



Together once again!



FALL 2022

At SRA, we have been buzzing with excitement for the long-anticipated Rising Stars overnight retreat held the weekend of August 13th-14th.

In beautiful Sonoma county at the Alliance Redwoods Center, over 60 rising high school seniors from all over the Bay Area were welcomed by SRA staff members for a two-day, overnight retreat.

The new student retreat marks the start of the five to six year journey as an SRA Rising Stars student. Over the course of the weekend, high school seniors bonded over various relationship building activities, wrote reflective letters to their future selves, and even practiced meditating. Beyond offering an abbreviated "summer camp" experience, the weekend provided an introduction to the SRA programs and services available to them for the next six years. SRA students met the SRA Staff Advisor who will be assigned to coach and support them through the five to six year college-to-career journey.



Scan the QR Code to get a glimpse of the retreat!

Rising high school seniors new to SRA get to know each other during freetime at the New Student Retreat.



I hope you can join me in breathing a sign of relief as we work to rebuild. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us all to be resilient and creative in nearly all aspects of our lives. I personally found comfort in the long daily walk I took with my dogs; joy in the delight my children had in following various social media trends; and inspiration from the thought-provoking conversations I had with my colleagues in my doctoral program. But more than anything, I found strength in the SRA community.

During the past two years, COVID-19 dramatically increased the scope and depth of the challenges faced by low-income students of all ages. As a result, [college enrollment of low-income high school students across the country fell by 29%](#) in the first year of the pandemic alone. Fortunately, the SRA community overwhelmingly showed up for our students and together we were able to combat these pressures. Out of necessity, SRA's support of its students skewed toward objectives of emotional resilience, mental health, and college persistence. And this focus paid off: 97% of SRA's high school seniors continued on to college during the pandemic.

SRA provided responsive support and swiftly adapted our services to address the students' changing needs. For example, offered first in response to the challenges created by the pandemic, SRA now offers individual mental healthcare services for all SRA students and staff. Thanks to the support of SRA's donor community, nearly 40% of the Rising Stars students and multiple staff members are accessing SRA's private therapy portal, and in 2022-2023 we will only continue to expand these offerings.



There is still so much to do, but I am inspired. We are now more motivated than ever to continue to do what we have always done: empower students facing systemic barriers to define and find success through education, career, and in life.

I hope you can join me for our Critical Conversations webinar on October 25, where we will discuss the truly unprecedented times we are living through and the new normal we are building together.

Stay well,

Elizabeth

Chief Executive Officer, Student Rising Above
Doctor of Education (student); Johns Hopkins University

Student Spotlights!

From a unique internship as part of the new Dolby Go program as Browser Product Manager Associate, to joining Prep Médico, an initiative at UC Davis that works to usher more Latine students into the medical field, SRA students and Alumni have been up to some pretty cool things.

Robert Green, rising fourth year student at Pitzer College in Southern California, was recruited for an Investment Operations Associate position at Capital Group this summer. As a low-income, gay, black man, Robert shares that his recent trip to Africa for a semester abroad “was really life changing” and that the experience “really opened my eyes up to many different career fields that I didn’t even know I could possibly do.” To hear his story, watch <https://tinyurl.com/RobertGreenSRA>



UC Riverside graduate and SRA Alum, **Anastasia Abello**, faced cancer as a teenager. She brought this experience to her work as an Associate Scientist at Sutro Biopharma where she conducted cancer research. Recently she was accepted into the UC Davis Integrative Pathobiology PhD program and awarded the Dean’s Distinguished Graduate Fellowship, guaranteeing full funding for the next five years. To hear her story, watch <https://tinyurl.com/anastasiabello>

Sabrina Gardner (Rising Star 2013-2018) graduated earlier this year with her Master’s in Social Work from the University of Washington with plans to continue her career in youth mental health. She is helping to grow a new emergency department diversion program at Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital that provides mental health crisis intervention services to patients in pediatrician offices. This program allows clinicians to address the safety of patients while getting them connected to community mental health resources for ongoing care.



Annelique Lindberg, a third year college student, was funded by both the National Science Foundation and the University of South Alabama (USA) to participate in the Bioarchaeology of Bronze Age Social Systems at the Center for Archaeological Studies at USA. She collaborated with an interdisciplinary group of scientists while conducting original research on two Arabian Bronze Age skeletal collections (2400-2100 BCE) and made a video about her research - check it out <https://tinyurl.com/anneliqueSRA>

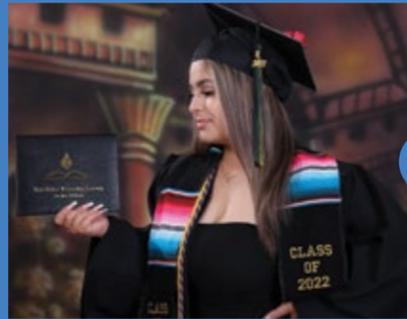
New SRA students enjoying an afternoon hike during the recent New Student Retreat



Looking Forward

Decisions, Decisions! SRA students head off-to-college!

We are excited to see the nearly 500 SRA students attend almost 200 different colleges and universities this year. From Howard and Harvard, to Stanford and San Francisco State, students are pursuing their degrees at colleges and universities near and far!



"I felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment when I graduated high school. I'm now looking forward to college and all the new opportunities."

- Maribel Cardenas



"I'm really proud of how far I've come so far and I am excited for new endeavors here at Berkeley. I hope to be able to form strong connections with fellow classmates and professors!"

- Rosie Figueroa



Together with their SRA Advisor, first year SRA College students shop for dorm supplies!

SRA College Communities

This academic year, SRA students will attend 193 different colleges and universities across the nation. Featured below are the institutions with five or more SRA students in attendance.



SRA Alum Spearheads and Reimagines Alumni Programming



SRA is thrilled to kick off a more robust Alumni Program with the leadership of SRA alum Edylwise Fernandez, who has accepted a promotion from Career Development Program Coordinator to Alumni Program Lead. She will focus efforts on cultivating the organization's relationships with alumni, to be able to 1) follow SRA

students to better understand longitudinal impact SRA's programming; 2) support students in their early careers; and 3) allow SRA to partner with Alumni as they lead change in their communities.

During their time with Students Rising Above (SRA) thus far, Edylwise has taken initiative with countless efforts that continue to contribute to SRA's growth as a team for our students and for our community. Edylwise shares more about their new role:

"The Alumni Program Lead position is SRA's intentional decision to focus its efforts on cultivating the organization's relationships with its program participants beyond college. SRA recognizes the impact of our alumni in shaping the future of our communities and developing the Alumni Program is the organization's way of showing that we want to continue

being in their corner as they continue to pursue their aspirations.

I am most excited about connecting with fellow alums and to learn more about the different types of journeys they are on. Our alums are doing really cool things in their fields and personal life—I want to hear all about it! In addition to connecting with fellow alums, I am looking forward to taking the lead on developing the Alumni Program.

Like many alums, SRA had such an impact on my future's trajectory. This role means a lot to me because it allows alums like myself to maintain a relationship with an organization that had such an impact on who we are today. Most importantly, as an SRA alum, I recognize the decision to create this role as SRA's way of demonstrating their commitment to our future."

Building Success

SRA Career Development Initiatives

In addition to the college success support SRA students receive from SRA College & Career Advisors, students also have access to a Career Development team who:

- build a career development curriculum
- organize career development events, workshops, and webinars
- maintain external relationships with over 250 network of employers and organizations to source internships and entry-level job opportunities.

Currently, the responsibility of coaching students as they access these resources still largely belongs to SRA College & Career Advisors. Similar to college advising, students require a personalized and structured approach as they develop professionally. Yet career coaching provides students with dynamic knowledge of the workforce's changing demands and emergent needs.

Additionally, as more students take advantage of SRA's external relationships with partner companies and organizations, we are eager to even further expand our external partnerships to provide a broader array of internships and summer programs.

The expansion of SRA's Career Development programming is a critical, high-potential area of growth for SRA

As such, SRA has developed responsive strategies to help students optimize our Career Development programming. These program growth areas have been incorporated into SRA's three-year Strategic Plan which launched in July. By deepening and expanding our



students' exposure to, exploration of, and readiness for a broader spectrum of well-paying career options, SRA enables our students to make fully informed decisions to consider career preparation a long term investment. Next year, SRA will invest nearly \$1M toward our Career Development programming and translate this work to the SRA Hub, bringing it to scale for more students and partner organizations.



SRA students visit the labs at Lumentum during a summer Career Insight Day.

Let's Go Virtual

Students Online Achieving Results (SOAR) Program

Launched in 2018, SRA's SOAR program combines elements of our flagship Rising Stars program and our innovative online SRA Hub to create a personalized program delivered entirely online, supported by one-on-one support of SRA Advisors and a community built in cohorts.

At a time when accessible, developmentally-informed virtual programming for low-income first-generation students are more important than ever, SRA partnered with the University of California Riverside during the 2021-22 academic year. The partnership allows SRA to evaluate our hybrid SOAR program while serving first-year students in UCR's incoming class, testing SOARs effect on college engagement and persistence. Between January 2022 and May 2022, cohorts of students were guided through topics

such as UCR campus resources, stress management, self care, meaningful winter and summer breaks, and more. By the end of the program, 93% of UCR SOAR scholars would recommend SOAR to a friend, 80% of UCR SOAR scholars highly agreed that participation in the SOAR program helped with their desire to stay in college, and 93% of UCR SOAR scholars agreed that their Peer Mentor was helpful.

By gathering both qualitative and quantitative data throughout this partnership, SRA has been able to interpret the efficacy of the program's specific mechanisms for improving the student experience while in school.

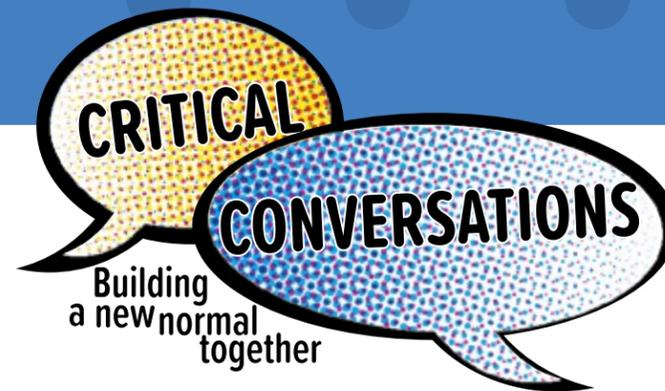
SRA's SOAR program is one of the two main areas of growth for this upcoming year. In 2022-23, SRA's SOAR participation will nearly double from 145 students to likely over 250. To support this growth, SRA will invest over \$1.2 million dollars to cover additional staffing, direct student stipends, and additional program services such as comprehensive Career Development services. This growth is critical to SRA's long term success, and will allow us to scale the most effective components of our program, removing geographical limitations and increasing our overall impact to reach students nationwide.



Amy Vides is studying economics at UC Riverside.



Alvaro Vazquez, recent graduate from Seattle University with a double major in Business Analytics and Finance.



SAVE THE DATE

Virtual Conversation

Hosted by SRA CEO Elizabeth Devaney

October 25th

5pm PST

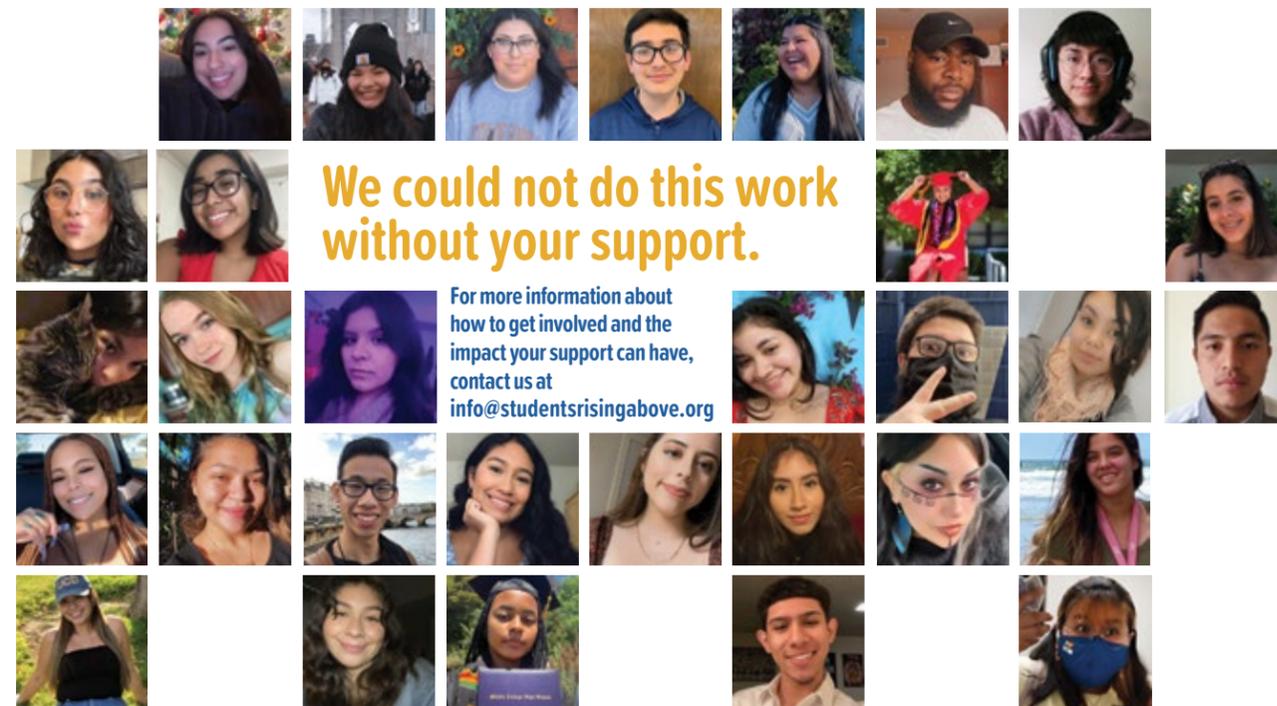
Register at <https://tinyurl.com/srascriticalconversations1>

We are excited to invite you

to a conversation with SRA's CEO Elizabeth Devaney, and other notable figures in the higher education space and student development world, where they will discuss the future of SRA, the state of higher education and workforce development, what WE can do to ensure student success, and so much more.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented the world with a confluence of crises. Together we faced a healthcare crisis, a teacher crisis, a student crisis, and a caretaker and service provider crisis. Through all of this, we at Students Rising Above have remained diligent in our support of the students in our programs, and steadfast in our

belief that every student has the potential to be a Rising Star when given the opportunity and support to do so. It is this belief that has guided us as we continue to adapt to the ever shifting landscape we find ourselves in. As we look ahead, it is important that we tackle the challenges of this post-COVID world head on.



We could not do this work without your support.

For more information about how to get involved and the impact your support can have, contact us at info@studentsrisingabove.org



Together once again!



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