

COLLEGE BOUND OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITIES

An Overview of CBO's History



CBO's Mission & Vision

Mission

College Bound Opportunities mentors, empowers and inspires low-income, first-generation Scholars to overcome barriers, graduate college, and achieve success in life.

Vision

All low-income, first-generation students are afforded the opportunity to graduate college and pursue their dreams.

Did you know?

Only 1 in 9 low-income, first-generation students will graduate college. CBO

mentors, empowers, and inspires

students to beat the odds holding a

98% graduation rate!





CBO Class of 2029 at the New Student Celebration

Our History: What is CBO?

College Bound Opportunities (CBO) is a community-based, community-supported organization. It was founded in 2006 to address the concern that only one in nine first generation, minority or low-income students graduate college. In Lake County, where CBO started with four students at Highland Park High School, more than 60,000 people are living in poverty according to the U.S. Census and less than 45% have graduated college. Word of the CBO program and its successful model quickly spread to Deerfield High School (2008) and Lake Forest High School (2011). Several years later, CBO expanded into Waukegan to partner with Cristo Rey St. Martin College Prep (2016), then to Buffalo Grove High School (2017), and to Vernon Hills High School (2019). Today, CBO supports 40 high school juniors, 32 high school seniors, more than 135 students at more than 25 colleges and universities across the country, and boasts a network of more than 270 alumni, all of whom are employed and/or pursuing graduate degrees.

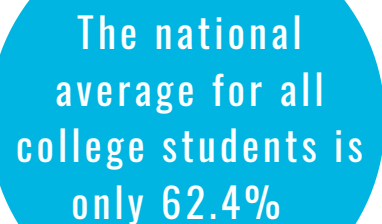
After 18 years supporting low-income, first-generation students in the northern suburbs of Chicago, we have found “otherness” to be one of the biggest obstacles our Scholars face. In communities that are predominately white, affluent and successful, our students stand out because of their race and/or socio-economic status. Many CBO Scholars and their families are living in or on the cusp of poverty and suffer from food insecurity, substandard housing or homelessness. Waukegan and Highwood have some of the highest rates of poverty in Lake County and more than one-third of our Scholars are from these communities.

As is often the case with under-resourced students, once they leave the walls of their high school, the resources available to them drastically decline and they lack the necessary guidance to succeed in college. The CBO program follows our Scholars into and through their college years and, most importantly, ensures their college graduation.

At CBO, we are helping our Scholars and their parents understand the long-term benefits of investing in a four-year college degree and overcoming the financial, social and emotional hurdles they face. Not only is a college graduate’s earning potential higher, approximately \$1M more over a lifetime than a high school graduate, but the experience of attending college helps a person grow socially and emotionally. For these reasons, CBO targets those students who show promise and dedication to their education and who might not receive the attention, encouragement and resources their multi-generational peers might.

The Need

- In all of our partner high schools there are nearly 1,000 students who come from low-income families eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. There are many more families who live just above this threshold, yet are not eligible to receive this aid. [Source: Illinois State Board of Education 2023-24 Report Cards]
- Cristo Rey St. Martin, has an enrollment of approximately 100 students at each class level, all of whom are identified as low-income; 89% of students at the school are Hispanic.
- The average annual family income for CBO Scholars is \$33,000.
- The average cost for four years of college, including tuition, fees, and room and board, ranges from \$82,000 (public, in-state) to \$210,000 (private). [Source: Bankrate]
- By age 24, only 12 percent of students from low-income families will earn a bachelor's degree compared to 73 percent of their higher-income peers. [Source: The Pell Institute]
- Only 11% of first-generation students graduate college in six years, thus the odds are stacked heavily against these students. [Source: The Pell Institute]
- More than two-thirds of all U.S. jobs will require a postsecondary degree or credential making college attainment key to national prosperity. [Source: Lumina Foundation, Education Is the Avenue to Prosperity in America]



The national average for all college students is only 62.4%

The CBO Scholar



95% of CBO Scholars are first-generation college students. Nationally, 50% of college students are first-generation.



To become a CBO Scholar, a student must complete an application and participate in a face-to-face interview with several interviewers. Most are the first members in their families to attend college, hence the need for a mentor. Our CBO Scholars are multicultural and often are transplants to our area. The CBO Scholars group becomes close knit, and they serve as role models not only for younger siblings, but for other students who aspire to the program.

CBO is a competitive program which seeks students with a minimum B- GPA (grade point average), a strong desire to graduate from college, and the need for a mentor to guide them through a myriad of obstacles along the way. CBO is giving these students the confidence to believe in themselves and visualize a better future. These students receive the necessary guidance to navigate the college application process and stay focused on their post-secondary education. The need for a mentor is a critical factor in determining which students would benefit most from the CBO program. Additionally, CBO does not focus its efforts on the highest academically performing students because they will likely attend college regardless of CBO. Rather, CBO targets those students who show promise and dedication to their education, but who might otherwise be characterized as “average” students. These are the college-bound students who need the most help.

Our Program

CBO employs a balance of academic support along with programming intended to address the social and emotional needs of our high school and college students to succeed in higher education, including:

Mentoring

What sets CBO apart is its long-term commitment to the students it supports through 1:1 mentoring provided by 200+ community volunteers for the entire 6-year span of the program and, oftentimes, beyond. Once in college, the mentors provide the necessary emotional support for the scholars to adapt to college life. Mentors stay in contact with their scholars twice a month, at minimum, via phone, e-mail and text.

1:1 Application Assistance

CBO works diligently to ensure each student's college applications are complete, including financial aid or scholarship applications.

Technology

Each CBO scholar receives a laptop upon high school graduation so they are prepared to effectively complete their studies.

Career Prep

CBO helps prepare Scholars for life after college by providing resume writing workshops, mock interviews, networking events, and an internship fair attended by local companies.

Financial Assistance

To keep their debt to a minimum, each Scholar is eligible to receive up to \$8,000 to help with academic costs, text books, supplies, housing, etc.

Additional services include identification of colleges to apply to, college visits, and identification of scholarship opportunities. CBO also provides bi-monthly parent meetings conducted simultaneously in English and Spanish, so as to ensure all parents are well-informed. All of our programming ensures our Scholars get into and graduate from schools which are the best fit for them academically, socially, culturally, and financially.

The Benefit to CBO Scholars



83% of high school graduates from high income families enroll in college as opposed to just 67% of their peers from low income families; CBO is closing this gap through its programs with 100% of its Scholars accepted into college. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, The Condition of Education 2018)



98% of CBO Scholars have graduated college or are on the path to graduate college while only 62.4% of college students nationally graduate a four-year institution in six years. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, The Condition of Education 2020)



While just 11% of first-generation students graduate college in six years, CBO is greatly filling this gap with its success rate; 95% of CBO Scholars are the first in their families to attend college.



The median annual earnings of a college graduate is \$66,000 compared to an annual earnings of \$41,800 for a high school graduate; a college degree provides a direct route for success for CBO Scholars. The success of these graduates translates into a stronger local economy as they earn more income. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, The Condition of Education 2024)



The unemployment rate for individuals with a Bachelor's Degree is 2.2% compared to 3.9% for high school graduates. College graduates create less strain on government programs targeting unemployment. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, The Condition of Education 2024)



Indirectly, the children of CBO Scholars will also be more likely to attend college. Not only does the increased income make it possible for CBO Scholars to help support their children through college, but having parents with post-secondary education creates a culture within the home that values higher education. CBO hopes to impact generations to come.