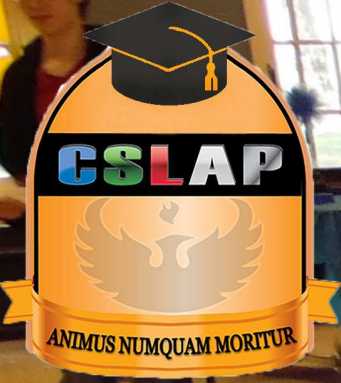


COLLEGE ACCESS FOR ALL



COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP
LEADERSHIP ACCESS
PROGRAM (CSLAP)

ANNUAL REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR
2019-2020



CONTENTS

- 3 MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- 4 COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAM
- 5 COVID-19 FUNDING PROGRAMS
- 6 COVID-19 EMERGENCY ACTION
- 7 BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE
- 8 STUDENT TESTIMONIES
- 9 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
- 10 OUR SUPPORTERS
- 11 FINANCES



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Change brings change. For seven years, we at CSLAP have met the college access needs of high school students in the Rio Grande Valley by transforming ourselves to uplift our community.

In 2013, CSLAP was founded as a summer institute to provide near-peer mentorship to high schools in Hidalgo County. Alumni of local public schools provided free services, such as college essay workshops and ACT prep courses, not traditionally offered by teachers or counselors.

In 2016, CSLAP transformed into an academic year course at PSJA ISD. Unconventional aspects of college access, like alumni networking and professional development, became institutionalized in the district.

In 2019, CSLAP incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to help more students across the Rio Grande Valley.

That has been our goal from the start: Do more good work.

And what is the work? Quantitatively, increase Hidalgo County's higher education enrollment and graduation rates. Qualitatively, enhance Hidalgo County's college-going culture by connecting young professionals from the area to high school students, expanding their networks and increasing their social capital.

Most importantly, change what needs to change: Provide a medium for our future leaders to give back to the youth of the Rio Grande Valley. We are just beginning.

Thomas Ray Garcia
Founder, Executive Director



COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAM

High School

In the 2019-2020 academic year, our mentors hosted college access events at local high schools. Students benefited from our college discovery seminars, parental financial aid sessions, essay workshops, ACT tutoring, mock interviews, and budgeting workshops.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to adapt to distance learning, we were well-equipped to continue our near-peer mentorship sessions through Zoom or phone. We also hosted live online events and produced asynchronous videos on topics like financial aid letters, loans, and college transition.



On-Site Hours
at Schools

226

School
Visits

46

Students
Served

151

Near-Peer
Mentorship
Sessions

109

Essay
Revisions

169

College

Students from our past summer institutes and PSJA ISD course have continued to receive mentorship and personalized help throughout college. From campus resources to professional opportunities, our students benefited from our guidance and networks.

As we mentored our college students, they in turn became mentors for our high school students. They gave back to their alma maters by hosting college transition panels, alumni college fairs, and one-on-one sessions with seniors.

The reciprocal relationship we developed with our college students allowed them to benefit from our networks in tangible ways, such as obtaining internships with business professionals, while also mentoring the high school class of 2020.

Advising
Hours

51

Universities
Attending

16

Students
Served

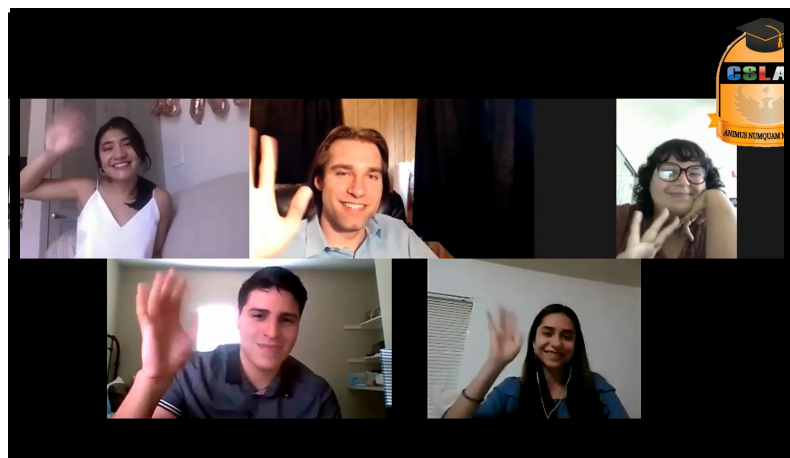
26

Advising
Sessions

45

Mentor
Profiles on
Website

24



COVID-19 FUNDING PROGRAMS



Scholarship Awardees

3

Scholarship Sponsors

2

Scholarship Totals

\$2,200

Pell Grant-Eligible Awardees

3

High School Partners

2

Scholarships

Throughout spring 2020, we responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by distributing funds to Hidalgo County families in need.

We launched our inaugural scholarship program to address graduating seniors' needs like technology, books, and other personal expenses that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CSLAP Executive Director, Thomas Ray Garcia and Ruiz Erectors Co-Founder, Martin Ruiz sponsored scholarships for three Pell Grant-eligible students who will be attending college out-of-state.

Total Awardees

15

Donors

15

Aid Disbursed

\$2,710

CSLAP Alumni Awardees

5

Non-Awardee Beneficiaries

7

Emergency Aid

By establishing our emergency aid fund, we expanded our impact to community members at-large by both donating money and providing long-term solutions to families afflicted by the economic fallout from COVID-19.

We focused first on our college students. We replaced lost meal plans, prevented several evictions, and enabled students to return home during the mid-March campus shutdowns.

Then, we expanded the fund to high school students lacking technology and Hidalgo County families struggling with utility bills.

Applicants who did not receive aid were assisted in other charitable ways, such as by receiving a laptop directly, information on obtaining free WI-FI, and guidance on applying for health insurance.

Non-profit organization helping families with internet assistance



5:02 93° NEW AT 5
THOMAS RAY GARCIA
 FOUNDER, CSLAP

COVID-19 EMERGENCY ACTION



Calista Lopez, University of Pennsylvania '22

"After applying and receiving aid from the CSLAP COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund, Thomas worked with me to find a safe source of income for the summer. Thomas introduced me to his Princeton network, which led to my connecting with Manolo's Best, a company looking for someone with my interests and skill set. At Manolo's Best, I've been able to explore my interest in vegan cooking as I myself am a vegetarian, express myself creatively as a content creator, and learn about the advertising, marketing and outreach that makes businesses successful."



Eduardo Uria, Texas A&M University '22

"I began my CSLAP journey my junior year when my friend Ramiro invited me to the summer writing program. From the instant that I arrived, it was an experience that I couldn't have received in any other place, especially not the Valley. This pandemic came out of nowhere and plans for internships were scrapped by many companies. While out of sheer preparedness I had saved enough to pay for two months, I was in dire need of finding how to pay for the last month. I noticed that CSLAP was giving emergency aid for students affected by the pandemic. I was given the aid and immediately had a weight off my shoulders, which in turned allowed me to focus on my summer studies."

College Access Online

Spring 2020 was a season of adaptation. During distance learning, students required stability to complete their college transition process. Fortunately, we transitioned our seminars and workshops online, enabling students from school districts across the Rio Grande Valley to attend live or view asynchronously. CSLAP alumni hosted online events ranging from civic engagement to resume building. Mentors from across the country taught new subjects in innovative ways, such as by peer reviewing essays in Zoom breakout rooms.

Virtual Near-Peer Mentorship

The COVID-19 pandemic expanded the need for quality mentorship, and college students proved particularly effective by granting insights into their spring 2020 college experiences. In addition to becoming role models for their community, our mentors hosted dozens of one-on-one sessions with graduating seniors to review college acceptances, financial aid packages, and internship options. We ensured students chose their fall 2020 university based on facts, fit, and COVID-19 health concerns.

Nonprofit continues to support students to, through college

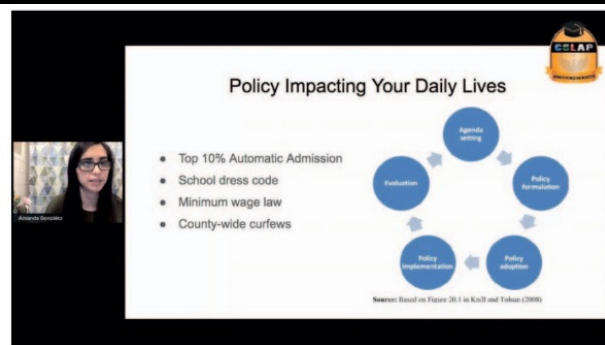
BY A. COLLEEN DEGUZMAN
STAFF WRITER

The transition from high school to college can be a daunting step as it is. Now, as students also face unprecedented obstacles that the coronavirus pandemic has brought to education systems, nonprofit College Scholarship Leadership Access Program, or CSLAP, has been working to support local seniors through the process of college admissions.

Through workshops and mentorship with university students, the Rio Grande Valley-based organization works with high school juniors and seniors to prepare them for college. Workshops cover a range of topics, including professionalism, campus policy, and budgeting.



our sessions online, so that students don't miss out on any of the semester of college. Another workshop that the organization's board



Amanda Gonzalez, a Rio Grande Valley native and student at St. Edwards University in Austin, leads a virtual workshop about campus policy to College Scholarship Leadership Access Program, or CSLAP. Courtesy photos

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Advocating For Digital Access

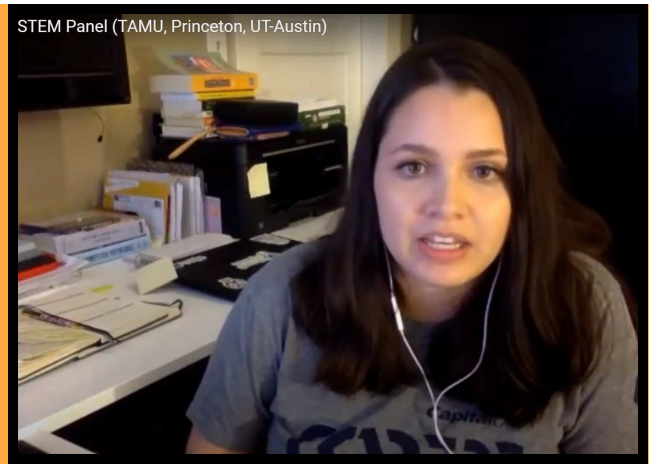
After adapting to the realities of distance learning, we understood that too many students were falling through the cracks because of a lack of access to technology or WI-FI. In addition, digital illiteracy plagued families who could not access software or online tools to receive college transition materials or read up-to-date COVID-19 news.

Beyond providing emergency aid, we stepped up to bridge the digital divide by partnering with local advocacy nonprofit, ARISE Adelante, and the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). News of our partnership reached the media, which refocused the public's attention on the digital divide in the Rio Grande Valley.

Partnering To Provide Services

Our partnership entailed ARISE Adelante identifying low-income, Spanish-speaking families in Hidalgo County colonias who required internet assistance. As we connected with the families, we received data and best practices on teaching digital literacy to diverse communities from IDRA. Our services included providing technical support to families, tutoring children through assigned classroom software, and training ARISE Adelante staff on using Zoom.

STEM Panel (TAMU, Princeton, UT-Austin)



CSLAP x IDRA Summer Planning

CSLAP.OFFICIAL.COM

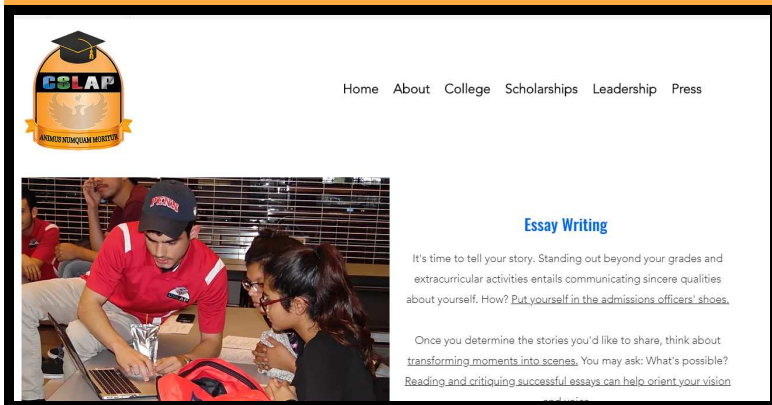


Uplifting Families In Need

In order to help as many people as we could during the COVID-19 pandemic, we flipped our operating model to reach families directly rather than through school districts. Our actions rippled through communities, transforming short-term adjustments to long-term solutions. After receiving our assistance, parents helped their neighbors by granting them access to their newly-acquired WI-FI hotspots or teaching them digital skills gained from our sessions.

Broadening College Access

Although our interactions with families often related to completing school coursework, we increased our impact by filtering our solutions through the lens of attending college. Families who would have not learned about college otherwise did so through our website. As their initial introduction to the internet, our website framed the online world as a helpful resource rather than a playful distraction for their children. We also helped download software to translate websites into Spanish, reducing access issues.



STUDENT TESTIMONIES



Alex Castro, Oral Roberts University '17

Through CSLAP, I learned that the college and scholarship application processes are less scary than I imagined. As a result, I received an acceptance letter to the college I wanted and the scholarships I needed. CSLAP benefits anyone seeking collegiate success.



Victoria Quintanilla, Yale University '21

CSLAP provides the understanding of the universities' want for individuals who will enrich the campus culture and society. This is a valuable lesson rarely discussed and promoted when most seniors apply to college, and it really makes the difference in how one chooses to show their best sides, not just their best scores.



Jabes Gallardo, MIT '24

By helping me piece my story together, CSLAP has helped me more than any SAT Prep Book could. This is due to both its resources and mentors that have given me the confidence to pursue my aspirations.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Isaac Bailon-Martinez, UTRGV '16

Public health and prevention specialist at Texas Department of State Health Services. Currently specializing in HIV prevention and applying to medical school.



Benito Garza, Texas A&M University '22

Founder of the Hispanic Business Scholars Network and Forbes Under 30 Scholar. Currently majoring in finance and minoring in sports management.



Mali Mejia, Georgetown University '22

Program coordinator for the DC Schools Project and member of the Georgetown Aspiring Minority Business Leaders. Currently double majoring in international business and marketing.



Cristian Mercado, UTRGV '19

Biomedical lab specialist and former leader at United for College Success at South Texas College. Currently conducting research on diabetic retinopathy at UTRGV.



OUR SUPPORTERS

Donors

Sandra Cabrera
 Deana Davoudiasl
 Matt Eventoff
 Cynthia Garza
 Nancy Gomez
 Alejandro Hernandez
 Melissa Hernandez
 Aurelio Montemayor
 Maria Papadakis

Paulino Ramirez
 Leticia Rosales
 Martin Ruiz
 Deborah Sandoval
 Leonel Tijerina
 Jorge Valdez
 Karina Varela
 Carlos Zuniga

Community Partners

ARISE Adelante
 Intercultural Development Research
 Association (IDRA)
 McAllen ISD
 Rio Grande Guardian
 Ruiz Erectors LLC
 Vanguard Academy

Thank you to all our donors, community partners, and supporters for helping our organization grow. Our startup fundraiser in June 2019 enabled us to help students as we transformed into a nonprofit organization, and your continuing support has allowed us to grow deeper ties to our community. The cause endures and the work continues because of you. Animus numquam moritur: the spirit never dies!



CSLAP
 College Scholarship Leadership Access Program

94% CSLAP students who say they have learned something they did not know before about the college admissions process
Source: Fall 2019 Student Survey

9 PSJA ISD students who received mentorship to win the Gates, Jack Kent Cooke, Dell, VAMOS, or Questbridge College Match Scholarships
Source: Post-CSLAP Student Data

90% Vanguard Academy seniors who say CSLAP enhanced their chances of getting into college
Source: Fall 2019 Student Survey

250 Students who have attended a CSLAP event, workshop, or class from 2013-2019
Source: Post-CSLAP Student Data

College Access for All
www.cslapofficial.com

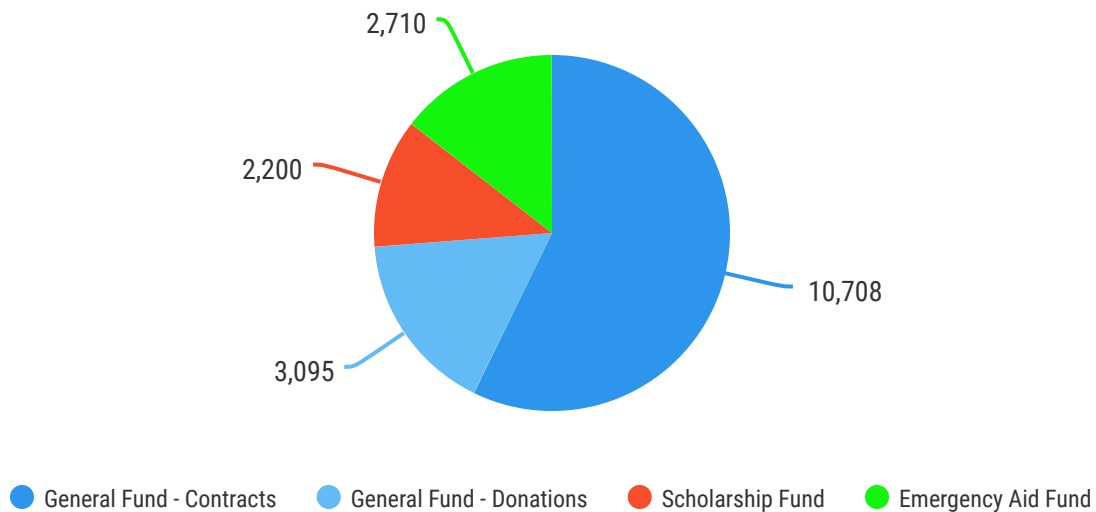
FINANCES

Financial Overview and Context

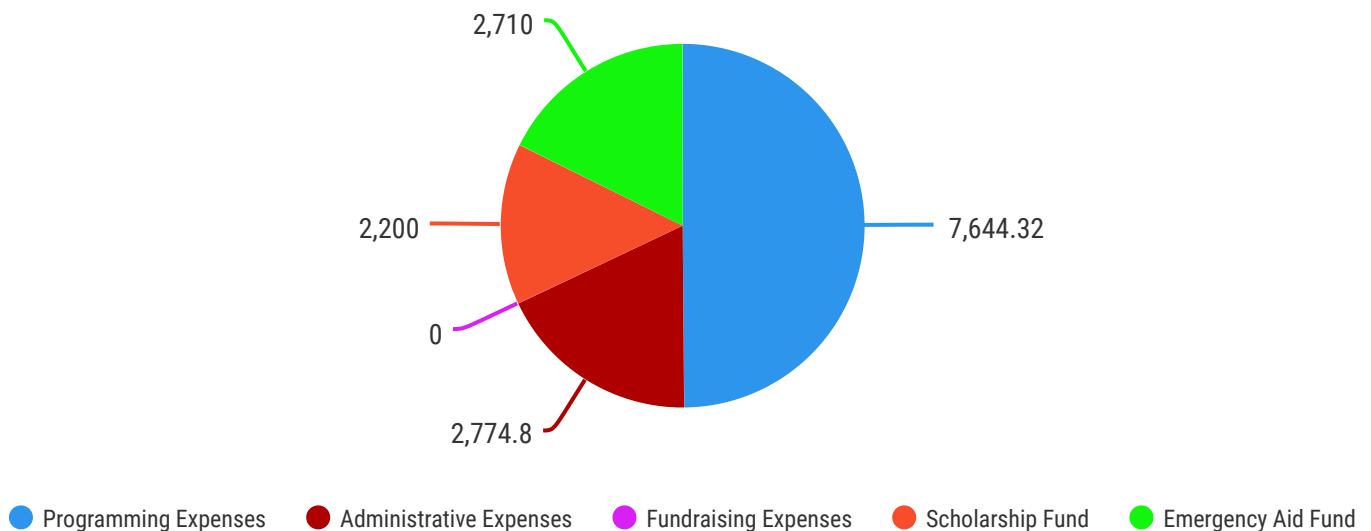
CSLAP ended academic year 2019-2020 with an operating surplus of \$3,383.89. Our first-year budget was focused solely on operating and administrative costs involved in delivering college access services and mentorship at local schools. No investments were made nor debt incurred.

This is our first annual budget. From 2013 to 2016, we operated our summer institutes on a volunteer basis without a budget; we contracted with PSJA ISD to pay six mentors a \$500 stipend each in summer 2017.

Revenues (June 1st, 2019 - May 31st, 2020)



Expenses (June 1st, 2019 - May 31st, 2020)



ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

College Scholarship Leadership Access Program



**College Access For All
www.cslapofficial.com**