EMERGE

IMPACT REPORT

2024-2025

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear EMERGE Village,

Harvard. MIT. Rice. UVA. Vanderbilt.

This spring, I watched our seniors take the stage and raise those pennants over their heads: the acceptance, the celebration, the door swinging open. It's the moment most people picture when they think of EMERGE. It's also hard-won. Getting a talented student from a low-income background into a selective college takes years of patient work, and we are extraordinarily good at it. This year, a peer-reviewed study in Education Finance and Policy compared students who just made our admissions cutoff with those who just missed it. Same schools, same grades, same backgrounds. The only difference was EMERGE, and the students who had us were significantly more likely to enroll in a selective college. I don't have to tell you it works. The research does.

What has struck me most in my first year, though, is everything surrounding that moment — before it and long after it. The months spent convincing a brilliant student that a college far from home is worth reaching for. The calls home to a worried parent. The hard first semesters. The unexpected bills. The first job, the degree earned with little or no debt, the career that follows. Getting in was never the finish line, and we have never treated it as one. We stay.

I also stepped into this role at a real inflection point. School districts are under mounting pressure, the way this work gets funded keeps shifting, and both are asking us to grow in new ways: to lean further into the community of supporters who believe in this, and to reach students we have never been able to reach before.

Which brings me to what I am proudest of this past year. We launched EMERGE Everywhere, a virtual version of our program that brings the same intensive, one-on-one advising to students wherever they are, no longer limited by where we can physically be. It is early, but the results are strong enough that we are growing it in the year ahead, and it points toward a future where a student's zip code decides even less about how far their talent can take them.

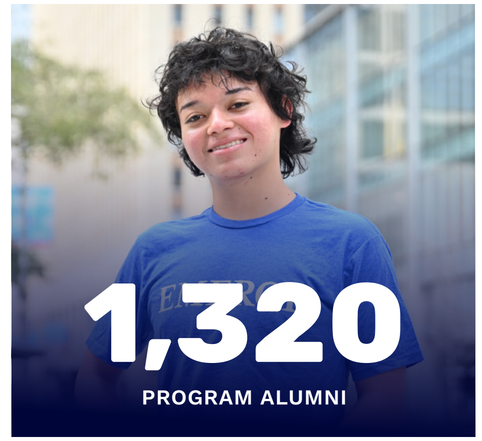
We invest this way, for the long haul, because the return is measured in decades rather than semesters. Our earliest scholars are only now eight years out of college, and already they are becoming the engineers, lawyers, and leaders of this city, earning more, giving back, and building the Houston they will one day run. That is the whole promise of an EMERGE scholar, and it is just coming into view.

A new chapter is starting, and I could not be more ready for it. None of it happens without you — the people who show up, day after day, so that talent this strong never goes unrealized. To our donors and community partners, thank you for being the village that makes it possible. The best of what these scholars will do is still ahead.

With gratitude,

Ashley Cash
Chief Executive Officer

THE YEAR AT A GLANCE



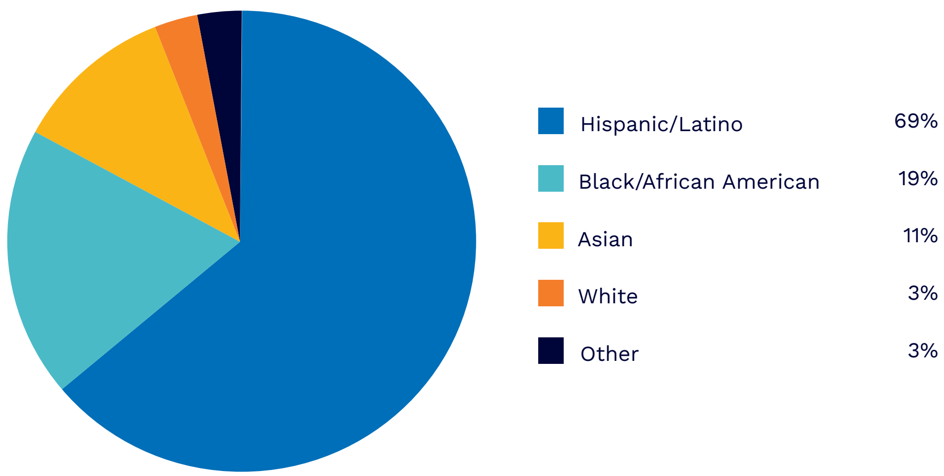
93%
FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

89%
FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT

83%
TOP 10% OF CLASS

5 DISTRICTS | **66** HIGH SCHOOLS

Demographics of EMERGE Scholars



Validated by Research

Independent research confirms that the EMERGE model works. A recent peer-reviewed study in the Education Finance and Policy journal found that students admitted to EMERGE were **17 percentage points** more likely to apply to the nation's most selective colleges and **15 percentage points** more likely to enroll. Researchers compared students who scored just above and just below EMERGE's admissions cutoff, providing strong evidence that EMERGE itself drives these outcomes.

> **"Sustained, personalized advising can meaningfully shift college choice trajectories for high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds."** [1]

Source: [1] Holzman, Brian (Texas A&M University), Irina Chukhray, and Courtney Thrash (Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research), Education Finance and Policy (2026).

THE EMERGE PATH

EMERGE TO COLLEGE

Katherine | CO2025 graduate of Sterling Aviation High School
Babson College matriculant

"No one in my house had been through college applications, and my school didn't really walk us through them either, so the financial aid forms, the research, the deadlines, all of it was mostly on me to figure out. EMERGE changed that. My program manager sat with me through the parts I didn't understand, helped me find schools that actually fit me, and kept me from giving up when it felt like too much. Going to college once felt out of reach for someone like me. This fall, I'm starting at Babson."

EMERGE THROUGH COLLEGE

Savannah | Sophomore at Bryn Mawr College
Jeff Ubben Posse Fellow at Warner Music Group

"I first set foot on Bryn Mawr's campus on an EMERGE summer college tour, and it's where I go now. EMERGE didn't stop once I got there either. When I couldn't afford a flight home over break, they helped cover it, and it was at an EMERGE summit that I found the program that launched my career. Today I'm one of five Jeff Ubben Posse Fellows in the country, interning directly under the CEO of Warner Music Group, with a path opening up in front of me I never imagined."

EMERGE BEYOND COLLEGE

Edna | Swarthmore College Alum
Houston-based Senior Data Engineer

"EMERGE helped me find Swarthmore and get the aid that made it possible, a school I never would have applied to on my own. Being there gave me the network and the skills that took me from where I grew up to a career in tech back in Houston. It's a leap in earning power I never pictured, and it's opened doors not just for me but for my whole family."

Access is just the beginning...

Selective colleges are among the strongest pathways to economic mobility for talented students from low-income backgrounds. Students who attend these institutions are more likely to graduate, access high-opportunity careers, and achieve upward economic mobility.[2]

When EMERGE scholars gain access to these institutions—and the support to thrive there—they are positioned to break barriers, expand opportunity for their families, and contribute their talents to building the Houston they'll one day lead.

Sources: [2] Opportunity Insights (2023), Diversifying Society's Leaders? The Determinants and Consequences of Admission to Highly Selective Colleges; Brookings Institution (2024), Selective Colleges and Universities Need to Do More to Enroll Low-Income Students.

EMERGE TO COLLEGE

EMERGE scholars matriculate to selective colleges at 7X the rate for similarly matched high-achieving, low-income peers nationwide [3]

Our Solution

Sophomore Year:

- Information Sessions to introduce EMERGE and selective colleges to high-performing students
- Holistic Review and Scholar Selection that mirrors the college admissions process

Junior Year:

- Selective College Advising at a 1:60 counselor to student ratio focused on college fit and match and strengthening applicant competitiveness
- Selective College Exposure to connect students to selective campuses and admissions officers

Senior Year:

- College Application, Financial Aid, and Matriculation Advising at a 1:40 ratio focused on individualized support and coaching through the entire application, decision, and enrollment process
- Professional Mentorship with local community leaders

The Problem We're Solving

Information Gaps:

- Families may not know which colleges offer the strongest outcomes or how financial aid makes them affordable [4]

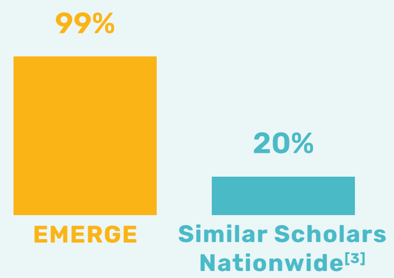
Counselor Constraints:

- Large counselor caseloads (averaging 1:397 in Texas) limit the specialized advising required for selective college admissions [5]

Environmental Fit Signals:

- Students' perceptions of fit at selective colleges are often shaped by environmental signals such as peer representation, messaging, and prior exposure [6]

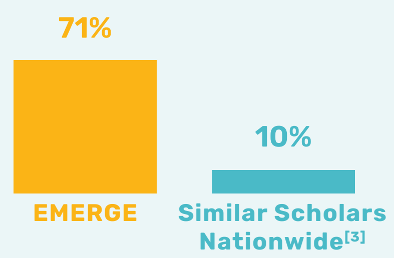
% APPLYING TO SELECTIVE COLLEGES



96%

EMERGE SCHOLARS ARE ACCEPTED TO A SELECTIVE COLLEGE

% MATRICULATING TO SELECTIVE COLLEGES



Sources: [3] Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis – Analysis of the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (2024). Low-income students with SAT scores comparable to EMERGE scholars were used as the national comparison group.
[4] Brookings Institution – The Missing "One-Offs": The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students (2013); Jack Kent Cooke Foundation – Opening Doors: How Selective Colleges and Universities Are Expanding Access for High-Achieving, Low-Income Students (2017).
[5] American School Counselor Association – Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio Data (2024–25).
[6] Social Psychology of Education – Shin, J. E., & Lytle, A. (2024). The roles of impostorism and academic help-seeking in undergraduate students' sense of belonging and college completion intention

EMERGE THROUGH COLLEGE

EMERGE scholars graduate from college at 4.5X the rate of low-income peers nationwide [8]

Our Solution

- Summer Bridge Programming to prepare first-year college scholars to confidently arrive at campus on day one
- SQUADS to connect first-year students with peers for mentorship and support
- EMERGEncy Funds providing short-term assistance with unforeseen expenses so scholars can stay focused on school
- Case Management to connect scholars to on-campus and community resources, coach students through uncertainty, and provide guidance toward on-time graduation
- Transfer Re-Enrollment Advising to guide students on these pathways through applications, financial aid, and academic planning
- Career Transitions to connect scholars to industry professionals and internships that prepare for life after college

The Problem We're Solving

Sense of Belonging:

- Campus environments that are unfamiliar in culture, networks, and lived experience can affect how quickly students connect to community and support systems that sustain their success [9]

Resource Navigation:

- Students often lack access to the unwritten rules and relationships that unlock academic and career opportunities [10]

Financial Pressures:

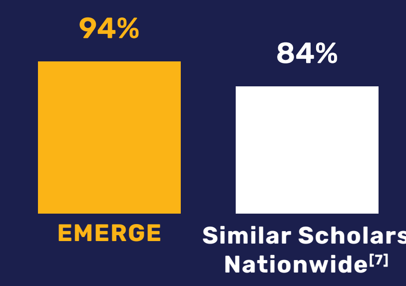
- Unexpected costs and the need to work can threaten students' ability to stay enrolled and fully engage in college [11]

65%

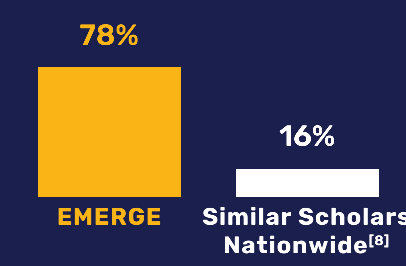
EMERGE SCHOLARS GRADUATE <$10K IN DEBT

NATIONAL AVERAGE: $30K

% PERSISTING IN COLLEGE FROM YEAR 1-2



% GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE IN 6 YEARS



Sources: [7] National Student Clearinghouse Research Center – Persistence & Retention: Fall 2023 Beginning Cohort (2025). [8] Pell Institute – Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States 2024: 50-Year Historical Trend Report (2024). [9] Pell Institute – Moving Beyond Access: College Success for Low-Income, First-Generation Students (2008); Wolniak, Chen-Bendle & Kunzman, The Development of Sense of Campus Belonging: A Four-Year Longitudinal Study of Low-Income College Students (2025). [10] Brookings Institution – The Missing "One-Offs": The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students (2013); Jack Kent Cooke Foundation – Opening Doors: How Selective Colleges and Universities Are Expanding Access for High-Achieving, Low-Income Students (2017). [11] National Student Clearinghouse Research Center – High School Income Level Drives Postsecondary Success (2025) and Persistence and Retention Report (2024)

EMERGE BEYOND COLLEGE

EMERGE scholars are charting new paths after college – continuing to post-graduate education, launching careers and moving into meaningful, choice-filled lives

2 in 3

BUILD THEIR CAREERS IN HOUSTON [12]

72%

EARN $45K IN THEIR FIRST JOB [12] ABOVE THE $33K AVERAGE FOR HOUSTON CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN ADULTHOOD [13]

1 in 4

ARE CURRENTLY PURSUING OR HOLD A GRADUATE DEGREE [12]

87%

VOLUNTEER OR GIVE BACK [12]

Alumni Board

In FY25, we launched our Alumni Board to strengthen engagement with EMERGE program graduates, elevate and share alumni stories, and re-engage alumni across cohorts. The board serves as a bridge between past and present participants, fostering connection, mentorship, and ongoing involvement with the organization. Inaugural alumni board members in FY25 include:

Liana Wang
Alumni Board President
William Acheampong
Isis Cantu
Simon Kiang-Hinojosa
Luis Leon Medina
Ryan Martinez
Bridgette Ramirez
Ivanna Raudales
Emmanuel Salas
Jonathan Trujillo

Sources: [12] EMERGE all-time alumni survey responses (n: 264); [13] Greater Houston Community Foundation. (2025, March 28). Driving Changes with Data: Key Drivers to Increase Economic Mobility in Houston"

WHAT'S NEXT?

By 2036, more than 70% of jobs in Texas will require a credential beyond high school. [14]

Houston's future will be built by the people prepared to earn them, and developing that talent is the work EMERGE exists to do. We are not close to finished.

In the year ahead, EMERGE is undertaking its most comprehensive study of alumni to date, building a complete picture of where our graduates go, what they earn, and what they come to lead. It is how we will make the case for economic mobility not as a belief we hold, but as evidence we can show.

We will keep strengthening every stage of the journey, from a student's first year of high school to their first years in a career. What all of it is building toward is a generation of EMERGE scholars who graduate, build their lives, and become the people who lead this city, in its hospitals and boardrooms, its classrooms and city halls. The talent is already here. Our work, now and in the years ahead, is making sure it rises.

Source : [14] Texas 2036 & George W. Bush Institute. The State of Readiness: Are Texas Students Prepared for Life After High School? (March 2023)

OUR DONORS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thank you to every supporter who invested in EMERGE this year. From gifts of every size to record-breaking turnout at our annual luncheon and sporting clays tournament, your generosity helped more scholars reach the colleges, mentors, and opportunities that build stronger futures for themselves, their families, and our region.

$250,000+
Anonymous
The Brown Foundation, Inc.
The Cullen Foundation
Houston Endowment, Inc.
Huffington Foundation*
Sarofim Foundation

100,000+
Laura and John Arnold
ConocoPhillips
Jerry C. Dearing Family Foundation
ExxonMobil
Greater Texas Foundation*
Carrie and Thomas Hutchinson*
Jack Kent Cooke Foundation
NBA Foundation*
The Powell Foundation
The Samuels Family Foundation
Trellis Foundation

50,000+
Hillary Holmes Archer and Matthew Archer
Crum Foundation
The Beth and Ravenel Curry Foundation
Guill Family Foundation
H-E-B
Third Coast / Matthew Rowland

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5,000+
Allen Harrison Company
Armadillo Litigation Funding
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Cathryn and Doug Selman
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Vallette and Russell Windham

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GVSI, Inc.
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Zachary Harris
Giulia and Robert Hattan
The H&R Block Foundation
Jill and James Hughes
Invesco
Sis Johnson
Suzie Johnson
Johnson Development Services
Johnson Real Estate Partners LLC
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Tracy Kapiloff
Diane Kaplan
Katherine Kardesch
David Karohl
Linda and George Kelly
Lisa and Michael Kim
Kim Susan, LLC
Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Flip Koch
Janet Kohlhase and Steven Craig
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Stephanie and Jay Levy
LJA Engineering
Frances Lummis
Maggie Lummis
Kris and John Maclay
MaDDuk LLC
Carole Mariani
Martha McDugald
Laura C. McWilliams
Lisa and Charlie Meacham
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Paul Hastings
Deborah Perl
Phillips 66
Piper Sandler
Platform Partners
Post Oak Municipal Advisors
Premier Tank Truck Service, LLC
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Regency Centers
Kelly Rose
Bryn and Ryan Rupe
Kathleen and John Sanchez
Andrea Sankey
Julie Schneider
Sue and Bob Schwartz
Select Equity Group L.P.
Sue and Randy Sim
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*Gift made as part of a multi-year commitment

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	$4,551,711
Receivables	1,343,588
Prepaid expenses and other assets	80,872
Right of Use Asset	355,243
TOTAL ASSETS	**$6,331,414**

LIABILITIES

Accounts payables and accrued expenses	$132,651
Lease liability	387,748
Total Liabilities	**$520,399**

NET ASSETS	**$5,811,015**
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	**$6,331,414**

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

REVENUE

Contributions	$4,333,765
Special Events, net	847,136
Program Service Fees	2,317,748
TOTAL REVENUE	**$7,498,649**

EXPENSES

Program Services	$5,448,602
Management and general	992,004
Fundraising	963,216
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$7,403,822**
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	$94,827

EMERGE

3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 800 | Houston, TX 77027

EMERGESCHOLARS.ORG