

School Year  
Impact Report

2022-2023

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.



# 2022-2023 School Year Impact

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By any measure, 2022-2023 was extraordinary for PeerForward.

In 2022-23, PeerForward leaned in to meet new challenges, such as the U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down affirmative action, while continuing helping students and schools recover from pandemic losses. We enjoyed our first year of a partnership with the NBA Foundation, continued working with new high school partners in Kentucky, Hawaii, and Bermuda. And we saw more promising results from our new PeerForward in College program. PeerForward's profile was raised in media coverage on The Today Show and in The New York Times Magazine, Education Week, and others. PeerForward's expertise in assisting students in low-income communities navigate their way to and through college.

**We are proud to offer this 2022-2023 review.**

Students  
are not  
involved  
enough

# CONTENTS

<b>The Challenge</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Where We Work</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>PeerForward Has a Solution</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>PeerForward in High School</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>PeerForward in College</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Exciting Partnerships and Support</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>In the News</b> .....	<b>10</b>



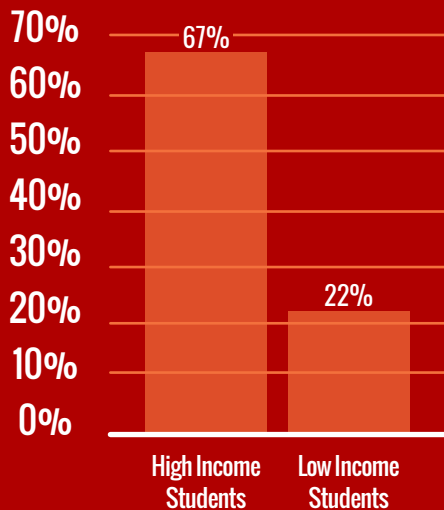
## The Challenge

# \$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.

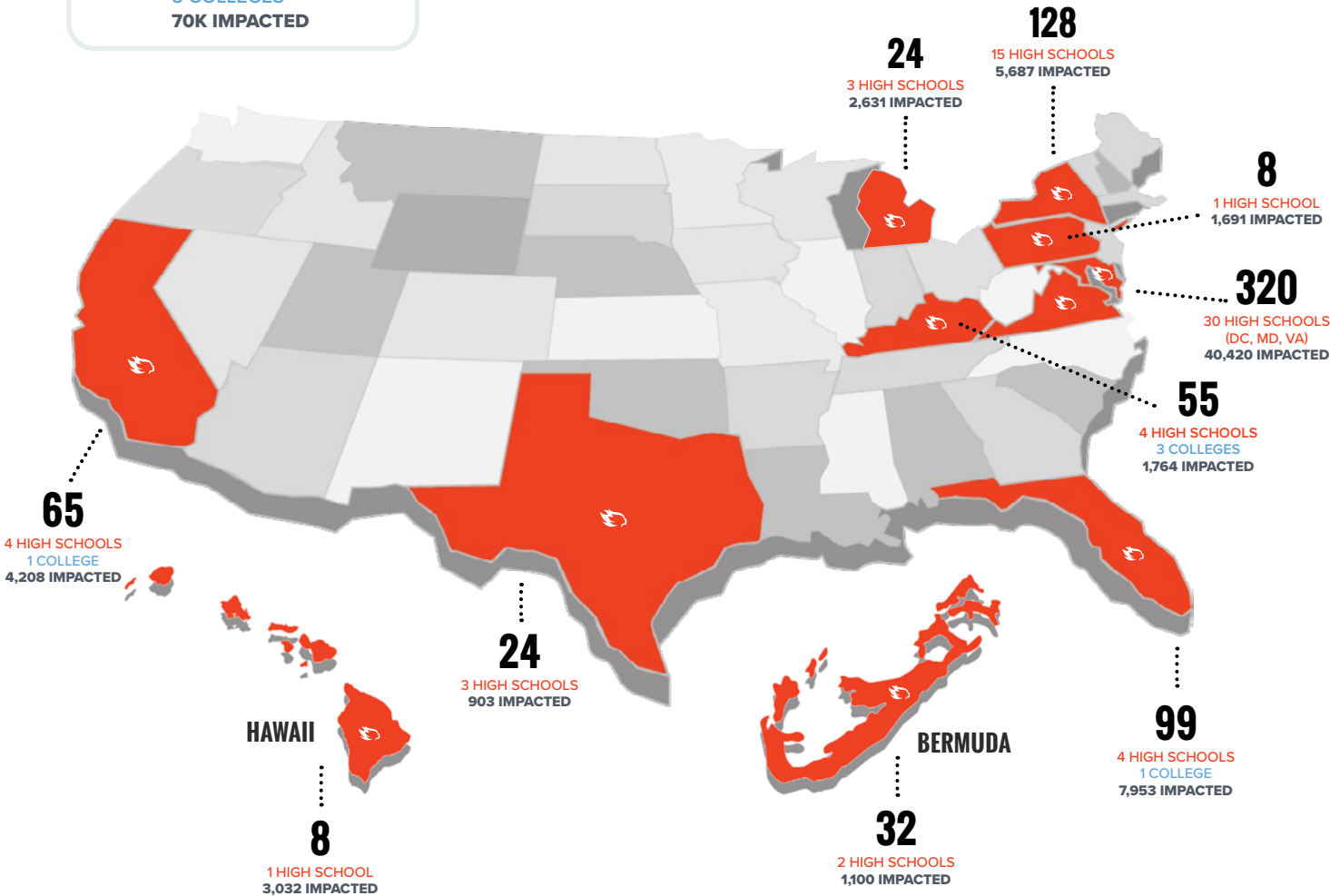


**783 PEER LEADERS**

67 HIGH SCHOOLS

5 COLLEGES

70K 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







**"A Peer Leader is someone who brings people together. They inspire hope for others that their dreams are possible. They are always thinking of ways to make a difference or to inspire others. They want to see their peers succeed and support them and their accomplishments."**

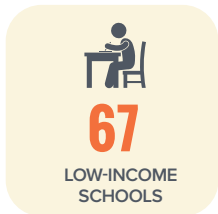
**Adam Kone**

Peer Leader at High Point High School, Md.

# PeerForward in High School

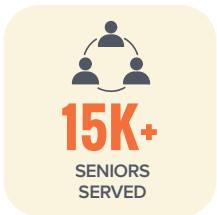
PeerForward's work is more urgent than ever. While high school students continue to recover from pandemic set-backs, a new potential hurdle arose when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled affirmative action unlawful. The decision introduced a great deal of uncertainty in the admissions season, but PeerForward remained true to its work. The organization began to assist students with admissions essays. While the model has evolved, PeerForward continues to provide every Peer Leader with an essay coach – something parents of means pay thousands for (further perpetuating an unequal system). During summer training, all Peer Leaders were coached in writing their own essay and how to coach their friends to do the same.

## 2022 - 2023 HIGH SCHOOL RESULTS



**791**  
CAMPAIGN  
ACTIVITIES

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



**\$70M**  
IN FINANCIAL  
AID

PROJECTED AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL AID STUDENTS CAN ACCESS THROUGH FAFSA BY EARLY COMPLETION



**88%**  
SCHOOL  
RENEWAL RATE

OF OUR SCHOOL PARTNERS RETURNED FOR THE 2023 - 2024 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. Our results are strong.

## 2022 - 2023 COLLEGE RESULTS



**135**  
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



**2.9K**  
STUDENTS  
SERVED



**90%** MENTEE  
RETENTION RATE

Retention rate for mentees of Peer Leaders at Cal State LA.



“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



"Something I will remember from this amazing group is being able to help my peers prepare for the future. Going through so much on my own made me realize that I needed to help others."

**Dario Rayes**

Peer Leader at Crossland High School, Md.

# Our Partners Make PeerForward Possible

## PeerForward Garner Key Supporters

PeerForward has emerged from pandemic challenges stronger than ever, thanks to numerous supporters who have stepped up to ensure we can deliver, including The Carnegie Corporation, The Kapnick Family Foundation, The Oak Foundation, ECMC Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Henry McCance Foundation, Harold K.L. Castle Foundation.

### Highlights of 2022-2023 academic year include:



A new partnership with Oakland Promise to serve high schools in the Oakland Area, starting with five in the 2023-24 academic year.



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.



Our first year in partnership with the NBA Foundation, which provided opportunities for the organization to build capacity and connected us to Dallas Mavericks, who are supporting two high schools in Dallas in 2023-2024.



PeerForward received a generous gift from the Together Rising Foundation of Glennon Doyle and Abby Wambach (U.S. Women's soccer star.)



Funds from MacKenzie Scott's generous, \$5M donation in 2022 to PeerForward continues to support program and operations.



"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



# In the News

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## [Education Week](#)

“To Help Students, One Company Has Unlocked \$100 Million a Year in College Aid”, Rick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute interviews CEO Gary Z. Linnen to learn how the PeerForward model helps 13,000 underserved high school students connect to postsecondary opportunities.

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## [The New York Times Magazine](#)

The New York Times Magazine spoke with a couple of our Peer Leaders about the Supreme Court’s ruling on affirmative action. You can read more about what this decision means to our Peer Leaders on The New York Times Magazine’s website.

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## [Today with Hoda & Jenna](#)

On their Feel Good Today segment, Today with Hoda & Jenna put their spotlight on PeerForward. In this uplifting segment, we follow PeerForward CEO, Gary Z. Linnen, and Dariel Vasquez, Brothers@ Co-Founder and CEO as they visit Peer Leaders at Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change.

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## [NYN Media](#)

College admissions, post-affirmative action. PeerForward CEO Gary Linnen discusses his work helping students of color into higher education in an interview with New York Nonprofit Media.

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## [Word in Black](#)

Op-Ed by Gary Z. Linnen: *Protecting Students’ Futures if Affirmative Action Ends* - “The threat to affirmative action is a new front in the battle for education equity. We must fight on. We won’t give up until all students have similar opportunities to dream, learn, achieve, innovate, and lead.” - Gary Z. Linnen

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## [The Official Black Magazine](#)

PeerForward CEO, Gary Z. Linnen joins Official Black Magazine CEO & Publisher, Michael Cox for a “CEO in the Spotlight” interview.

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Check out our latest features at [www.peerforward.org](http://www.peerforward.org)

# Look For Us in 2023-2024!

**81**  
PARTNERS

**900**  
PEER LEADERS

**76,000**  
IMPACTED

Follow us @PeerForward







**PEER**   
**FORWARD.**

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