



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Rise Together Education

David Wei (Paly '19), now studying Computer Engineering at SJSU

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement	3
Letter from the President	4
About RTE	5
Directors, Advisors & Student Representatives	7
Impact of Covid-19.	9
Our Scholars	10
Current Colleges & Universities	17
Financial Summary	18
RTE in 2021 and Beyond	20
Thank You to Our Supporters	21

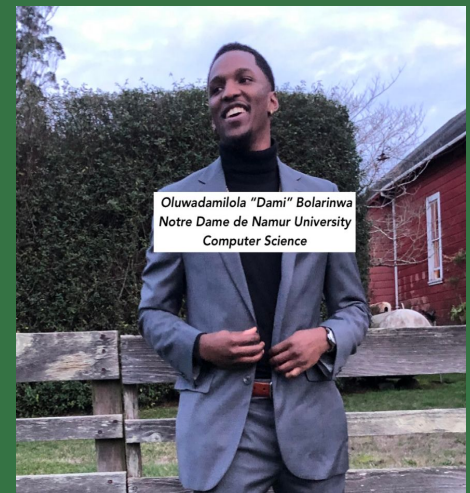


OUR MISSION

Rise Together Education is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving college graduation rates by providing support and financial resources to low-income Palo Alto High School students who have been accepted to 4-year colleges or 2-year community colleges with a direct transfer agreement.



Michel (Paly '2017)
Stonehill College (Class of 2021)
Criminal Justice Major



Oluwadamilola "Dami" Bolarinwa
Notre Dame de Namur University
Computer Science



Diana Rodriguez-Calderon
SFSU
Latino Studies & Criminal Justice

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends of Rise Together Education,

As we all know, 2020 was an incredibly challenging year on all fronts. We had many challenges as an organization, as did our scholars, who had their lives disrupted from campus closures, WiFi and technology issues, and the many social and emotional downsides of the pandemic. In a year where equity was front page news, we are pleased to be a part of the solution by putting money where it is so needed: with our neighbors who are mostly young people of color from low-income families. Their families are part of the fabric of our community. We are so grateful that you continue to support our scholarship fund. We are also grateful for the invaluable hours of volunteering to provide support such as career and financial literacy workshops, mental health therapy at Palo Alto University, and many more.

The year 2020 started with our board members enthusiastically preparing for RTE's largest fundraiser of the year, the dinner gala and live auction at Domenico Winery. We were able to secure over 100 auction items from generous local businesses to help support our 46 scholarship recipients. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic forced a shut down and we had to cancel our plans. We promptly switched gears to selling the auction items online and holding a virtual auction but were unable to reach our fundraising goals. The *Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund* grant arrived just in time to help support our work despite the loss of our gala funds. To offset our losses we also pivoted to more grant applications (successfully obtaining a grant from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation), increased our outreach to individual members of the community, partnered with Paly PTSA which helped us raise money from Back-to-School e-packets and worked with local restaurants to do Dine Out evenings.

We are excited to report that 8 of 12 RTE students from Paly's Class of 2016 graduated in 2020 with 2 more scholars on track to graduate in 2021 (one of whom is in a 5 year program at Northeastern University). That is an amazing 83% graduation rate in less than 6 year. Nationally, only 20% of first generation college students graduate within 6 years. We had the highest number of applicants ever (19 students) from Paly's Class of 2020 who added a significant financial commitment to our future budget. In the fall of 2020, we had a total of 43 scholarship recipients (plus two who decided to defer their college entrance for one year).

This past summer, Stephanie Estrada, the original RTE scholar who inspired the establishment of our organization, completed her first year of graduate school and joined our Board of Directors along with Samuel Vasquez, also a former RTE scholar who recently graduated from San Francisco State University. Additionally, we added members from the Palo Alto High School staff (Greer Stone, Deanna Chute and Principal Brent Kline). Nancy Kawakita assumed the role of Treasurer, which brings the total number of passionate Board of Directors to 13 members, 3 Advisors and 4 Paly Student Representatives. We formed new committees to strengthen our mentoring programs, networking and fundraising. This included the Peer Mentoring Program implemented by Stephanie and Samuel.

We couldn't have done this work without the help of our volunteers and the financial support of everyone in and around Palo Alto! We thank you!

Sincerely,

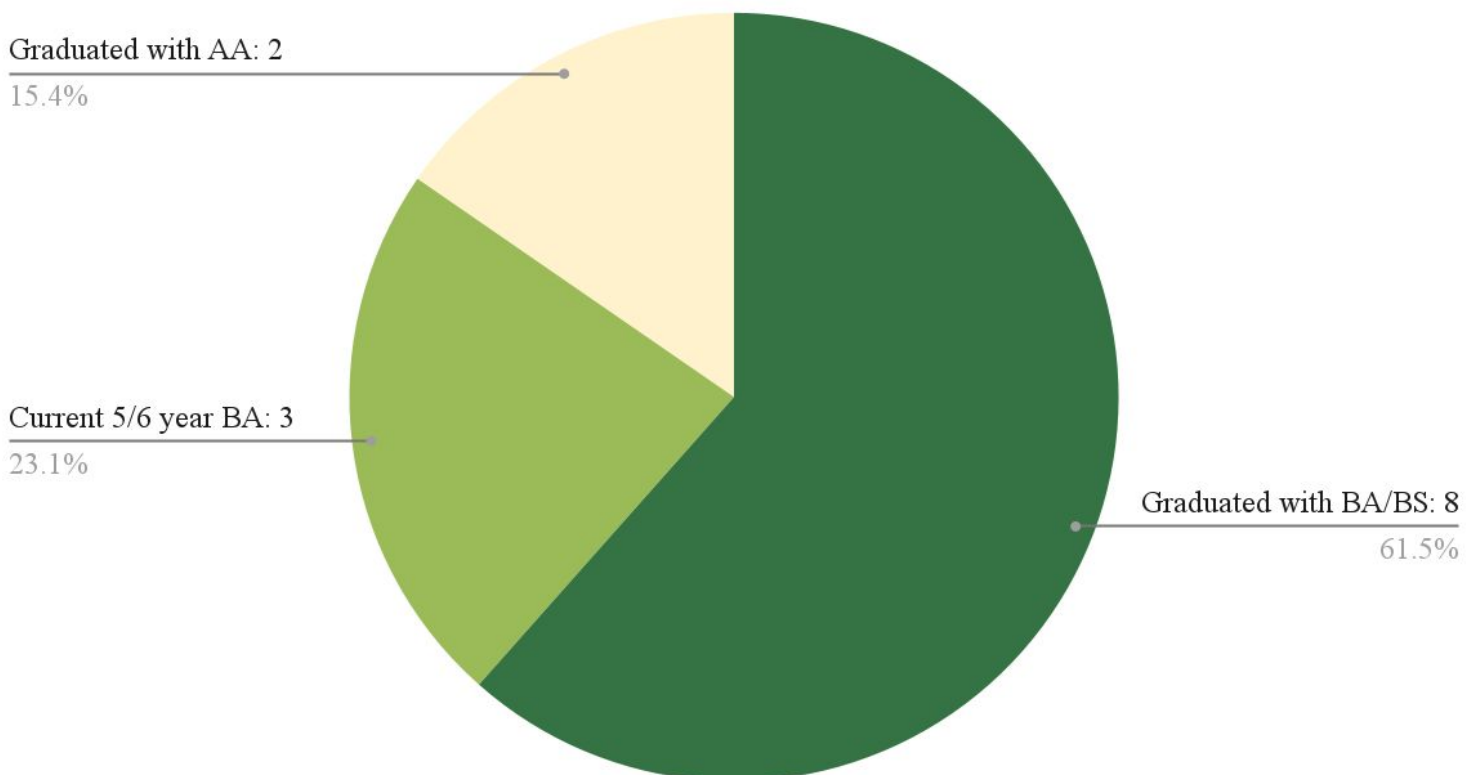
Dawn Billman

ABOUT RTE

Rise Together Education (RTE) is a Palo Alto High School-based nonprofit that provides multi-year mentoring and financial support to eligible low-income Paly students attending 4-year colleges or 2 year-colleges with a direct transfer agreement. Our long term commitment to these students starting in high school is unique to our organization. Our students must meet the criteria of being eligible for the federal [Free or Reduced Lunch Program](#) for Palo Alto Unified School District, which is equivalent to an annual income of less than \$48,000 per year for a family of four. If a student is low-income and is accepted to college, then RTE provides financial aid, resources, one-on-one mentoring, networking opportunities, workshops, individual coaching, community building and free mental health counseling through Palo Alto University. **We are a nonprofit organization that helps deserving students get to college and through college.**

Working with Paly staff, RTE first identifies potential scholarship recipients during their years at Paly. Just prior to graduation, RTE begins working with these students and continues to work with them through college and after graduation. In 2020, 98% of RTE's expenses were allocated to scholarships to help students with financial aid gaps. The number of students and the amount of scholarships RTE is able to provide is dependent upon fundraising efforts; however, our financial goal is to one day be able to provide scholarships up to \$5,000 per year for each student. We aim to have enough money raised to provide all of our current students scholarships through four years of attending college. As of Fall 2020, we provide \$2,500 per year to each 4-year college student and \$1,000 per year to each 2-year (community college) student. After our community college students complete their associate degree, we provide \$2,500 per year to attend a 4-year college for up to two additional years.

College Graduation Rates by Paly's Class of 2016 in December 2020



HISTORY

June 2015: Laura Marcus-Bricca started a GoFundMe page for Stephanie Estrada.

November 2015: RTE granted IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

June 2016: RTE welcomed 12 Paly graduates into its first cohort.

Fall 2016: Spirit Week Store created as first RTE fundraiser (ran for 3 years).

Spring 2017: Held joint fundraiser with the Paly Choir.

March 2018: Hosted Paly's Got Talent fundraiser.

March 2019: RTE holds its first Gala fundraiser, bringing in about \$32K

May 2020: Dawn Billman is voted in as President.

March 2020: RTE cancels its gala fundraiser due to Covid-19

August 2020: Alumni Stephanie Estrada and Sammy Vasquez join RTE Board as Co-Directors.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dawn Billman - President
Danielle Haas-Laursen, JD, PhD - Vice President
Nancy Kawakita, MBA - Treasurer
Deanna Chute, MA - Secretary
Pallavi Homan, MBA - Alumni Liaison
Kimberly Schwan - Mentorship Chairperson
Tida Violante, DrPH, MPH - Grants and Development Chairperson
Greer Stone, JD - Director
Ruby Ibanga, MS* - Director
Miguel Fittoria, MA* - Director
Elizabeth Mueller - Director
Stephanie Estrada - Director and Peer Mentoring Co-Chairperson
Samuel Vasquez - Director and Peer Mentoring Co-Chairperson



ADVISORS

Laura Marcus-Bricca, Co-Founder and Past President
Kimberly Diorio, Co-Founder and Past President
Michael Sullivan, Co-Founder and Past Treasurer

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Emma Lin - Class of 2021
Ella Rosenblum - Class of 2023
Ras Kebebew - Class of 2021
Melina Soburg - Class of 2021

*Term ended June 2020

IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN 2020

In the fall of 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had a total of 43 scholarships recipients who attend colleges and universities across the country. It was an exceptionally difficult year for everyone including our scholars, many of whom faced disruption in their learning. Many had to attend school remotely with younger siblings in the same room. They suffered the economic and mental health consequences of the pandemic-induced shut down, as well as immediate and long term health effects from Covid-19. Like the rest of the world, our scholars and their family members were highly impacted by the pandemic.

Paly graduates did not have a graduation ceremony in June 2020. College students who graduated in the spring of 2020 had online graduation ceremonies. Most never saw their campus in fall 2020 and attended online courses. In general, like most students, our scholars would have preferred to studied in person and connected with their peers and instructors in the classroom.

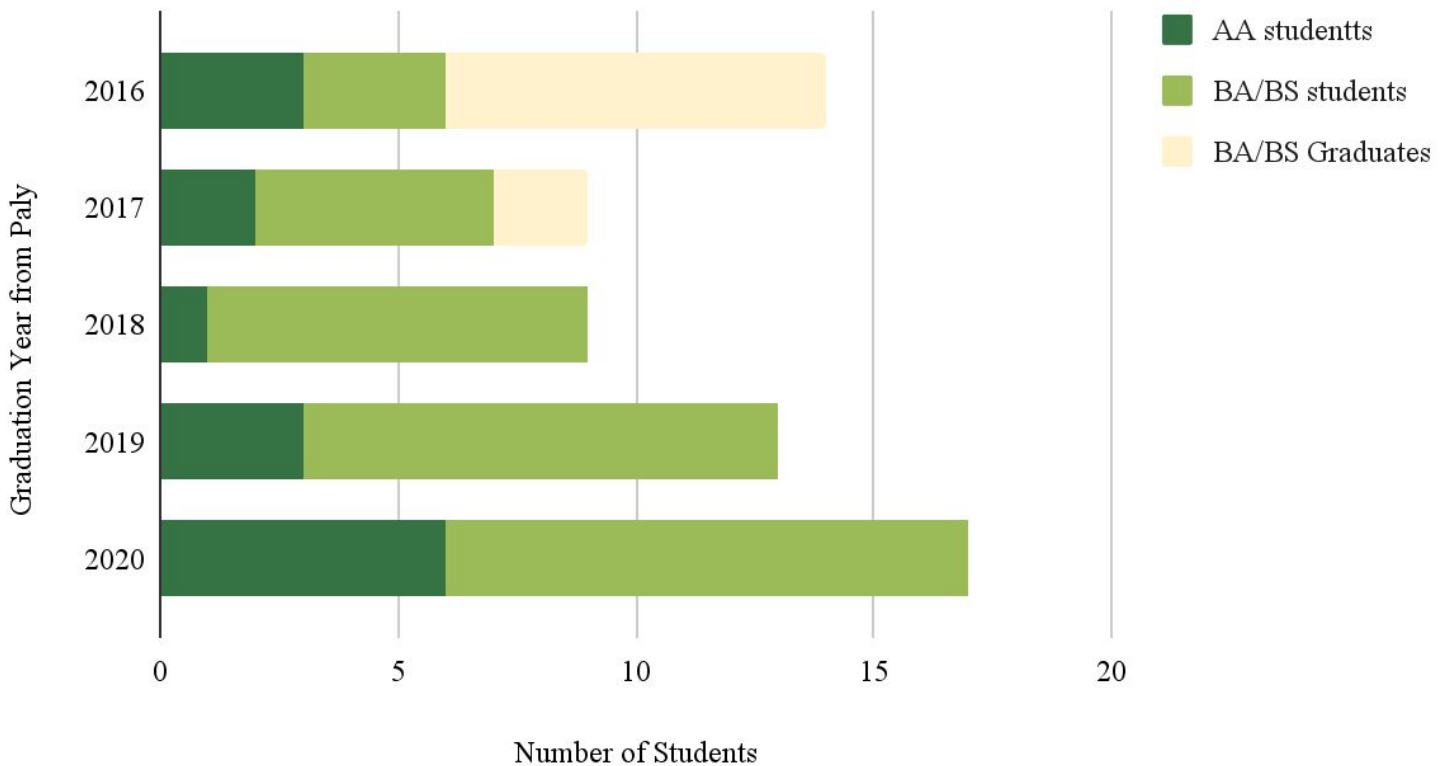
Throughout the year, RTE continued to engage our scholars by phone and virtual meetings and workshops., We provided needed referrals for resources and held online workshops for our scholars.

OUR SCHOLARS

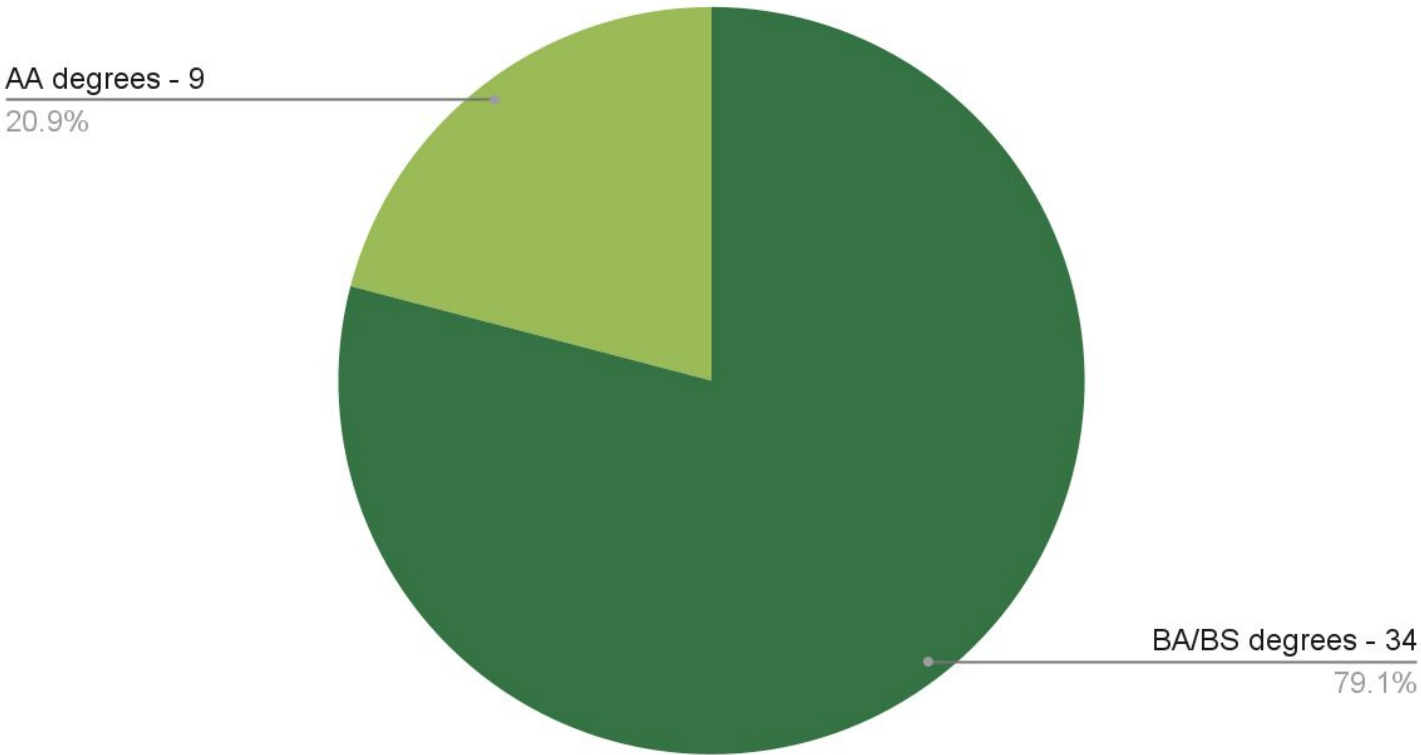
All of our scholars except six are the first generation in their families to attend college. Not only do they bring pride and joy to their families, but have made their teachers and staff at Paly very proud as well. The number of students whom we supported from each Paly graduating class are listed below.

Data shows that first generation students tend to have a lower college retention rate but our RTE scholars have overwhelmingly proved themselves and graduated with a bachelor's degree in a timely manner and three are in graduate schools. One student even graduated from college within three and a half years.

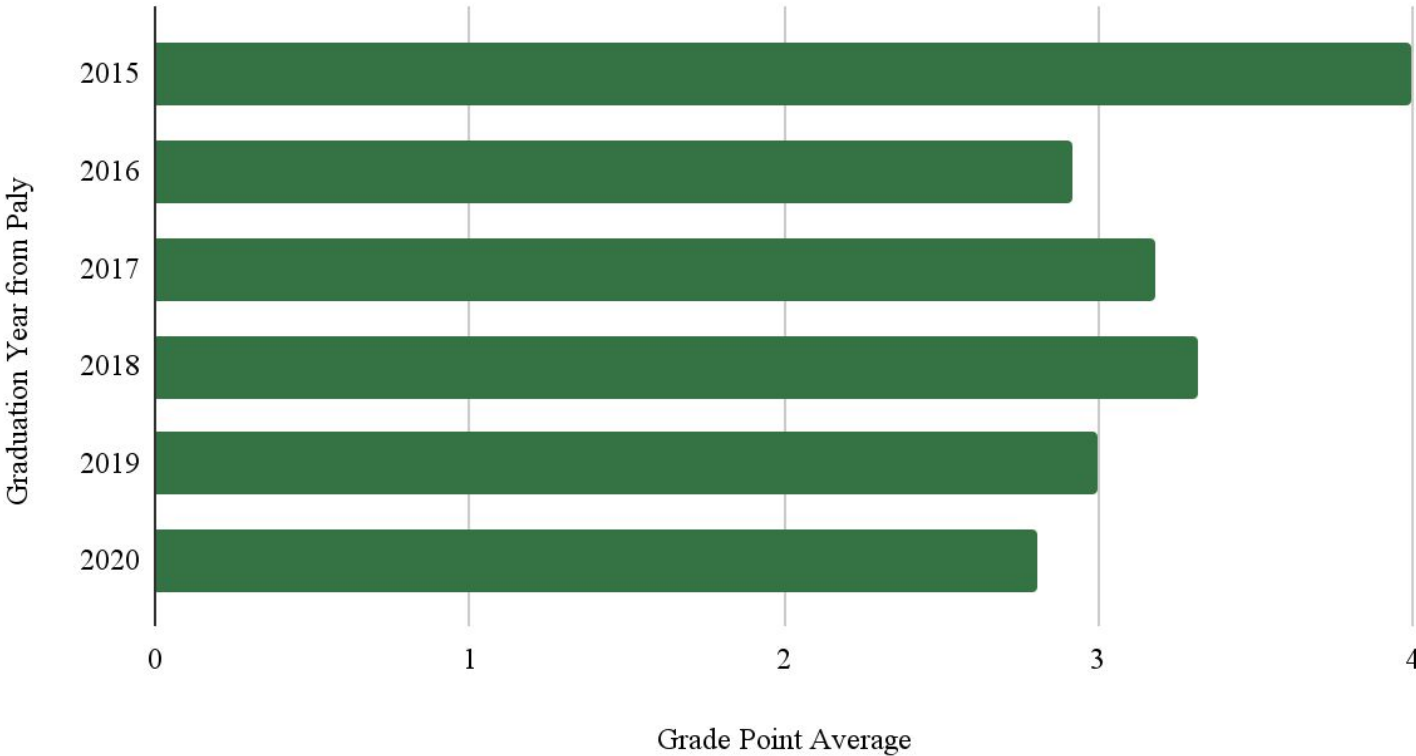
Matriculation & Graduation in Fall 2020



Matriculation in Fall 2020

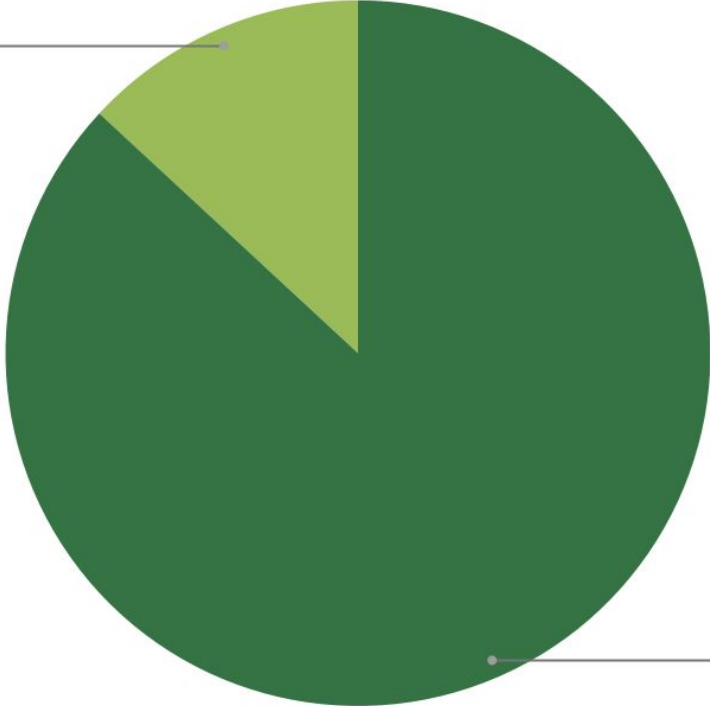


Cumulative Grade Point Average, December 2020



Scholarship Recipients by Parental College Status

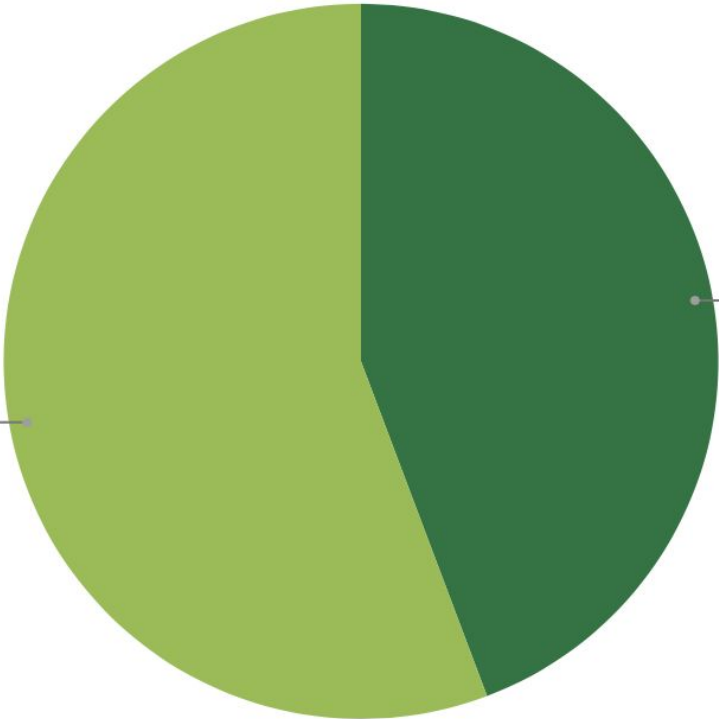
Not 1st Generation - 8
13.1%



1st Generation - 53
86.9%

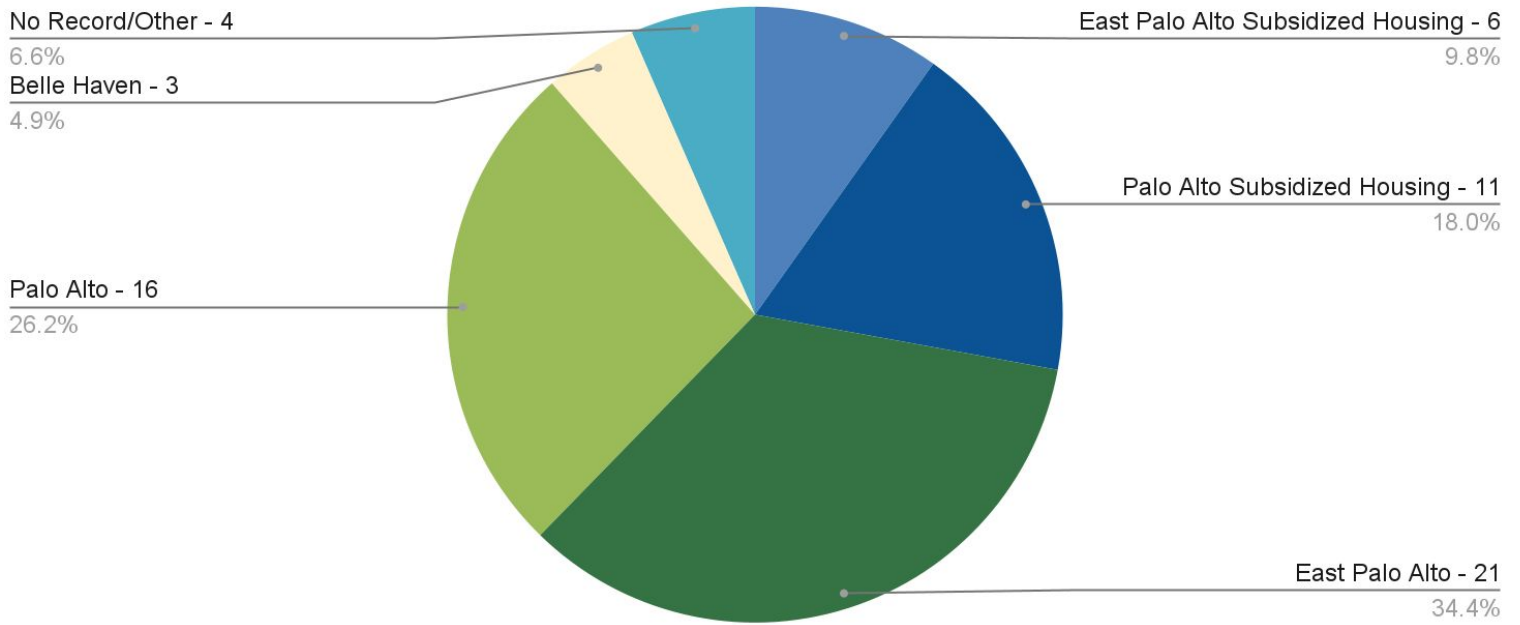
Scholarship Recipients by Sex

Female - 34
55.7%

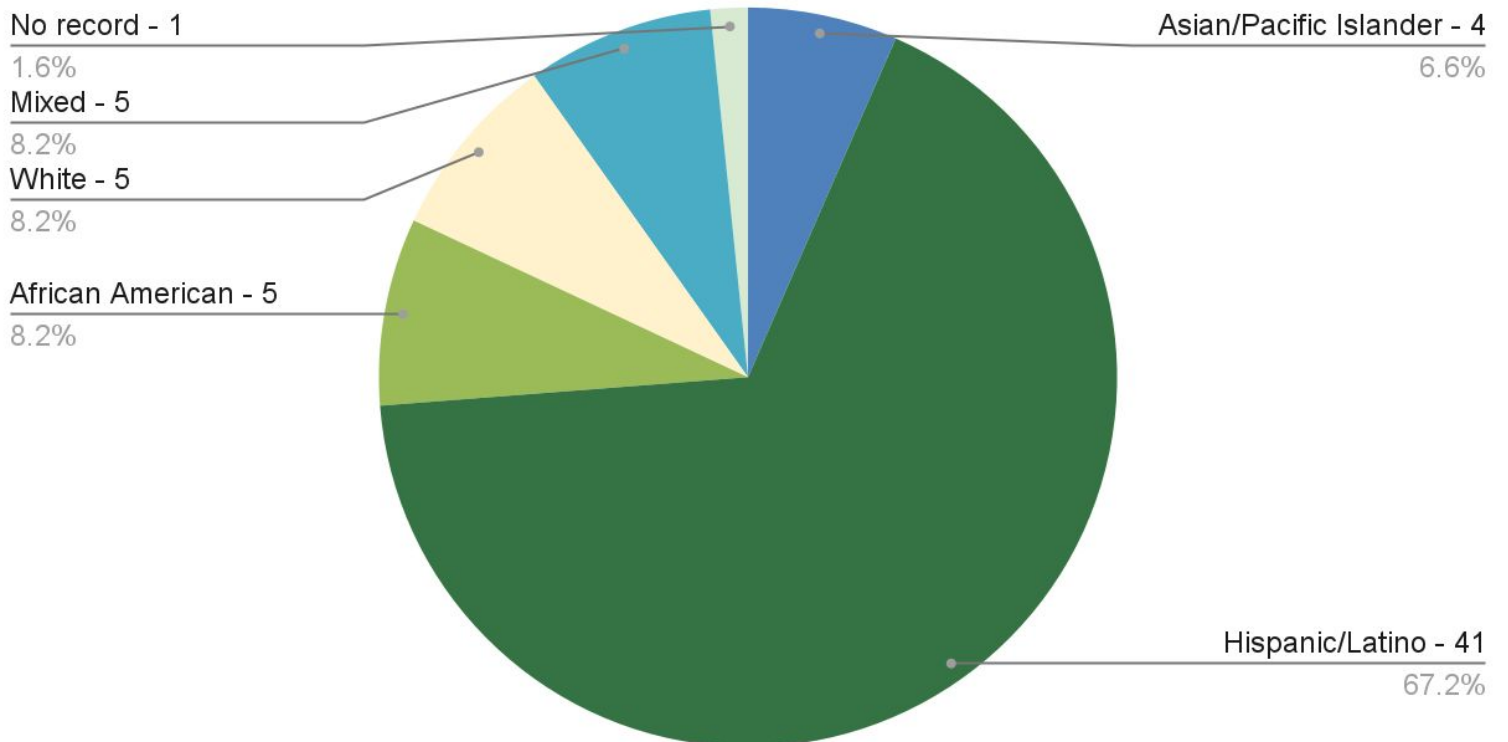


Male - 27
44.3%

Place of Residence during Grade 11



Race & Ethnicity





MARTHA AVILA-ZAVALA

Martha Avila-Zavala (Paly Class of 2016) graduated from Whittier College with a degree in human development and health in 2020. During her time at Whittier, she created her own major, combining biology, psychology, sociology and childhood development. She was able to conduct research with her professors, and most recently worked alongside a post-doctorate student to study the genetic mechanisms that regulate morphogenesis, a stage of cell development. She was also awarded several scholarships. She was an active member of the First Generation & Allies club and the Palmer Society, a women's society at Whittier (similar to a sorority). In two years, she plans to attend medical school and become a pediatrician. She said she is grateful for the financial and emotional support she has received from RTE throughout her time at Whittier, and encourages other students to learn to seek out help when they need it. Thanks to RTE and her other scholarships, she is graduating this year with no debt.

SUSANA CACHO

Susana Cacho, (Paly Class of 2016), graduated from Williams College in 2020 after double-majoring in Political Science and Spanish. While at Paly, she was part of The Campanile's staff, a tradition she chose to continue by joining the staff of Williams' yearbook, The Gulielmensian. She also worked as Junior Advisor for 56 first-year students. Although she was initially torn between attending Williams and USC, she chose Williams because they gave her almost a full scholarship. Looking back, she said it was the best decision she could have ever made, and encourages other students not to be afraid to attend college outside the Bay Area or California. After graduation, she plans to go to law school to follow her dream of becoming an immigration lawyer. She hopes to help other families navigate the U.S. immigration system. She is grateful to RTE and its donors for investing in her education and empowering her to give back to her community. RTE support gave her the opportunity to visit her family during holidays, participate in unpaid internships and become a role model for her younger siblings. She is also proud to announce that this year she will be eligible for U.S. citizenship.



Susana Cacho
Williams College
Political Science & Spanish

BROOKLYN HUTCHINSON

Has RTE made a difference in your decision to pursue a college degree? If so, how?

“RTE did make a difference in my decision to pursue a college degree, and helped me get there. Programs such as the Rise Up summer program and the First Generation program at my school helped me to better understand and prepare for the application process and evaluate financial aid, but I still wasn't entirely sure about the possibility of my going to college because of the cost. The RTE scholarship was a major influence in my ability to attend college, and I'm honestly not sure what would have happened without it.”



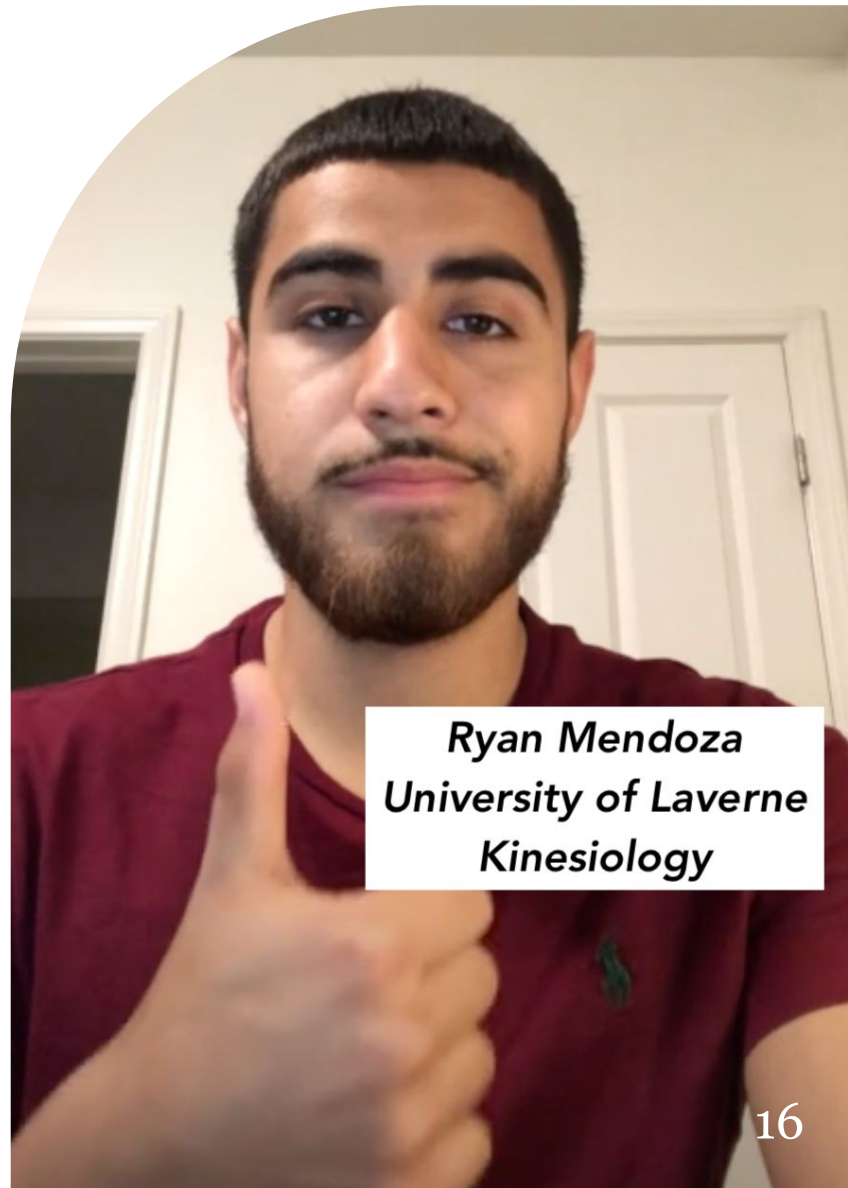
***Brooklyn Hutchinson
Rochester Institute of Technology
Graphic Design***

RYAN MENDOZA

Ryan Mendoza (Paly's Class of 2017). Ryan graduated early from the The University of LaVerne (December 2020) where he majored in Kinesiology. Ryan had a soccer scholarship, held a part time job, and attended college full time! Ryan is currently applying to graduate schools to study to become an Occupational Therapist.

“

“The scholarship has completely helped me in so many ways. To name only a few, I will begin by simply pointing to the obvious one which is... financially --- by having this extra amount of money. I have more time to focus on my academics and therefore work 5 hours less per week this semester. That has been amazing given the fact that I am a student athlete and do not have to stress 24/7!”



Ryan Mendoza
University of Laverne
Kinesiology

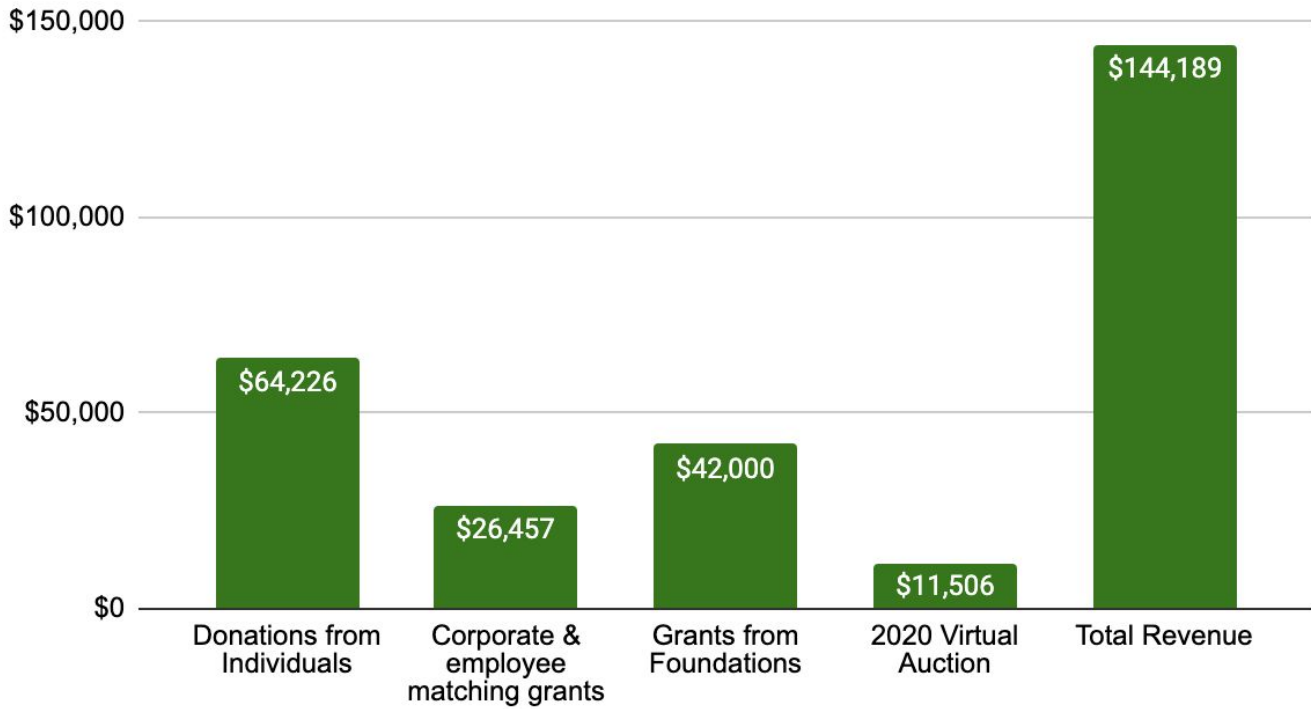
Current Colleges & Universities of Our Scholars

- Amherst College
- Allegheny College
- California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
- California State University, Channel Islands
- California State University, Chico
- California State University, Los Angeles
- California State University, North Ridge
 - California State University, Riverside
- Chapman University
- College of San Mateo
- Cosumnes River College
- DeAnza College
- Emory University
- Foothills College
- Humboldt State University
- La Verne University
- Menlo College
- Notre Dame de Namur University
- Northeastern University
- Pasadena City College
- Pitzer College
- Rochester Institute of Technology
- San Francisco State University
- San Jose State University
- Saint Louis University - Madrid
- Santa Barbara City College
- Santa Monica College
- Stonehill College
- Sonoma State University
- Stanford University
- The University of New Orleans
- Tufts University
- University of California, Merced
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- University of California, Riverside
- University of Connecticut
- University of La Verne
- University of Redlands
- University of San Francisco
- Whittier College
- Williams College

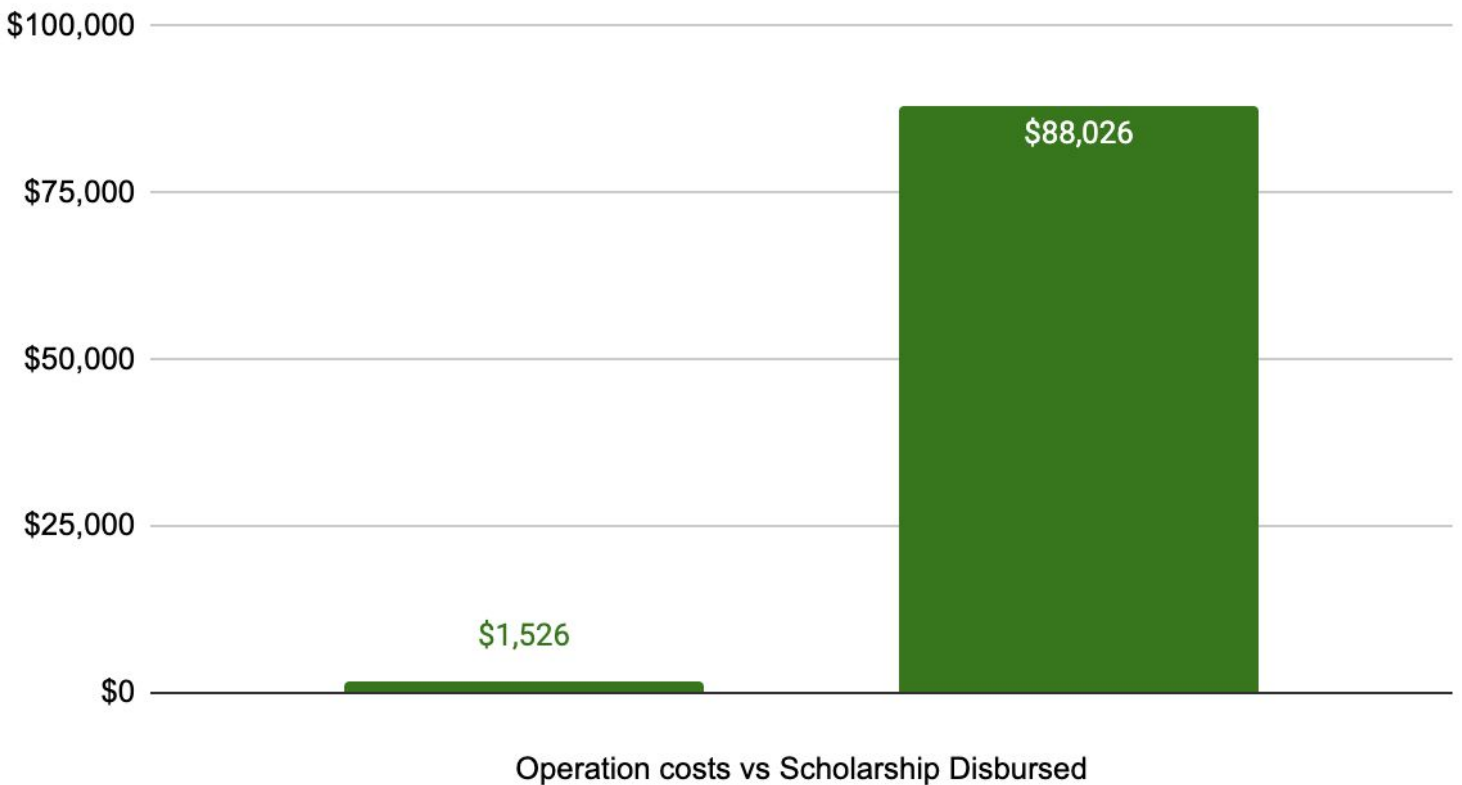


2020 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Revenue



Expenses



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

As an all-volunteer board, *Rise Together Education* raised money from individuals, foundations, and businesses in the local community. We have spent the past six years establishing our program. We aim to spend 90% of the funds raised on scholarships. In 2020, 98% of our expenses were distributed to students as scholarship awards.

Fiscal Year	Funds Raised	Amount Disbursed	Number of Students
2015	\$1,734	\$0 from RTE	1
2016	\$81,286	\$34,431	13
2017	\$134,837	\$42,650	21
2018	\$118,054	\$60,280	30
2019	\$97,491	\$86,700	46
2020	\$144,189	\$86,500	43

In fall of 2019, the Board of Directors felt secure in the amount of money raised and voted to increase the scholarship amount to \$2,500 per year for four-year college students and \$1,000 per year for community college students (for the maximum of two years). We were able to continue this in 2020 for all our scholars. We anticipate distributing roughly \$130,000 in scholarships in 2021. We are grateful for the support of our generous donors and supporters who have continued to provide our organization with their time and skills.



Sara Aguilar
(Paly Class of '17)
Menlo College
Marketing

RTE IN 2021 AND BEYOND

As RTE has firmly established itself within the Palo Alto community, we have also increased promotion and outreach on the Paly campus - despite the Covid-19 pandemic. We anticipate that we will have at least 20 incoming students each fall. As always, we are partnering with Paly's College and Career Counselors and sharing information with other similar organizations in the area to find more ways to help these students. In a year of Covid and lock downs, mental health was an important issue for our scholars. We worked with **Palo Alto University** to provide mental health support for those who needed therapy. We have established a peer mentoring program with the new graduates and the two former RTE scholars who are now on the Board of Directors: Samuel Vasquez and Stephanie Estrada.

We are fortunate to have Paly's principal and Paly teachers on the board. Paly teachers reach out to low-income and first-generation underclassmen to help ensure that they are college ready and know that RTE will be there to help them.

In 2020, we began to secure grants to diversify our income stream and ensure that we have sufficient funding to provide scholarships for at least two years into the future. We reached out to local foundations to apply for grants. We also began networking with local businesses to provide career workshops, internships and jobs to bring our scholars back to work and live in our community once they have finished college.

We invite you to be a part of our mission to help more hardworking students like Stephanie, Martha, Susana, and Ryan successfully graduate from college and reach their goals in life.

THANKS TO OUR GALA SUPPORTERS

Ada's Cafe
AJ Tutoring
American Girl
Anatolian Kitchen
Angela Sun Consulting and SAT prep
Asian Box
Athleta
Barbara Kollin, DVM
Baylands Golf Links
Beat the Lock Escape Room
Beauty & the Cutie Portrait
Blue Mercury
BlueTree Travel
Boudin
Cafe Pro Bono
Chipotle
Core Power Yoga
Coastanoa Lodge and Camp
Creekside Inn
Crowne Plaza Hotel Palo Alto
Design Within Reach
Dinah's Garden Hotel
Douce France
Enoteca La Storia
Fairmont Hotel San Jose
Four Seasons Hotel Silicon Valley EPA
Garden Court Hotel
Gott's Roadside
Hair International
Half Moon Bay Golf Links
Hobee's
Homewood Suites
Howie's Pizza
Hudson Grace
Italico
Izzy's Bagels
J. McLaughlin
Joanie's Cafe
Joie
Juut Salon Spa
Keen
Kirk's Palo Alto
La Boheme
Lady M
Leaf & Petal
Lisa Deneffe Photography
Lulu's
Lululemon Athletica
Mary Ellen Bena, Adam Paulson, and Jerry Berkson BBQ
Mendocino Farms
Motion Street Studio
Namesake Cheesecake
Nest Bedding
Nobu Hotel Palo Alto
Oceano Hotel and Spa
Palo Alto Dental Wellness
Palo Alto High School Fiery Arts Program
Palo Alto Police Dept
Parent Quilting Group
Patrick James
Peet's Coffee
Pizza My Heart
Pizzeria Delfina Palo Alto
PrAna
Pure Barre
Ridge Vineyards
Rumble Boxing
Ruti
Sam's Chowder House
San Jose Earthquakes
San Mateo Visitor and Convention Center
Sigona's Farmers Market
Spoke & Weal
SRE Asset Management
Stanford Department of Emergency Medicine
Stanford Hospital Division of General Surgery
Steam/Tai Pan
Sun of Wolf
Sweaty Betty
Terun
The Bar Method
The Counter
The Market at Edgewood
The Westin
Theatre Works
Tin Pot
Tonik Cycling Apparel
Verve Coffee Roasters
Watercourse Way
Yoga Source
Zareen's
Zombie Runner

Watch a gratitude video from our scholarship recipients [here](#).

2020 GRANTS AWARDED

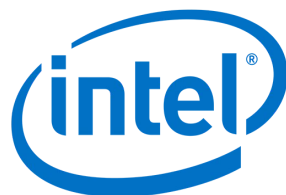



2020 BUSINESS SPONSORS

Gala Sponsors



Employee Matching Grants





**We would like to thank the
hundreds of individual
supporters who believed in
our mission, provided time,
encouragement and
financial support.**

**Rise Together Education
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info@risetogethered.org

www.RiseTogetherEd.org

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