

FALL 2014 REPORT

# Breakthrough in Progress: Increasing Graduation Rates in Los Angeles County

“This spring, I will be the first in my family to graduate from college. A sense of confidence and skill has replaced my fear of not being able to afford or attain a college degree.”

—Lizeth Gasca, UCLA senior & participant with the Fulfillment Fund, a LASIF partner



LOS ANGELES  
SCHOLARS  
INVESTMENT FUND

A partnership of California Community Foundation  
and College Access Foundation of California

# The graduation crisis in Los Angeles County is at a critical tipping point

**43% of 9th graders do not graduate high school. Of those who do get into college, 60% don't finish.<sup>1</sup> And college enrollment and graduation rates for children of low-income parents who didn't attend college are at historic lows.**

Rising tuition costs have made a college education unaffordable for many low-income families. The annual cost to attend a UC school has more than tripled since the year 2000 to over \$13,000. Without financial aid, that represents more than 50% of the average low-income family's total earnings.<sup>2</sup>

Thousands of low-income students do persevere and go to college. They have the grit, smarts and desire to be successful and contribute to Los Angeles, the place we call home. In spite of their greatest efforts, personal financial hardship and rapid growth in the costs of higher education are obstacles for too many. Low-income students face an average student loan burden of nearly \$20,000<sup>3</sup>, meaning that those who do receive a degree are often saddled with debt that limits their career choices and prevents them from joining the middle class.

This unprecedented gap hurts more than just students. By 2025, a projected 2.3 million California jobs will go unfilled because of a lack of college degree holders.<sup>4</sup> The costs to society are already striking: today, high school graduates without a college degree are three times more likely to be unemployed than college graduates, and nearly four times more likely to live in poverty.<sup>5</sup>

**But when we enable just one student to earn a bachelor's degree, they will attain \$1 million more in lifetime earnings.<sup>6</sup>**

## Reversing L.A. County's Graduation Crisis

**Only 57% of L.A. County 9th graders finish high school, 31% go to college and only 12% graduate from college. However, students who work with LASIF programs are showing phenomenal success: 98% of 9th graders complete high school, 96% attend college, and 82% earn a degree. By investing in LASIF, you can help expand these programs and reverse our graduation crisis.**

\* Based on preliminary reports from LASIF partners.

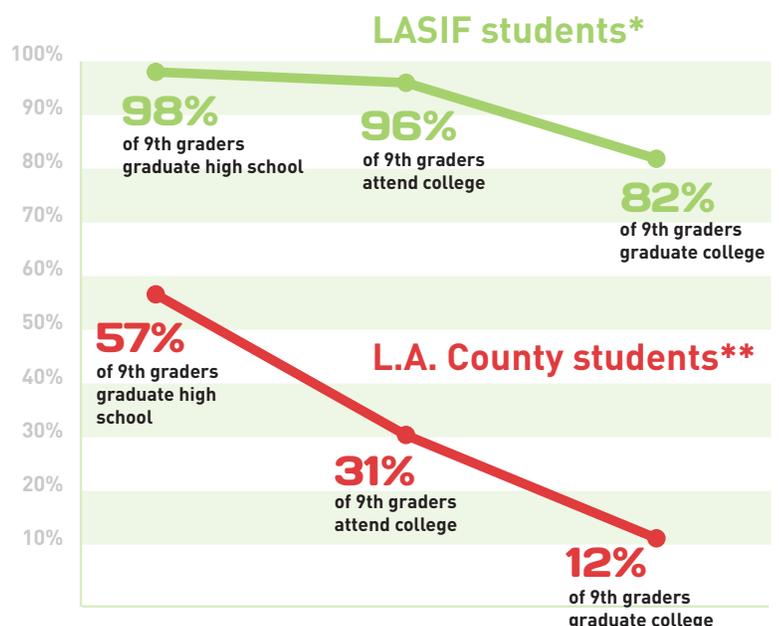
\*\* Statistics compiled from: California Post-Secondary Education Commission, National Center for Education Statistics, UCLA and data from L.A. County CSU campuses.

Imagine what it would mean to California if every student entering 6th grade this fall were to graduate from college in 2025.

This progress report is about the reasons for hope. Together, we are doing something to change this harsh reality and remove barriers to Angelenos who want a college education.

A joint initiative of the California Community Foundation and the College Access Foundation of California, the Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund (LASIF) focuses on more than just college access. It uses partnerships and innovative strategies tailored to the needs of low-income students in Los Angeles to reverse this crisis and increase graduation rates. LASIF combines multi-year scholarships with support programs from a groundbreaking collective of nonprofits with proven track records of success. By expanding capacity, facilitating partnerships and promoting innovation, LASIF is helping to set a positive course for L.A.'s future.

Together with our investors and nonprofit partners, this year LASIF helped more than 1,240 students prepare for, pay for and succeed in college—far more than any individual scholarship fund, foundation or donor could do alone.





Students at the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Los Angeles Harbor, a LASIF partner, participate in a STEM lab. These after school programs, in addition to the organization's College Bound Program, provide a pathway to college success.

## Leveraging scholarships with wrap-around services

The Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund urges investors to think differently about college scholarships. LASIF is addressing the unique—and uniquely diverse—needs and challenges of students in Los Angeles County.

LASIF maximizes scholarship dollars by ensuring students apply for all publicly available financial aid opportunities for which they are eligible, which can reduce tuition by an average of 28%<sup>2</sup>. But scholarships alone aren't enough. Our partners create extensive resource networks and relationships with students and their families, starting in K-12 schools and in many cases continuing through

college. Our partners have learned that, in addition to providing traditional scholarship funds, they need to help students develop life skills and emotional, social and cultural capital. It's this multifaceted approach that enables young people to access the resources and tools available to them before, during and after college.

Urgent action is needed to develop innovative approaches in the field and achieve a broad long-term impact. That's why investors across Los Angeles, California and the U.S. are joining LASIF's \$15 million investment pool.

“Los Angeles is ground zero for the national crisis in high school and college graduation. We can't let the hard work and persistence of so many low-income students go to waste. We can't ignore the challenges they face navigating the hard times of higher education. And we can't thrive as a city without their contributions. It's our responsibility as a community to do our part to support them in their path to college completion. Philanthropists, businesses and lovers of L.A. alike have a stake in their future.”

**Chet Pipkin, Founder, Chairman and CEO, Belkin International Inc.**

This year, LASIF expanded to fund 19 organizations, providing \$4.6 million in scholarships and operating support for its nonprofit partners

1,240

LASIF STUDENTS SERVED

19

ORGANIZATIONS FUNDED

573

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED

158

HIGH SCHOOLS SERVED BY LASIF ORGANIZATIONS

183

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED BY LASIF STUDENTS

“We can be proud of our results for getting students into college. Now, it’s critical to focus on getting them through college. We must work more deeply, and with one another, to ensure students arrive on campus equipped with the skill set they need to succeed.”

—Ford Roosevelt, President and CEO, Project GRAD Los Angeles, a LASIF partner



Ford Roosevelt and Project GRAD scholar, Ernesto Morales

The Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund draws its strength from the diversity of its nonprofit partners. Their keen understanding of the communities they serve results in a rich portfolio of organizations and models. Take, for example, these pioneering approaches shared by our grantees this year.



**FULFILLMENT FUND**  
**Mentorship Lasts from Application to Graduation**

Stressing deep one-on-one mentoring relationships to help its students go to college, the **Fulfillment Fund** also ensures that this personal support continues through a college access and success pipeline. The Fulfillment Fund's pipeline also includes a college access program in partner LAUSD high schools, renewable need-based scholarships and postsecondary services. With the help of LASIF, the Fulfillment Fund aims to provide scholarships and increase access to financial aid and college persistence and completion support services.



**BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF THE L.A. HARBOR**  
**After-School Programs Can Promote a Pathway to College**

The **Boys and Girls Clubs of the Los Angeles Harbor** reinvented their traditional after-school activities 12 years ago by starting the College Bound Program. This wildly successful program, now replicated in 51 partner clubs across California and the nation, uses counselors, tutors and other staff to work alongside disadvantaged youth, mapping out a four-year plan for finishing high school and guiding them through the college application and financial aid processes. LASIF is enabling the program to expand and connect its outreach to students in college.



**UNITED FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN**  
**Foster Youth Need Individualized Educational Support**

Addressing the unique needs of foster youth is crucial to raising the 1% college graduation rate that plagues this exceptionally vulnerable population. Understanding that they often fall behind because of the frequency with which they change schools, **United Friends of the Children's** College Readiness Program connects Los Angeles County foster youth in grades 7-12 with counselors over a six-year period. This consistent and nurturing relationship gives students a dependable support system to help guide them through college applications and prepare them for life on campus.



**PROJECT GRAD LOS ANGELES**  
**Social and Emotional Skills Lead to College Success**

Serving L.A.'s San Fernando Valley, **Project GRAD Los Angeles** advises students one-on-one from the first day of high school all the way through college. Their model combines academic enrichment with counseling focused on maximizing eligibility for four-year scholarships and other financial aid. These are integrated into a comprehensive program designed to develop social emotional competencies, helping students handle stressful situations, focus their attention, set realistic academic goals and modify their behaviors to achieve them, make sound decisions and establish and maintain positive relationships.

LASIF also partners with the 80 high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District's Intensive Support & Innovation Center, applying what we're learning about effective college and financial aid guidance to better prepare students for college and careers. These diverse organizations working together are at the heart of the comprehensive solution LASIF offers.

Each of LASIF's 19 nonprofit partners brings a unique approach, whether in the geography, community, the age of the students they serve or in the programs they use to reach students. Even more power comes from their collaboration; by sharing their successes through LASIF, our partners learn from each other and further strengthen their effectiveness.



## A funder collaborative paying big dividends

The Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund combines California Community Foundation's deep knowledge of Los Angeles County and experience as one of L.A.'s largest scholarship administrators with College Access Foundation of California's extensive issue-based expertise and track record of funding organizations that improve college graduation rates.

Like any good investment, LASIF aims to pay dividends, and one critical return on investment is the knowledge gained. That's why we provide value-added support to help L.A.'s leading education nonprofits grow and share best practices focused on the singular mission of getting more students to graduate college.

## Shared knowledge builds stronger models

**The Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund supports novel approaches that combine multiyear scholarships with additional support that's proven to help students graduate.**

Best described as part high-performing mutual fund, part innovation incubator, the Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund combines innovative models, multiyear scholarships and effective programs proven to get students to and through college. We also reward great ideas. LASIF encourages our partners to connect, share and learn from each other in order to achieve even greater impact. In our first annual Partnership Forum, we convened over 35 leaders from our partner organizations to illuminate best practices with the potential to be translated into models of excellence for Los Angeles, California and the nation. Key highlights include:



**Outstanding models are as diverse as the populations and communities they serve.**

Partners reach students of all ages and backgrounds through strategies such as counseling, financial aid assistance, academic preparation, college planning, family engagement, mentoring, peer networks, internships and on-campus support.



**Successful organizations engage with students and parents early and often.**

Some organizations begin outreach to students in elementary school, while others follow students through college, preparing them for jobs in their chosen careers. The importance of building a long-standing relationship with students, and in many cases their families, is paramount for most LASIF partners.



**Collaboration among high-performing programs and high schools will lead to powerful collective impact.**

When the best learn from the best and are able to share new ideas, not only is the value to the individual nonprofit tremendous, but it also accelerates a movement for broad adoption of replicable models. LASIF also helps connect its partners to colleges and other influential organizations in the community.



“My grandfather’s dream was to provide education and opportunity to the youth of Los Angeles, and I want to continue that vision.”

—Liz Lawler, Advisor,  
Harry J. Volk Fund, LASIF investor

# Join us and activate the multiplier effect

An investment in the Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund is a commitment to the students of Los Angeles County. Together, LASIF donors have the opportunity to change the course of L.A.’s future and reverse the downward trajectory of college graduation rates.

Because the economic and educational challenges facing Los Angeles County can be found in communities throughout the United States, investing in LASIF holds the potential to provide a nationwide model to address the college graduation crisis.

By joining with LASIF to invest in college success, you help ensure that thousands more low-income Angeleno students will realize the promise of a college degree—improving the economic stability and quality of life across Los Angeles and building a better future for our community.

## Our investors

- Anonymous**
- The Kresge Foundation**
- Karin Larson**
- Richard and Melanie Lundquist**
- Vicki Martin and Preston Johnson**
- Chet and Jan Pipkin**
- The Harry J. Volk Fund**
- Chandra Wilson**

# JOIN US

For more information about how you can get involved, please contact Peter Rivera, Senior Program Officer for Education at the California Community Foundation by emailing [PRivera@calfund.org](mailto:PRivera@calfund.org) or calling (213) 413-4130.



## About California Community Foundation

The California Community Foundation (CCF) in Los Angeles County has been an essential community advocate in the region since 1915. With more than \$1.4 billion in assets, CCF is one of the largest foundations of any kind in the nation. As a community foundation, CCF is a tax-exempt, public nonprofit organization committed to transformative change across Los Angeles County and around the world. CCF has more than \$40 million in donor-endowed funds dedicated to scholarships. We provide financial, technical and management support to nonprofit organizations and act as a convener with thought leaders in addressing regional issues. Learn more at [calfund.org](http://calfund.org).



## About College Access Foundation of California

College Access Foundation of California is a private foundation committed to increasing the number of low-income students in California who attend and complete college. We believe improving college achievement is central to California's future, and the Foundation works to provide low-income and historically underrepresented students with the knowledge, resources and tools they need to achieve success. Our funding supports organizations and public-private partnerships that use college scholarships, college and financial aid advising and high school-college partnering strategies to address barriers to college attainment. The Foundation's endowment is approximately \$450 million. Learn more at [collegeaccessfoundation.org](http://collegeaccessfoundation.org).

<sup>1</sup> Statistics compiled from California Post-Secondary Education Commission, National Center for Education Statistics, UCLA and data from L.A. County CSU campuses.

<sup>2</sup> The Institute for College Access and Success, [http://www.ticas.org/files/pub/Cal\\_Grant\\_College\\_Cost\\_and\\_Affordability\\_3.5.14.pdf](http://www.ticas.org/files/pub/Cal_Grant_College_Cost_and_Affordability_3.5.14.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/09/26/appendix-b-additional-tables-2/>

<sup>4</sup> California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy, <http://www.californiacompetes.org>

<sup>5</sup> Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/>

<sup>6</sup> Julian, Tiffany. "Work-Life Earnings by Field of Degree and Occupation for People With a Bachelor's Degree: 2011," American Communities Survey, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/acsbr11-04.pdf>

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