

School Year
Impact Report

2021-2022

PEER
FORWARD[®]



OUR MISSION

PeerForward's mission is to unleash **the power of positive peer influence** to transform the lives of youth living in low-income communities by connecting them to college and careers.



2021-2022 School Year Impact

By any measure, 2021-2022 was extraordinary for PeerForward.

From Hawaii high schools to the NBA Foundation, we expanded who we work with. From further developing a new college model in Florida, California, and Kentucky to collaborating with another nonprofit to test a new approach for serving young men of color in New York City.

As always, the work was led by students. And PeerForward had a stellar group of students serving as Peer Leaders in the 2021-22 school year. In high schools, Peer Leaders doubled down on efforts to get students back on track to and through higher education after drastic pandemic drops, pulling the average financial aid completion rate within one percentage point of pre-pandemic rates and unlocking \$100M in aid to pay for college or other credentialed programs. Our College Peer Leaders are working wonders, too, as you'll see.

We are proud to offer this 2021-2022 review.

Students
are not
involved
enough

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Challenge	1
Where We Work	2
PeerForward Has a Solution	3
PeerForward in High School	5
PeerForward in College	6
Exciting Partnerships and Support	8
Highlights So Far	9
In the News	10

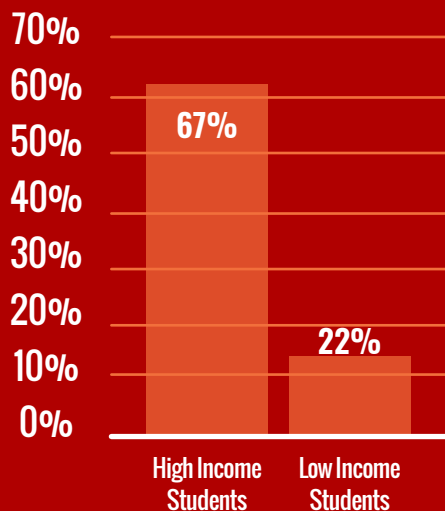
The Challenge

\$1M

On average, those with a four-year degree earn \$1M more over a lifetime than those with only a high school diploma and are more likely to be employed and have health care.

BUT THERE'S A PROBLEM.

Earned a Bachelors Degree by Age 26



↓ **18%** **BLACK STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

The pandemic only exacerbated the gap, especially for community colleges that serve a majority of Black, Latinx, and low-income students.

↓ **\$1.2T** **EFFECT ON THE NATION'S ECONOMY**

By 2029, a shortage of workers with postsecondary credentials is predicted to have a major impact. Until the gap between low-income and high-income students is addressed, equity in health, housing, income will be elusive and the nation will suffer.

Where We Work

Over the last two decades, we have **IGNITED THE POWER OF PEER INFLUENCE** in more than 600 high schools and colleges. Our schools are leaders in the movement for student-driven positive change.

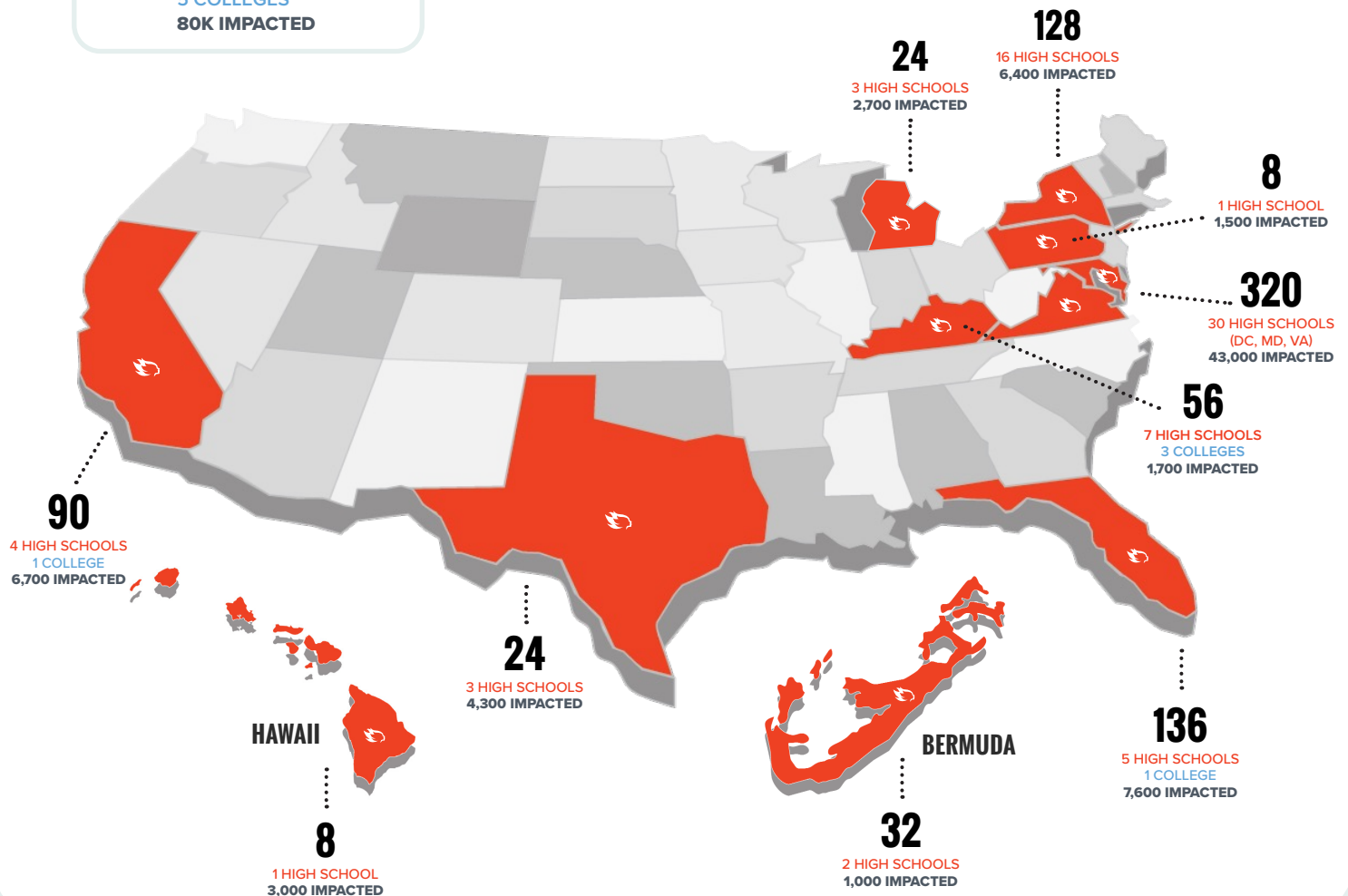


800 PEER LEADERS

72 HIGH SCHOOLS

5 COLLEGES

80K IMPACTED



PeerForward has a **Solution**

Leveraging the proven **POWER OF PEER INFLUENCE**, we recruit, train, and manage peer-led teams to mobilize classmates to and through higher education. The method varies between high schools and colleges, but the power of peer-to-peer engagement is at the core of both.

PeerForward in High School

Increasing College Enrollment
Peer Leader Teams of 8

PeerForward in College

Increasing College Completion
Peer Leader Teams of 25





"Applying to college is giving me confidence that when I have a chance to go back to Syria, I can help other kids. I want them to feel like they can really do it. If I can go to college even though I came from a different background from the kids around me, why can't they? I want my peers to feel confident about college and believe you can always change your future. Follow your own lead and follow what you believe."

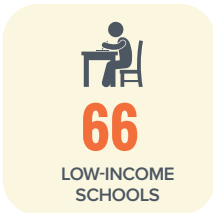
Waseem Bjbuj

Peer Leader at Central High School, Md.

PeerForward in High School

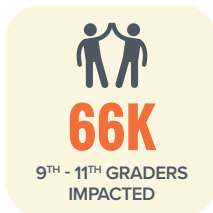
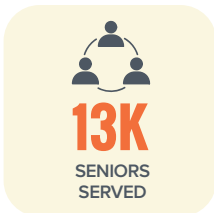
PeerForward Teams are responsible for conducting three campaigns 1) Apply to Three or More Colleges, 2) File Early for Financial Aid, and 3) Connect Academics to College and Career. Peer Leaders host financial aid workshops, essay writing sessions, application drives, college fairs and career panels, to name a few of their strategies. Each team of eight – four juniors and four seniors – conducted campaigns to ensure every senior in their school was assisted in the postsecondary admissions process, and that all other students became aware of the steps necessary to plan for life after high school. **Collectively, the teams led a dramatic recovery from the pandemic slump, pulling the rate for financial aid applications within three percentage points of the pre-pandemic level.**

2021-2022 HIGH SCHOOL RESULTS



696
CAMPAIGN
ACTIVITIES

PEER LEADERS EXECUTED ACTIVITIES TO INSPIRE AND ASSIST CLASSMATES IN PLANNING FOR AND APPLYING TO POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES



\$100M
IN FINANCIAL
AID

PROJECTED AMOUNT OF AID STUDENTS CAN ACCESS BY EARLY COMPLETION OF THE FAFSA



94%
SCHOOL
RENEWAL RATE

OF OUR SCHOOL PARTNERS RETURNED FOR THE 2022 - 2023 SCHOOL YEAR.



Peer Leaders Changing the Game! Peer Leaders like Za'Naiya Craig Williams are using their platform to address the current youth mental health crisis. Za'Naiya launched a mental health podcast with her school psychiatrist to raise awareness about mental health resources for students.

- Za'Naiya Craig Williams
Peer Leader, Performing Arts Community School, Los Angeles

PeerForward in College

PeerForward's newest program operates in two- and four-year colleges serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and low-income students to improve degree attainment. Trained Peer Leaders execute three campaigns to get classmates to take steps proven to increase chances of persistence to a degree: access academic support opportunities, stay on track with financial aid, and engage with campus communities and activities. Each Peer Leader mentors a roster of fellow students who are identified and recruited by the college. Peer Leaders are paid through AmeriCorps, College Work Study or other programs. Early results are strong.

2021 - 2022 COLLEGE RESULTS



109

PEER
LEADERS



71%

HIGHER RATE OF
DEGREE COMPLETION

PeerForward students at Broward College, our flagship partner, have a higher rate of degree completion than the general student population.



5

COLLEGE
PARTNERS



2,900

STUDENTS
SERVED



78%

COURSE
COMPLETION RATE

PeerForward students at Cal State LA have a 10 percentage higher course completion rate than those not participating in the program.



“Working with PeerForward is an experience characterized by shared goals, vision, and a desire to support students through peer-to-peer practices that are impactful and transformative...”

– Andrew Long, EdD,

Executive Director, Center for Academic Success, California State University, Los Angeles



"There are so many youth that just need that one influential person to come into their life and change their entire trajectory...my passion is to be the one person in as many young lives as possible, because they deserve it."

Kendra Yates

PeerForward Alumna, College Coach, and Workshop Director

Exciting New Partners and Support

PeerForward Becomes MacKenzie Scott Grantee

PeerForward earned the support of the nation's wealthiest woman, MacKenzie Scott. In 2022, after a vetting process, Scott made a significant contribution to PeerForward, which we are using to reach even more students.

TRANSFORMATIONAL GIFTS

In addition to the significant gift from MacKenzie Scott, PeerForward received two additional gifts that will strengthen and expand our work.



The Allan & Gill Gray Foundation discovered PeerForward's work in Bermuda and made a meaningful five-year commitment to support our national operations and expansion.



Created in August 2020 by the 30 NBA team governors, the NBA Foundation is the NBA's first charitable foundation. Our new partnership will uplift and amplify PeerForward's work, empowering our organization providing additional resources to meet the needs of rising scholars in today's challenging education landscape.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

BROTHERS @

PeerForward is excited to team up with Brothers@, a dual-beneficiary high-school retention and college persistence organization with the mission of improving the academic and social-emotional outcomes of young men of color in both secondary and postsecondary education. Brothers@ is led by Dariel Vasquez, an alum of our program!

HAWAII, BERMUDA, AND KENTUCKY PARTNERSHIPS

PeerForward has forged new partnerships over the last couple of years that are flourishing. Our partnership with select high schools in Hawaii, supported by the Harold K. L. Castle Foundation and GearUp, is prime for expansion. PeerForward is serving schools in Bermuda and has deepened its work in Appalachian Kentucky, partnering with four high schools and three community colleges.



"I recently learned a saying used in disability communities: 'Nothing about us without us.' For me, it's another beautiful and powerful reminder. I needn't ask those I care about what to say to them, or what to do for them. I can share what I have with them to stand behind them as they speak and act for themselves."

– MacKenzie Scott

American Novelist and Philanthropist

2022-23 Highlights So Far!

Peer Leaders are having a stellar 2022-23 so far, executing more than 400 activities and driving up application rates for financial aid and for admissions. Students at Lake Wales High School in Florida held a College Madness event, helping families prepare for the admissions process. At James Campbell High School in Hawaii, a One-on-One College List event gave students the chance to receive personalized guidance for the college search process. And the team at Dr. Henry Wise Jr. High School went above and beyond, by holding fundraisers to open and equip a new college and career center, christened with a ribbon-cutting-marching-band celebration. Peer Leaders staff the center by giving up their lunch periods. Take a look at the year so far in numbers below.

PEERFORWARD IN HIGH SCHOOL



5

HIGH SCHOOL
SUMMER
WORKSHOPS



624

HIGH SCHOOL
PEER
LEADERS



551

HIGH SCHOOL
CAMPAIGN
ACTIVITIES



67k

HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS
SERVED

PEERFORWARD IN COLLEGE



3

COLLEGE
SUMMER
WORKSHOPS



133

COLLEGE
PEER
LEADERS



3.3k

COLLEGE
MENTORING
INTERACTIONS



2.4k

COLLEGE
STUDENTS
SERVED

In the News



SiriusXM 'Forward Progress'

PeerForward CEO, Gary Z. Linnen, was a guest on the Forward Progress podcast hosted by Jason Jackson and Kirk Morrison. The conversation highlighted PeerForward as a recent NBA Foundation grantee in their continued work to invest in communities of color.



News 12

In celebration of three New York City organizations being recognized by The NBA Foundation, News12 featured PeerForward CEO, Gary Z. Linnen in their segment highlighting local grantees.



Good Day Rochester

PeerForward returned to in-person workshops in a new partnership with Nazareth College. Good Day Rochester covered the life-changing workshop experience and discussed the importance of higher education with PeerForward CEO, Gary Z. Linnen.



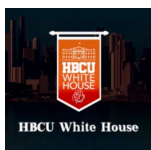
Great.com

Josh Rhodes from Great.com interviewed PeerForward CEO, Gary Z. Linnen, as part of their 'Great.com Talks With...' podcast. The series that aims to be an antidote to negative news stories and shed light on organizations and experts whose work is making a positive impact on the world. PeerForward was featured for our work helping individuals attain their education goals through positive peer influence.



LTX Quest

The largest virtual gathering of Latinx professionals, LTX Quest activated Latinx collective power to unpack complex identities, build community, and celebrate – all with purpose. PeerForward CEO, Gary Z. Linnen and Peer Leader, Erica Luzon joined expert panelists for an authentic conversation on navigating the workforce, gaining skills to access career opportunities, and building Latinx power.



WHPR-TV Detroit Live

Detroit talk show HBCU White House, hosted by Alvin Woods, focuses on bringing BIPOC narratives to the fore of news coverage. In the episode, PeerForward CEO, Gary Z. Linnen provided insights on how the pandemic is changing the college and employment landscape for low-income students while reflecting on the importance of being a role model for Black, Latinx, and first-generation collegegoers.



PEER 
FORWARD.

1140 3rd St, NE Suite 320
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 319-1763

www.peerforward.org