



WE ARE THE FUTURE



STUDENTS RISING ABOVE
2019 - 2020 Annual Report

A RIVER CUTS THROUGH A ROCK,
NOT BECAUSE OF ITS POWER,
BUT BECAUSE OF ITS PERSISTENCE

JIM WATKINS



STUDENTS RISING ABOVE

Dear SRA Community,

Like countless other individuals and families around the world, Students Rising Above (SRA) scholars have faced immense uncertainty, isolation, and unprecedented hardship over the past year. As COVID-19 precautionary restrictions fell into place, many students were unable to participate in summer internships as corporate headquarters across the Bay Area shuttered. SRA was forced to cancel our in-person Annual Retreat in August 2020, which typically serves as an intimate community-building kickoff to welcome our incoming students from the SRA Class of 2021, providing a space for them to bond with their peers and mentors. Many students still continue to face cuts to financial aid packages, food and housing insecurity, and increased financial and emotional pressure at home, often resulting in exacerbated mental health issues and a decline in overall well-being.

There is no shortage of these stark anecdotes - and yet, SRA has seen first hand our students' sheer determination and persistence:

- 97% of Rising Stars first year college students served by SRA this year began college as planned either in person or online.
- Advisors in our Students Online Achieving Results (SOAR) program saw attendance rates as high as 99%, further demonstrating the critical need for accessible, reliable social support networks.
- Despite a recession and downturn in the job market, SRA students and alumni have continued to turn over every rock and apply for every opportunity they can, securing positions with companies such as Blackstone Discovery and PWNHealth.

SRA expresses our deepest gratitude for your support of our programs and students. Because of your partnership, we are able to provide individualized wraparound support to low-income, first-generation students through their critical senior year of high school, throughout college, and into the workforce.

While many things have changed, one thing remains constant: SRA's ceaseless commitment to empowering each and every student to dynamically transform the trajectory of their lives. These young scholars and community leaders inspire us and bring us hope as they continue to march forward in the face of often unimaginable odds. We look forward to serving many more in the coming years with your partnership.

In Community,

Elizabeth Devaney
Chief Executive Officer
Students Rising Above

About Students Rising Above

A college degree and a clear pathway to equitable workforce participation are necessary to bolster long-term stability and self-sufficiency; in today's workforce, 56 percent of well paying jobs - those at a median salary of \$65,000 - go to workers with a bachelor's degree, and an additional 24 percent go to workers with some education beyond high school.* However, research repeatedly demonstrates that a student's educational and career attainment are driven by race and class. Established educational, social, and financial systems that evolved through a long history of segregation and discrimination continue to undermine the talent and innate ability of students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. These inequitable systems make it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for these students to earn a degree and secure career-ladder jobs - critical milestones in breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving sustainable, long-term economic success.

Students Rising Above believes that in order to achieve equitable college access and workforce participation, we must address the ways in which access to education is inextricably intertwined with class status, race and ethnicity, and income. Every day, we work to increase college persistence and equitable workforce

participation by providing tools, resources, training, and robust financial and socioemotional support, because we know that every student can and will achieve greatness when holistically supported to fully develop their identity, as well as their socioemotional and physical well-being.

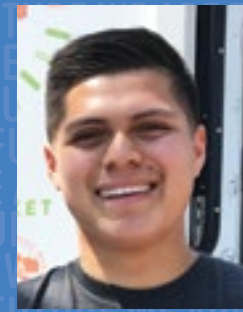
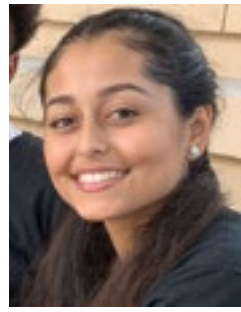
SRA's programming consists of three main pillars: our flagship Rising Stars program, the online SRA Hub, and the Students Online Achieving Results (SOAR) program. Taking a multifaceted approach in delivering these pillars, SRA bridges formal educational gaps, equips students with resources and support they lack, and empowers them to develop their innate skills, talents, and interests. SRA fuses high expectations and structure with a dynamic social approach that emphasizes autonomy and independence.

For over two decades, SRA's programs and services have been continuously expanded and enhanced to meet the evolving needs of our student community, offering: college access and success advising, healthcare navigation, socioemotional support, financial capability training, career guidance and readiness, and professional development and mentorship.

* Born to Win, Schooled to Lose - Why Equally Talented Students Don't Get Equal Chances to Be All They Can Be.

Mission Statement:

The Students Rising Above (SRA) community is dedicated to impacting the future through the cultivation of extraordinary youth. SRA invests in low-income, first-generation college students who have demonstrated a deep commitment to education and strength of character in overcoming tremendous odds of poverty, homelessness and neglect. We help each student to realize his, her or their potential by guiding and supporting the student through college graduation, and into the workforce. Our graduates are breaking the cycle of poverty within their own families, serving their communities, providing a new generation of employees and leaders from diverse backgrounds, and accelerating positive change.



building relationships with people. With those four things, anything can happen.”

E’Quacy Parker
CSU Cal Poly
Pomona 2018
Aerospace Engineering

“Through SRA I was able to get a laptop for school, a stipend, get help to pay my phone bill, build my resumé, find an internship, fly back home, and receive the support of my SRA Advisor, who I feel very fortunate to have. Aside from the academic, career, and financial support, my Advisor gives me what I feel is invaluable life advice too.”

Arnold Dimas
UCLA 2020
Anthropology

“Students Rising Above was necessary for my personal and professional growth. The endless resources, opportunities, and new family that I gained completely exceeded my expectations. I admire and will be forever grateful for Students Rising Above’s commitment and dedication to improving the lives of underprivileged youth.”

Tyisha Higgins
CSU San Francisco 2011
Liberal Studies

“SRA is the one thing that helped me see the bigger picture at the end of the day. No matter what you’ve gone through, you can achieve great things through dedication, hard work, time and



to calm me down and make me feel like I did belong in college. With the support of SRA, I graduated in three and a half years with two Bachelor’s degrees with honors (Cum Laude) and distinction. I was also awarded the Peacemaker award for my volunteer service promoting mental health, which wouldn’t have been possible without the internship connections I received through SRA. Because of this experience, I was accepted into all the grad schools I applied to, and received multiple job offers once I graduated.”

“SRA has impacted my life in so many ways, and I am thankful every day for the program. As a freshman, I applied for an internship through SRA and was accepted to work with the San Jose Downtown Association. SRA made it possible for me to be independent, successful, confident, and have the hope that I will succeed in everything that I put my mind to.”

Emma Ottum
UC Riverside 2020
Business Administration

Mariela Rivera
CSU Sonoma 2018
Criminal Justice
Santa Clara University,
MA Psychology
Counseling



“Being the first one in my family to go to college was nerve-racking. Once I got to campus, I felt so scared and out of place. I definitely had imposter syndrome. But my SRA Advisor was always able

Rising Above and Beyond

SRA’s immediate, emergency support in response to the pandemic included transporting students from abroad and across the nation to temporary housing in the Bay Area, providing food, and ensuring each student was equipped with the tools needed to continue their college courses virtually. Additionally, SRA provided free peer-group gatherings and virtual college and career advising online through the SRA Hub to any high school or college student facing challenges as a result of COVID-19 transitions. As a result, we saw our virtual student community grow by hundreds of students nationwide, further demonstrating the burgeoning need for services and support for vulnerable students.



RISING STARS

SRA’s flagship program offers five to six years of a full continuum of comprehensive, individualized college and career support. These services include college access and success advising, healthcare navigation, socioemotional support, financial capability training, career guidance and readiness, and professional development and mentorship.



“Students Rising Above has helped me through the process of stressing about college applications. It gives me a good idea of the deadline of scholarships, essays, FAFSA and keeps me motivated and running. SRA is also good at making me work on my essays and staying on top of my work.”

Alvin Lee, UC Berkeley

2020 Program Update

The existing online framework of our SOAR Program and the SRA Hub provided a solid remote learning foundation upon which SRA could build out programming to keep our students engaged, prepared, and informed, including:

CODEversity

CODEversity is an 8-week summer program that exposed students to basic coding skills and aimed to provide a better understanding of the multitude of career paths in the tech industry. Students worked to create their personal portfolio website to showcase their work.

Summer Mentor Program

SRA also piloted the Summer Mentor Program, a unique professional development opportunity that allows students to connect with a professional in an industry/role they’re interested in, and learn about their career path, experiences, and gather advice and insight regarding various career development topics.

Summer Leadership Program

The Summer Leadership Program was created to cultivate students’ leadership skills by supporting them in developing a passion project with the intention of positively impacting their communities. Students joined either as cohort participants, who developed their own projects, or Project Mentors who guided and mentored participants in developing their passion projects.



SRA HUB

SRA’s online platform that provides students with programs, services, and tools along with always-available access to a supportive community, self-guided learning, live webinars, a comprehensive library of articles and interactive tools, and responses from trained SRA advisors within 24 hours.



“I’m the first person in both my immediate and extended family to go to college, and so when it came to finding first-hand experience of college life; knowing what the difference between subsidized and unsubsidized loans are, how to fill out the FAFSA, I didn’t have any of that and didn’t have anyone to go to. The SRA Hub helped a lot - that’s where I learned all of that, as well as how to fill out a resume. All of this was because of the SRA Hub.”

Alvaro Vazquez, Seattle University



SOAR

Students Online Achieving Results
Virtual advising program that leverages the success of SRA’s Rising Stars program combined with the scalability of the SRA Hub. Regular personal interaction with peers and an SRA advisor keeps students across the nation engaged in a virtual community.



“SOAR has eternally impacted my life in many positive ways! I want to thank you, everyone, who made this program’s launch possible. I look forward to always staying connected to you all and sharing my college journey along the way. I am forever grateful to be a part of SOAR and the SRA Hub as a whole.”

Vera Wong, UC Berkeley

SRA's Ongoing Commitment to Racial Equity

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging at Students Rising Above

SRA believes that in order to achieve equitable college access and workforce participation, we must address the ways in which access to education is inextricably intertwined with class status, race and ethnicity, and income. While SRA has a long history of working with traditionally under-served students, much more can be done to make a significant and tangible impact on racial equity. SRA has contracted with Inclusive Performance Strategies (IPS) to support SRA through staff education, board development, and strategic planning with a diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) lens. IPS will work one-on-one with each SRA staff and board member over 12 months to build a common understanding among all stakeholders of the need to commit to diverse, equitable, and inclusive work and service environments. Every aspect of SRA, from its values to its governance, its infrastructure to its services, will be infused with a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

#DearCommunity

Students Rising Above believes that our students' first-hand experiences with inequity enables them to be well-positioned to enact change, and feel that it's essential that student-led advocacy be at the center of our larger efforts to advance educational equity. SRA remains steadfastly committed to growing our community from within, and equips students with the resources and tools necessary to become advocates and changemakers, so that this generation is prepared to take on the essential work of combating oppressive systems in their future workplaces and communities.

In response to and in support of the demonstrations around the country following the police killing of George Floyd, SRA launched #DearCommunity, a student-led initiative to spread awareness about social justice issues, particularly related to the Black Lives Matter movement. This student-voiced series consists of articles, videos, and other forms of media that our students want to share regarding their personal experiences, why the movement matters to them, and their journeys of growing through unlearning, learning, and re-learning. SRA's goal is to amplify and provide a platform for student voices, bring awareness to current and relevant social issues, inform others about how these issues are affecting certain communities, and inspire ways in which you can help in the efforts of long-term sustainable change.

#Dear Community, My Artwork, My Experience.

Versia Gipson, University of San Francisco 2023

My Artwork



I drew this art piece because I felt that we are one. I felt that we needed something to show others that we can come in different shades. With all the protests going on, I deemed it necessary to convey a positive message of different skin tones, body types, and disabilities. I showed some girls with visible disabilities with missing fingers and a missing eye. This was to inform individuals that our lives matter and that we must all stick together in unity. Materials: I used the app Ibispaint X

My Experience

I am a sophomore at the University of San Francisco majoring in Biology. I'm currently involved with the USFCA hip-hop dance team called Varsity SF. My hobbies are dancing, creative writing, and reading. I use my social media platforms to bring awareness to the Black Lives Matter movement.

#Dear Community, Performative Activism Has Got to Stop.

Tiara Collins, UC Berkeley 2022

Intro:

We are living in a time of civil unrest. Black people are getting murdered because of the color of their skin in broad daylight. Black people are dying at the hands of white supremacy and police brutality, creating a sense of unrest and uncertainty of what can be done in the future. With all of this going on in the Black community, one thing that we do not need is "allies" doing performative activism to pretend that they care enough about what is happening. There is no time for people to act like they are trying to help out the community when in actuality they are just trying to gain more followers on social media. In this piece you will be seeing examples of performative activism, what it means, and how you can actually help with the Black Lives Matter movement amongst being a part of creating a change for the Black community and other BIPOC. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice and unfortunately more Black bodies deserve to have people rally behind them to continue the fight to end racism and oppression, not for people to be silent and complacent in what is happening and abandoning the movement.

Examples of performative activism-

Performative activism is when you are doing activism to increase your social capital rather than actually being devoted to the cause that you are pretending to care about. It is overall sustained by public consumption. Posting a black screen on your Instagram and then moving on with your life like nothing is happening. Saying Black Lives Matter, but not taking the time to actually give Black workers resources and support. We see this on a lot of platforms that we know and love such as some of your favorite shows that do not have Black writers writing for Black characters which means that they

aren't writing from their point of view. Not having people who know how to do hair and makeup for Black people. Something that I have experienced is being Black while attending UC Berkeley, predominately white and Asian American school, where I get bombarded with emails about how this institution is going to prevent anti-blackness, yet there are barely more than 1,000 Black students on our campus. These are all examples of performative activism that has been going on these last few months, but also for years. All this is showing is that you can be all talk and no action. But what can you do to change this?:

What you can do!

The good news is that if you have caught yourself being a performative ally by no means does that mean that you can't educate yourself and grow from it. There are many ways that you can read up on petitions and sign them if you haven't done so already from Black Lives Matter Petitions. Since we are in quarantine another way you can educate yourself is by reading texts from numerous authors that marvel and examine around racial injustice and dismantling these systems Understanding and Dismantling Racism. The point is there are numerous ways that you can be an actual ally and taking the steps to understand why this is so important. I leave you with something to think about: Don't ignore something simply because it makes you uncomfortable.

Student Art Competition

Students Rising Above was thrilled to offer all SRA students and alumni the opportunity to enter its first-ever student art competition for inclusion in the 2019-2020 SRA Annual Report. We're honored to highlight these visual art pieces with our community, which represent the following: diversity and inclusion; equality and belonging; community and unity; and a strong sense of hope.



Citlali Andrade
Oakland Charter High
School 2021

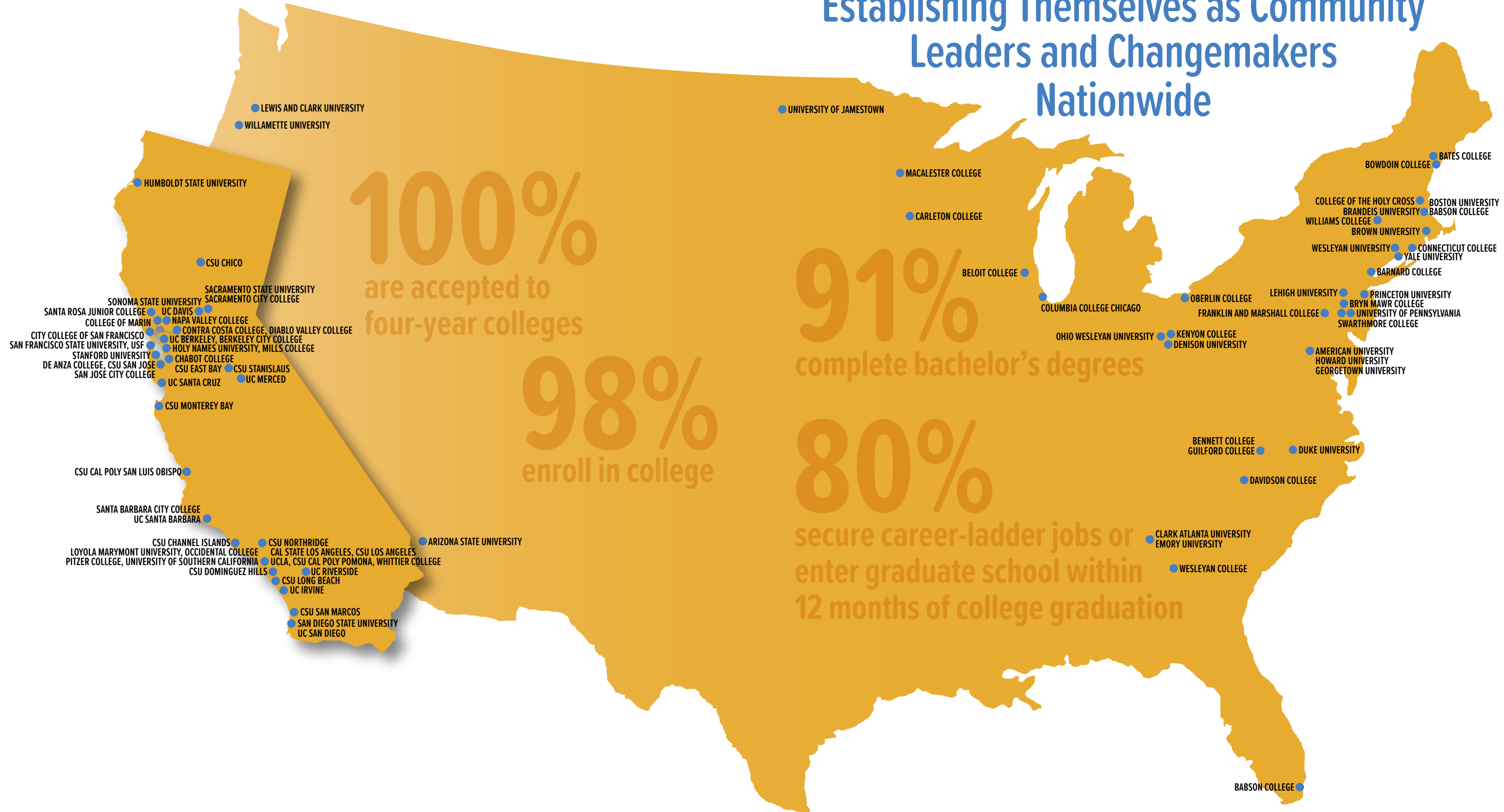


Versia Gipson
University of San
Francisco 2023



Lucy Lopez
Napa Valley College 2023

Our Current SRA Students are
Establishing Themselves as Community
Leaders and Changemakers
Nationwide



“IF THERE IS ONE THING SRA HAS TAUGHT ME THROUGHOUT THIS JOURNEY, IT IS THAT IF THERE IS ANYTHING WORTH DOUBTING, IT’S MY PERCEIVED LIMITATIONS. WITH HARD WORK AND A LEAP OF FAITH, I AM WELL CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING SUCCESS THAT I PLAN TO SHARE WITH NOT ONLY MY FAMILY, BUT WITH OTHERS WHO JUST NEED AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE THEIR TRAJECTORIES.” MARIA ZAVALA



The Future's Looking Bright

SRA Student and Alumni Success Stories: Winter 2020

Yale Senior Alondra Vázquez López Named Rhodes Scholar

SRA Rising Stars student Alondra Vázquez López has been selected as a 2021 Rhodes Scholar. Yale, where Alondra is a senior, honored this exceptional accomplishment with the following announcement:

Alondra Vázquez López, San Rafael, is a senior at Yale College where she majors in Ethnicity, Race and Migration. Her senior thesis, including exhibition of her art, is on Modern Illicit Migration Corridors in the Americas. Alondra has also studied Arabic in Morocco. She is a founding member and president of an undergraduate chapter of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, an active advocate for DACA students, and vice president of a nonprofit dedicated to creating portraits for children internationally who have endured significant adversity. She has also worked directly for asylum clients in Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez. Alondra plans to do the M.Sc. in Migration Studies and the M.Sc. in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies at Oxford.

"I realized from an early age that I would be the only one that could fight for my future and decided that an education was the best way to achieve that." - Alondra Vázquez López



UC Irvine Senior Irma Nazario Rivera Lands Position in Civil Engineering

Landing her first job during a pandemic is something that Irma no longer has to worry about. When Irma graduates from UC Irvine in June 2021 with a degree in Civil Engineering and a minor in Urban and Regional Planning, she'll transition into her role as a Field Engineer with the construction management firm, Whiting Turner Contracting Company. Irma's dedication and hard work in college and multiple internships, along with support from her SRA Advisor, has paid off, paving the way for a successful career and bright future!

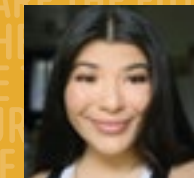


SRA Alum Vernon Wetzell Pursues Future in Astrophysics

SRA Alum Vernon Wetzell is finishing a Master's in Astrophysics at San Francisco State University, and has bright plans for the future, applying to PhD programs for Fall 2021. Additionally, Vernon is finalizing a peer reviewed journal paper in Astrophysics which evolved out of his undergraduate thesis, winning the Chancellor's award for undergrad thesis at UC Santa Cruz.

"Thank you for all of your help through undergrad, I would not have been as successful as I was and it would have been much more challenging without the support of SRA." - Vernon Wetzell

Giselle Chiprez Ramirez Receives Early Acceptance From Harvard University



Congratulations to SRA scholar Giselle Chiprez Ramirez on her Early Admission acceptance to Harvard University. With the support of SRA and her Advisor, Giselle has officially made her decision to attend Harvard in the Fall. We are so proud of you, Giselle, and we know you will continue to succeed in all that you do!



SRA Alum Luna Flores Joins SRA As College Success Program Coordinator

We are so excited to welcome Luna Flores, SRA Alum Class of 2013, to our team as the College Success Program Coordinator! Luna will be working to support the Rising Stars program. Luna is from Oakland and went to Castlemont High School and graduated from UC Riverside, receiving her B.A. in Ethnic Studies. For the last two years, she was with Girls Inc. of Alameda County, another organization she was a part of as a student.

SRA Students are Thriving in Internships and Careers

SRA is grateful to partner with over 250 companies across the San Francisco Bay Area, providing meaningful internship opportunities, career mentoring, and job training workshops. Due to the pandemic, many of these internship opportunities shifted to a virtual environment, further ensuring that SRA students receive the professional training necessary to thrive in their future careers.



“I’ve found new passions that I never knew were inside me that are only through coming to Genentech. I’m grateful for every single day that I get to come here. I love it!”
Olivia Di Santo
CSU San Diego
Genentech



“My favorite thing is the people; everyone is very kind, humble, and willing to teach me. I feel I am treated as an equal rather than an intern.”
LuLu Brien (left)
UC Berkeley
San Francisco Public Works



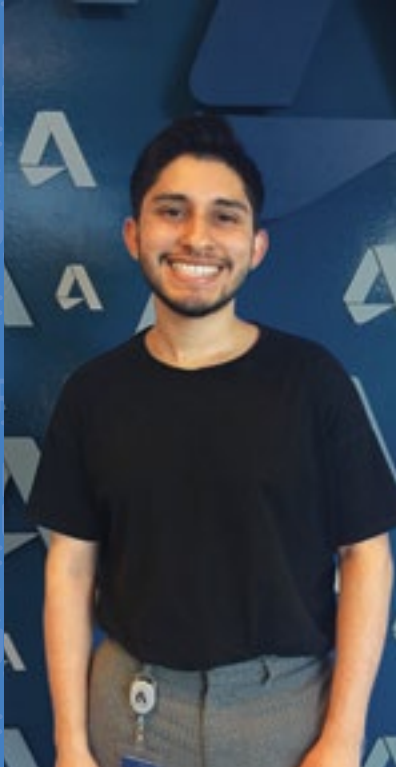
“This internship was life-changing, an opportunity to learn lots of new skills, like how things work and how to fix them. I would definitely come back if I have the chance!”
Centurion Barron
UC Merced
The Ritz-Carlton San Francisco Engineering



“The summer after I graduated high school, a year before the pandemic hit, thanks to SRA and my advisor, I was encouraged to apply to the Children’s Hospital Oakland Research Institute Summer Student Research Program (CHORI SSRP). The internship gave me a purpose and turned my confusion over a future career into a very simple goal, to always help others.”
Ishika Prashar
UC Berkeley
Children’s Hospital Oakland Research Institute



“This is my first job where I can envision a future of doing it everyday!”
Carolina Perez Ramirez
Santa Clara University
Kaiser Permanente



“By doing summer internships that were recommended to me by SRA, I have discovered the type of work environment that I would like to be in.”
Rogelio Rodriguez
UCLA
Autodesk

Jose’s journey has not been easy. . . nor linear.

Jose Iglesias took five and a half years to graduate, but he rose above his struggles with plenty of drive and commitment. He excelled at his internships with SRA corporate partners and highly impressed his internship supervisors — which is why he is now an employee at a major Silicon Valley tech firm!

What was your journey like getting into the Students Rising Above program?

My former high school, Arise High, had a couple of SRA scholars who spoke as SRA ambassadors. I was quickly interested in the benefits that came with being an SRA student and that sparked me to apply. Soon enough, I was told that I was a candidate for the upcoming year and that I was eligible for an interview. I don’t recall specifically where the interview took place but I remember that I was confronted by a panel of about 6-9 people.

Was there anyone specific at SRA that impacted you the most?

Yes, my SRA Advisor, Lisa. She’s at the status of a parent to me. Only a handful of people can make me cry with just words and she’s one of them. Lisa has always been genuine with me and never treated me as just part of her work, which is essentially what I am. I am not perfect, my journey as a student is not perfect and when I was at the worst parts of my journey, she never gave up on me. She did discipline me with her talks but all of it was out of love.

How did Students Rising Above affect or influence your career path?

SRA was the reason I landed my first internship before college. I was interning at Kaiser Permanente under the Occupational Health Department. From there on, I was just flooded with opportunities that were catered to my career and what I was pursuing. I went into UCSC as undeclared but once I decided what I wanted to major in, SRA was providing me with a plethora of opportunities that matched my skills and what I was learning.



Will you tell us about your involvement in the Career Mentorship Program?

Shawn is an awesome Mentor. He invited me to the Zoom headquarters where I was introduced with love and kindness. 15 minutes into our meet up, I was introduced to the CEO, Eric Yuan, who took the elevator down with us to the lobby. Shawn and I took e-scooters with some buddies of his to a small sandwich spot. My experience with him at Zoom was just incredible and unimaginable.

What was the process like for you for securing your job?

I’ve been blessed to have always been busy during my summers. If I wasn’t doing an internship, I was finishing up classes. The job I am currently in was actually out of the blue for me. I was able to secure my spot by using the tools that SRA gave to me; be polite, be well spoken, represent yourself to the best of your capabilities, always say thank you, always follow up with thank you notes/emails and much, much more.

What does Students Rising Above mean to you?

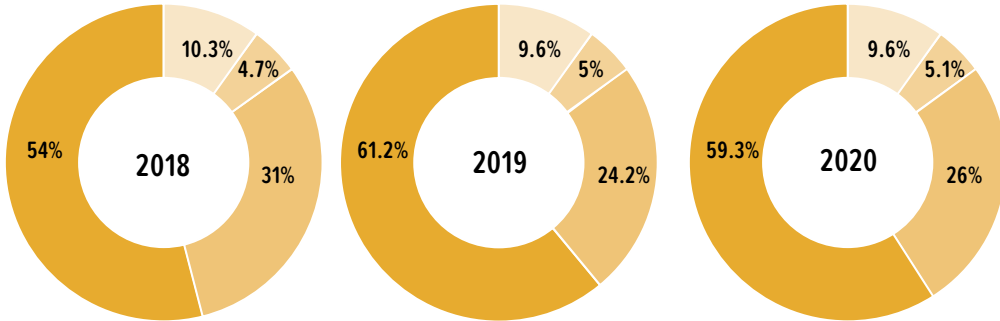
SRA means more to me than anyone can imagine. In simple words, SRA showed me the doors and let me know that I was capable of walking through them. Then they let me do the rest.

Do you have any advice for current SRA students?

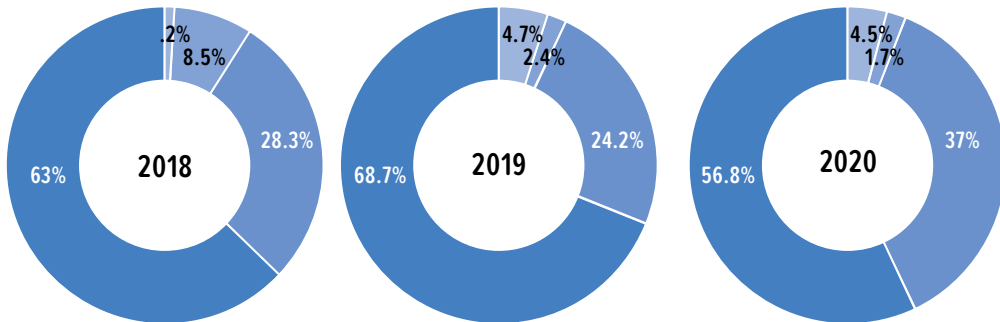
My advice is that, we don’t know what everyone is going through—always be compassionate, selfless, and understanding. This is what SRA lives by, it is what they’ve instilled in me and what I take with me everyday. The other piece of advice is that the only person you should ever try to be better than is yourself. Never cap your expectations to the success of others, see what you can do yourself and work on always being a better you.

Financial Summary

Expenses for Fiscal Year	2018		2019		2020	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Personnel	\$2,280,208	54.0%	\$2,781,922	61.2%	\$2,514,846	59.3%
Direct Student	\$1,306,156	31.0%	\$1,098,086	24.2%	\$1,104,309	26.0%
Technology and Facilities	\$199,131	4.7%	\$226,414	5.0%	\$215,096	5.1%
Additional Operating	\$434,393	10.3%	\$436,448	9.6%	\$406,139	9.6%
TOTAL	\$4,219,888		\$4,542,870		\$4,240,390	



Revenue for Fiscal Year	2018		2019		2020	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Individual Contributions	\$2,891,182	63.0%	\$2,693,548	68.7%	\$3,220,581	56.8%
Corporate and Foundation Funding	\$1,299,615	28.3%	\$949,510	24.2%	\$2,101,374	37.0%
Program Income	\$11,548	0.2%	\$92,786	2.4%	\$96,970	1.7%
Net Investment Income	\$387,994	8.5%	\$182,225	4.7%	\$255,001	4.5%
TOTAL	\$4,590,339		\$3,918,069		\$5,673,926	



Results for the fiscal years ending June 30 have been adjusted for comparability and exclude in-kind revenue and expenses. Additionally, excluded for comparison from fiscal year 2020 is an anonymous gift of more than \$5MM to relieve student loan debt for many SRA college graduates. The funds have been restricted for that purpose, with distribution occurring during fiscal year 2021.

With gratitude and
profound appreciation,

we acknowledge the following donors for their generous support of our students and programs during the 2019 and 2020 calendar years. We sincerely apologize for any inadvertent errors or omissions; should you find any, please reach out to let us know.

\$1,000,000+

Anonymous Donors
Anonymous Donor
Marilyn and Jerry Burke

\$400,000 - \$999,999

Richard F. Aster Endowment Fund
Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation

\$100,000 - \$399,999

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Susan Flagg & Carlo Rocca Fund
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\$50,000 - \$99,999

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Rosemary and Sheldon Wong



\$10,000 - \$24,999

The Todd and Dorris Ahlsten Foundation
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