enrolled
in college¹

16
partner high
schools served

¹ To any degree-granting institution.



Kim Cortes-Martinez

Gresham High School '24
Harvard College '28

I always knew I wanted to go to college. Growing up, my mom reassured me time and again: “Kimberly, your education is your inheritance. I may not be able to give you much else, but I can give you an education.” From this grew my unwavering passion and dedication to academia.

Being among the first in my family to pursue higher education though, I felt completely lost. I spent countless hours researching ways to make myself more competitive and prepared for the college process. I found myself needing a mentor to guide me through the journey.

My older sister, Chelsy, participated in College Possible and found invaluable guidance from her coaches in navigating to and through college. I learned more about the program when my mom and I attended family workshops. I couldn’t wait to be a College Possible student myself.

I knew I wanted to go to college, but I knew my path would be different than others. From a young age, I wanted to pursue an ivy league education at Harvard. I come from a family of immigrants who forged their own path every step of the way. I felt like there were few things I could do to be as brave as my parents. The one thing that felt remotely close to their bravery was making it to an institution like Harvard. This meant even more hours refining

“I always knew I wanted to go to college. Growing up, my mom reassured me time and again: ‘Kimberly, your education is your inheritance.’”

essays, completing applications and preparing for interviews.

I originally dreamed of being a lawyer and maybe even president someday. The first thing to draw me to Harvard was the world-renowned law school and government program, which churns out presidents and top notch lawyers like no other institution in the nation. If I wished to pursue law, Harvard was the place to do it.



“My College Possible coach, Ella, helped me tremendously. ... Ella showed me unwavering support and understanding that I had never experienced before.”

Years later, I realized law was not for me. But my dream to attend Harvard persisted because of my exploration of STEM in high school and deep commitment to public service. Harvard’s liberal arts approach to higher education allows students to leave the institution as well-rounded individuals, often well-versed in various topics from politics to climate change.

My College Possible coach, Ella, helped me tremendously. She also attended a rigorous institution and shared my passion for academia. Ella showed me unwavering support and understanding that I had never experienced before. Our similarities drew us together so much that I ran to her every time I had an email from Harvard to open, and even clicked “Accept Admission” with her by my side. Thanks to College Possible and Ella, I was accepted to Harvard College to study computer science and economics, starting fall 2024. Additionally, I became the only 2024 Jack Kent Cooke College Scholar from Oregon.

As I look toward a future in computer science and finance, I feel certain that my time at Harvard will prepare



me for anything life may throw at me. Harvard’s philosophical approach to each discipline allows me to connect my passion for humanities with my love for STEM and finance.

With this background, I will continue working with nonprofits. Previously, I focused more on the politics revolving around nonprofits, but I now wish to expand the technical capabilities of local nonprofits in Portland, my hometown. I have seen first-hand the lack of technical support many organizations have and know that providing them with my services would change their world and approach.

COLLEGE SUCCESS

Once students are enrolled in college they move into our College Success program, where coaches offer the skills, resources and information that students will need to persist until graduation and attain their bachelor's degree.

2022–23 Oregon student results

1,357
students
served

81%
persisted from
first to second
year in college²

114
colleges
attended by
students

113
degrees
earned³

84%
of students
attended college
in Oregon

² Represents fall-to-fall enrollment to any degree-granting institution.

³ This value includes verified BA, AA & Certificates (100 BA, 9 AA and 4 Certificates).





Tayma Miguel

Reynolds High School '19
Portland State University '25

As I approach graduation from Portland State University (PSU) in the spring/summer of 2025, I reflect on a journey marked by resilience, adaptation and growth. I started my college journey at Western Oregon University in 2019. When COVID-19 hit during my first year, I had to leave the dorms and navigate studying from home. This disruption made keeping up with my responsibilities difficult, leading me to take a break in spring 2020.

Determined to continue my education, I transferred to PSU's business administration program, focusing on marketing, in fall 2022. The pandemic highlighted the importance of giving students flexibility through remote work. This was essential as I have continued to take care of my younger siblings during college. PSU's virtual offerings were the perfect solution, enabling me to balance classes and home commitments.

College Possible's unwavering support has been a cornerstone of my journey, especially during my gap year. My College Possible coach was a lifeline, offering constant support and encouragement. They understood my challenges and knew I was determined to continue my education. Regular discussions with my coach kept me motivated and focused on my goal.

Greater involvement with College Possible has boosted my confidence and allowed me to make a difference. In March 2023 I testified at the Oregon Legislature to support increased higher education funding. I also served on the College Possible student board for two years. This role allowed me to build a supportive community that fostered College Possible students' academic success and growth.

With my coach's support, I joined student government in my second year, gaining insights into leadership and governance. I also mentored students at my former elementary school through the 'Student Leaders for Service' program. And I found a sense of belonging and purpose through volunteering with Kappa Delta Chi, a multicultural sorority, in fall 2023.

With my parents working long hours, I help with my siblings' education and household responsibilities. Despite these challenges, I've thrived academically and personally,

“Greater involvement with College Possible has boosted my confidence and allowed me to make a difference.”

thanks to my coach's commitment to my success. My coach helped me navigate the complex process of transferring schools. My involvement with College Possible has inspired me to consider a nonprofit career, helping students from similar backgrounds access higher education resources. I also aspire to work in marketing, particularly in social media, for a large company or in the entertainment industry abroad. I am interning at Forth as an "Access to Cars Intern," gaining insights into the nonprofit sector and the importance of electric vehicles. My role as an online promotions editor at the PSU school newspaper and my past position on the College Possible student board have further broadened my horizons.

As I prepare to graduate, I am excited about the future and grateful for the support and opportunities that have shaped my journey. My experiences at PSU and with College Possible have equipped me with the skills and confidence to pursue my dreams and make a meaningful impact in my chosen field, while also helping students like me find community and purpose in higher education and other post-secondary opportunities.



Jaaron Penn-Harris

David Douglas High School '18

Portland State University '24

Volunteer Coordinator for Youth Programs at the
Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization

Growing up in Southeast Portland, in an area known as “The Numbers” for its high street numbers and inner-city challenges, I faced an environment where poverty and violence made it difficult to see a way out. At David Douglas High School, many of my peers were caught in the school-to-prison pipeline, and college seemed like an unattainable dream. The last person in my family to graduate from college was my great-grandfather in 1945, and I struggled to believe it was possible for me.

Despite this, I knew I had to try or risk being trapped in the same cycle that had affected many of those around me. College Possible became the opportunity I needed. When I joined as a sophomore, I didn't know what the ACT or SAT were, or how to apply to college. But my coaches believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. They pushed me through ACT reviews, motivated me to apply to colleges and refused to let me settle for less.

Their support paid off. I was accepted into Southern Oregon University, Western Oregon University, and Portland State University. I started at SOU, then transferred to PSU after my first year. College Possible not only helped me get there but also kept me in school, covering the costs of transferring and my sophomore tuition. When I was accepted into a study abroad program in Japan at the beginning of my senior year, they guided me through the visa process and covered most of my flight. I spent five transformative months in Japan, from August 2023 to January 2024, becoming fluent in Japanese and expanding my worldview.

After returning, I graduated and began an internship with the Oregon Community Foundation, focusing on community engagement and equity. This internship led to a full-time role with the Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization as a Volunteer Coordinator for Youth Programs starting in August 2024. College Possible didn't just get me

“College Possible didn’t just get me to college; it laid the foundation for a career in international development and humanitarian aid.”

to college; it laid the foundation for a career in international development and humanitarian aid. My dream is to work with organizations like Human Rights Watch or Mercy Corps, and eventually contribute to the United Nations’ human rights programs.

The support I received from College Possible was more than academic. It was about building resilience and confidence. It allowed me to break the cycle and set a new precedent for my family and community. Education became a path to a better life and a tool for advocacy and change. My coaches helped me see that, and it’s a lesson I carry with me as I step into my future, bringing one simple truth: Education is Elevation.



CAREER PATHWAYS

The Career Pathways program supports College Possible students' transition from college into working life, ensuring graduating students are prepared to enter the workforce and are equipped to find well-paying jobs that match their interests.

2022–23 Oregon student programming

- Career exploration
- Resume writing and job applications
- Cultivating professional presence online
- Informational interviews
- Job fair prep and networking

A photograph of Teo Ramirez, a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a blue t-shirt that says "Gresham ARTS FESTIVAL". He is smiling and looking towards the left. In the background, another person in a blue t-shirt is looking down at a table. The setting appears to be an outdoor festival or job fair under a white canopy tent.

Teo Ramirez

Gresham High School '18
Warner Pacific University '21
Community Engagement Coordinator
at City of Gresham
Portland State University (MBA) '26

“College Possible was instrumental in my journey. It provided me with the tools and support I needed to succeed. Now, I am dedicated to helping others navigate the system, just as my coaches and the program helped me.”

During my sophomore year of high school, a College Possible coach visited my classroom and introduced me to the program. I was eager to join the program because I was a first-generation college student. I had no idea how to navigate the college process. Little did I know how impactful this decision would be in my life.

With the guidance of my College Possible coach, I learned how to write compelling essays, prepare for the ACT and navigate the college application process. My coach, Paige, persuaded me to join the Oregon Business Academy, a week-long program at the University of Oregon. There, I ran simulated companies, pitched products, and discovered my passion for business. This experience solidified my decision to pursue a degree in Social Entrepreneurship at Warner Pacific University.

Throughout college, my College Possible coaches continued to support me. They helped me transfer

credits from high school, plan my coursework and even pushed me to take an apprenticeship with the City of Gresham. This apprenticeship was a great steppingstone. I later earned an internship with Dutch Bros Headquarters, which was a significant step in my career.

After my year-long internship, I faced challenges finding a job. Dutch Bros was in a hiring freeze, and I found myself back at square one, working as a barista. But I did not give up. I eventually landed a job with Propark Mobility at the Moda Center, where I was promoted to Account Manager of two locations. Later, I applied for a position at the City of Gresham and was hired as the Community Engagement Coordinator.

In my current role, I focus on building relationships with community organizations, managing the volunteer program and developing resource guides. These guides help residents navigate various systems, much like how College Possible

“My mission is to help transform lives, moving people from merely surviving to thriving.”

helped me. My mission is to help transform lives, moving people from merely surviving to thriving.

The next stop on my journey will be graduate school. I will be starting

the MBA program at Portland State University this fall. I am excited to expand my business knowledge, build new relationships and bring new experiences back into my work at the City of Gresham.

College Possible was instrumental in my journey. It provided me with the tools and support I needed to succeed. Now, I am dedicated to helping others navigate the system, just as my coaches and the program helped me.



Invest in future graduates

CollegePossible.org/DonateOregon

Join our email list

CollegePossible.org/Email

Stay connected with us



@CollegePossibleOregon



@CollPossibleOR



College Possible Oregon



CollegePossibleOregon

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

Thank you for being part of this vibrant community!





CollegePossible.org/Oregon

532 SE Grand Avenue
Portland, OR 97214

Phone: 971-407-2960

Email: OregonInfo@CollegePossible.org

Copyright © 2024 College Possible. All rights reserved.