

Letter from the Board Chair and CEO

When we look back at our last year of service, we are inspired by our students' and our organization's accomplishments – only possible thanks to our community's generous support – that have educated, elevated and empowered.

In the past year, we have served more people with more partners than ever (in fact, we have doubled in size over the last five years, growing to meet our community's demand for service). But we aren't the only ones elevating our levels of success.

The students we **educate** have:

- > Enrolled in college at rates higher than their low-income peers nationwide;
- > Paired individually with a mentor to help guide them through their postsecondary journeys, resulting in more than 1,000 mentor/mentee pairs;
- > Matriculated to more competitive colleges than ever before;
- > Increased their ACT scores;
- > Secured more than \$24 million in financial aid and scholarships; and
- > Graduated from college at rates four times higher than their low-income peers nationwide.

After postsecondary completion, we continue to **educate**, helping students reduce their loan debt. In the past year, we helped over 400 employees in two major area hospital systems restructure student loans, saving them a total of more than \$22 million.

This work has a tangible purpose. We need to **elevate** the postsecondary skills and access opportunities for all students with whom we work in order to connect them to available jobs, subsequently empowering the workforce in our region and state.

- > 64 percent of Ohio jobs will require a postsecondary credential by 2020.
- > Ohio is the seventh largest state, but ranks 39th in educational attainment.

With this in mind, we need to build on our successes from the past year. We will continue to:

- > **Educate** students early in their secondary education about why it is important to think about their postsecondary futures.
- > **Elevate** traditional high school students' postsecondary skills through a number of targeted efforts that will result in increased postsecondary enrollment and completion.
- > **Empower** adult learners to return to school earn their credentials and gain the skills that will make them attractive to the most in-demand employers in Northeast Ohio.

We are grateful for your partnership, and we are proud to have you join us in this work. Sincerely,



Alan S. Kopit
Chair, Board of Trustees



Lee A. Friedman Chief Executive Officer

Mission

College Now's mission is to increase college attainment in Greater Cleveland through college access advising; financial aid counseling; and scholarship and retention services.

Financial Stability

Operating Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending July 31, 2015

Foundations	\$3,742,589
Corporations	\$1,300,521
Individuals and Organizations	\$592,223
Government Grants	\$2,958,140
Fee for Service	\$842,136
Special Events	\$325,223
	\$9,760,832

Operating Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ending July 31, 2015

Advising and Counseling Services	\$4,816,690
Scholarship Awards	\$2,998,763
Scholarship and Retention Services	\$1,070,753
General Administration	\$363,211
Fundraising	\$464,500
	\$9,713,917

College Now at a Glance

 $\begin{array}{c} 25,000 \\ \text{Number of individuals served} \end{array}$ by College Now in the 2014-15 academic year

50 Million

Amount of financial aid the more than 10,000 current college students served by College Now have received

\$65 Million

Amount of scholarships awarded to Greater Cleveland students since inception

\$70,000

A \$500 investment in College Now advising services results in an average of \$70,000 in financial aid awarded per student over four years of college

Northeast Ohio high school students and adult learners who received College Now scholarships in 2014-15

\$1.880

Average College Now renewable scholarship award in 2014-15

\$3 Million

Amount of scholarship dollars awarded in 2014-15

First- to second-year retention rate among College Now scholarship recipients

4x

College Now scholarship recipients graduate at a rate four times higher than the national average for students from low-income backgrounds

1.100

Number of community members volunteering as mentors for College Now scholarship recipients

Venues in Northeast Ohio where College Now provides its services

\$22 Million

Total amount saved by more than 400 employees at two non-profit clients who engaged College Now for student loan restructuring services

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College Now Mentoring Program Expands to Over 1,000 Mentor/Mentee Pairs

Derhaps one of the most unique and well-known aspects of College Now's work with students is our innovative Mentoring Program. Now in its fifth year, the College Now Mentoring Program has grown to serve over 1,000 students in 2015-2016 and is ramping up to serve every College Now traditional-age scholarship recipient in 2016-2017.

College Now began the Mentoring Program in 2011 to support our scholarship recipients in successfully completing college, and the program is already seeing real results. While it is too early for graduation data yet (the first cohort of students will hit the six-year graduation mark in 2017), students in the Mentoring Program have a 97 **percent retention** rate from their first to second year of college. This is **significantly higher** than their peer group of students from high financial need backgrounds, which have a national retention rate of 53 percent. The Mentoring Program's goal is to graduate students at a rate of **80 percent** – the rate at which students from the **highest income** quartile in the country graduate from college.

The Mentoring Program recruits volunteers from across the community who represent more than 250 employers and range in age from 25 to 75. That variety allows mentors to help connect students to companies and employment opportunities in Northeast Ohio. Many mentees

have found internship and even full-time employment opportunities thanks to the Mentoring Program.

Mentors and mentees communicate most often via a robust online communication platform that College Now developed after recognizing that schedules and, often, lack of physical proximity can make regular meetings difficult. Mentors and mentees are required to meet in-person several times a year, and College Now hosts three events annually that bring pairs together and fulfill that requirement. One such event is the Mentor Appreciation Luncheon & Career Fair. Held each January to coincide with National Mentoring Month, the event honors College Now mentors and recognizes the Mentoring Program's Mentors of the Year, who are nominated by their mentees. This year's winners were Amanda Gnagy (KeyBank), Kendale King (Deloitte) and Eileen Mandara (retired). Following the luncheon, students had an opportunity to participate in a career fair featuring a variety of local businesses and corporations.

College Now alumni recognize the program's impact, as well. During the 2015-2016 academic year, 82 former scholarship recipients signed up to serve as mentors for current students.



2015 Mentors of the Year with College Now CEO Lee Friedman and Board of Trustees Chair Alan Kopit



College Now Hosts Second Bag Lady Luncheon with Overwhelming Success

n October 1, 2015, College Now welcomed nearly 900 guests to the Cleveland Convention Center for the second biannual Bag Lady Luncheon, for which KeyBank was the exclusive title sponsor. The Bag Lady Luncheon is a fundraiser benefitting College Now's Mentoring Program where attendees virtually bid on new and gently-used designer handbags, accessories and unique experiences.

Based on the success of the inaugural event in 2013, College Now felt confident the second Bag Lady Luncheon was going to be an even bigger draw. Prior to the event, the College Now Bag Lady team, led by Board Members and Event Co-Chairs Judi Embrescia and Sally Stewart, and a large Host Committee, planned bag collection parties and hosted events to build excitement among attendees. And, without sending a single invitation, the number of attendees doubled from 2013, allowing College Now to net \$360,000 to benefit our Mentoring Program!

While there were over 600 designer handbags and accessories for the women in attendance at the Bag Lady Luncheon to bid on, the Bag Lady team knew there needed to be options for the men in the room, as well. As a result, The Bag Lady Men's Committee was formed; they not only worked to secure items and experiences that would appeal to men, but also commissioned an

exclusive Bag Lady Tie. Designed by J3 Clothing **Company**, the tie was displayed and sold in its store and at the Luncheon itself.

This year, for the first time, the silent auction featured a table of Premium Items – brand new, designer handbags valued at \$1,000 or more, donated by designers including Tory Burch, Lanvin Chicago, Lauren Bush Lauren, Proenza Schouler and Ralph Lauren, Chicago. Ralph Lauren, Chicago also supplied the event's signature handbag, a vivid red Ricky Bag that paid homage to the event's title sponsor, KeyBank. Attendees purchased raffle tickets to win this exclusive item.

Board Member and WKYC-Channel 3 anchor Russ Mitchell emceed the luncheon, which featured remarks from the Bag Lady Co-Chairs, College Now CEO Lee Friedman and scholarship recipient Kendale King, who shared how transformative working with College Now has been for him. Keynote speaker, **KeyCorp's Chairman** and CEO Beth Mooney, spoke about her journey through the banking world and shared her thoughts on leadership and legacy. The Luncheon program concluded with Mr. Mitchell and Mr. King drawing the name of the Ricky Bag winner.

We're already gearing up for the next Bag Lady Luncheon, which will be held in 2017 in connection with College Now's 50th anniversary. We look forward to seeing you there!

Thank you to the 2015 Bag Lady Luncheon Corporate Sponsors:

KeyBank ■ Medical Mutual ■ Cohen & Company ■ Aleris ■ Bernie Moreno Companies ■ California Closets ■ Fairport Asset Management ■ Forest City ■ Glenmede ■ Hirtle Callaghan ■ Howard Hanna ■ Huntington ■ Lubrizol ■ Northeast Ohio Media Group ■ Northern Trust ■ United Airlines

College Now Saves Student Loan Holders More Than \$22 Million through Loan Counseling Programs

or individuals who have defaulted on their student loans or who have an immense amount of debt – more than they can manage – the obstacles are daunting. Meeting monthly expenses, buying a home, saving for retirement, improving consumer credit scores and, for those with debt but without a degree, returning to achieve a bachelor's degree all seem impossible. College Now has been working with **University Hospitals** and **The MetroHealth System** to help their employees restructure their student loans and enroll in loan

repayment programs that make the most financial sense for their individual situation. College Now also provides academic counseling for these employees, as well as their children, advising them on career pathways and strategies for earning postsecondary credentials or degrees. Based on College Now's success with these programs, our services will expand to work with the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Cuyahoga County, among others, in the coming year.

354

Number of University Hospital employees who received College Now loan and academic counseling between August, 2013 and August, 2015

213

University Hospitals employees eligible for loan forgiveness

129

University Hospitals employees who lowered their monthly repayment amount

20

University Hospitals employees no longer in "default" status on their student loans

\$63,876

Average University Hopsitals employee savings, with savings ranging from \$10,000 - \$300,000

\$16.8 Million

Estimated total College Now has saved University Hospitals employees

67

MetroHealth System employees who have received College Now loan and academic counseling since Fall, 2015

\$5.4 Million

Employee savings so far at The MetroHealth System

\$13

New monthly loan payment secured by one MetroHealth employee who had previously been paying \$2,000 per month



Empowering Adult Learners to Impact Their Community

The development of an educated and skilled workforce is critical to Northeast Ohio's economic revitalization. There are thousands of adults in our community who need help to achieve a credential or degree that will qualify them for careers that pay livable wages. In November 2015, the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services reported that 255,000 Ohio adults of working age are unemployed, and 59,000 adults in Cleveland alone have some college but no degree.

College Now has dramatically expanded our adult learner services and is mobilizing the adult learner population in Northeast Ohio, empowering them to earn postsecondary credentials and degrees that will improve their lives and the livelihood of their communities.

College Now's new "You First" initiative allows us to deliver neighborhood-based college access, financial aid and loan counseling services to familyfacing service organizations, their clients and, for some, their employees. The Bruening, Saint Luke's, the Henry and Eugenia Green Family and Westfield Insurance Foundations have invested generously in this new initiative.

You First aims to increase access to postsecondary education and degree completion for parents and, eventually, their children. You First empowers parents by providing them with knowledge and resources that will enable them to enroll in college and secure a stable financial future for their families. In addition, through You First, College Now helps families who are saddled with student loan debt achieve financial relief through loan rehabilitation, consolidation, restructuring and forgiveness programs.

College Now is also working to expose adults to the abundance of manufacturing career options in our region. Through a three-year challenge grant from The Fred A. Lennon Charitable Trust, College Now is helping to close Northeast Ohio's manufacturing skills gap by connecting individuals to postsecondary educational pathways and scholarships necessary for achieving career-building manufacturing opportunities.

Currently, Northeast Ohio does not have the trained workforce that is needed to fill open manufacturing positions, let alone the **49,000 openings** that Team NEO, the region's economic development group, predicts will be available in Northeast Ohio over the next decade. The financial support from the Lennon Charitable Trust has allowed College Now to develop an industry-specific program that enables deeper advising with adult students interested in the manufacturing industry, which supports diverse careers in 21 manufacturing sectors represented in the Northeast Ohio region, ranging from automotive manufacturing to food manufacturers and more. By 2025, the manufacturing industry is expected to represent **22 percent** of jobs in Northeast Ohio's economy.

We are excited to work with our partners as we close the skills gap and empower adults to seize new career opportunities throughout Northeast Ohio.

(If you know an adult who would benefit from any of these services, please have that individual call 216.241.5587 or visit our Resource Center in Tower City.)





Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation Grants College Now \$600,000 to Improve Students' Chances of Postsecondary Success

ollege Now strives to develop cutting-edge curricula to help students succeed and develop the skills that will lead to their collegiate success. Our work has been nationally recognized, and in April 2015, College Now was one of nine organizations across the country that received funding from the **Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation** to implement a new two-year program, called RISE (Raising Individual Student Expectations).

The goal of RISE is to reduce postsecondary remediation rates in math and English, using a differentiated ACT-focused curriculum, individualized tutoring and supplementary activities. All these initiatives will be coupled with an intrusive advising approach, as the \$600,000 grant supports several dedicated College Now advisors who will be working with one cohort of students during their junior and senior years across the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD).

The number of students in the CMSD placing into remedial classes has dropped from **76 percent** in 2013 to 72 percent in 2014. While the trend is going in the right direction, students still need more intensive services. RISE seeks to continue that forward momentum by improving students' readiness for college-level work. Reducing math and English remediation rates are important factors in assessing a students' academic readiness. According to the Community College Resource Center, the longer a student is in remedial coursework, the less likely he or she is to complete a degree.

Currently, there are 101 students in the RISE program who are benefitting from ACT English and math test prep sessions. 62 of these students took the December 2015 ACT test. Of these 62, 41 students increased their English score, 33 increased their math score, and **36 students** increased their composite test score!

College Now Receives Grants to Expand impACT the 216 Programming

n August, College Now received two new 21st Century Community Learning Center grants totaling \$1.2 million that allowed us to expand our impACT the 216 after school program from four locations to six. With these two new grants, we are able to deliver the program in partnership with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Esperanza, Inc. to serve students primarily from Lincoln-West High School, and with the **Warrensville Heights City School District** to serve students primarily from Warrensville **Heights High School.**

impACT the 216 is designed to increase students' reading and math proficiency and boost their ACT scores. Students work with College Now advisors one-on-one and in group sessions on activities that will polish their reading and math skills, as well as familiarize them with the ACT in order to increase their test scores. A higher score helps students receive more scholarship dollars and financial aid when applying to college. The eight-week program also helps students form a detailed college plan that they present to their families at the end

of the session. The increased awareness among students' families supports their postsecondary aspirations. Program participants also take part in college visits and are eligible for a stipend and a potential internship upon successful program completion.

The U.S. Department of Education funds these programs nationwide through state departments of education. The Ohio Department of Education subgrants 21st Century funding to Ohio schools and community-based organizations through an annual renewal and competitive application process.

Receiving the two new 21st Century grants to expand the impACT the 216 program is a testament to College Now's work. The Ohio Department of Education received 241 applications for new funding in 2015, and only 75 were awarded. We are grateful that our impACT the 216 after school program's strength and its value in building students' educational pathways was acknowledged through receipt of not one, but two, of these highly competitive grants.



STEP UP Students Graduate From High School After 12 Years of Intensive Advising

gainst a backdrop of college posters, a half-dozen East Cleveland parents pulled 35 tiny strips of paper out of paper bags yesterday.

Each strip had the name of one first-grader whose future will be shaped by the Step Up scholarship program." - The Plain Dealer, Oct. 1, 2003

STEP UP (Steering Talented and Engaged Pupils towards Undergraduate Programs) began with the generosity of an anonymous couple, who donated an undisclosed amount of funds to The Cleveland Foundation with the purpose of supporting to a cohort of students in in the East Cleveland school district from first through twelfth grades. This support would ensure that these students received the preparation necessary to pursue their postsecondary educational objectives. STEP UP funds were administered through The Cleveland Foundation, with the anonymous donors monitoring students' progress and expanding the program over time to allow participating students the flexibility to decide where they wanted to attend high school.

Aside from simply providing monetary support, STEP UP gave these students early access to the college-going process and impressed upon them at a young age that postsecondary studies were

possible. They received support from a dedicated advisor, Amiya Hutson, who served from the program's inception as a mentor and counselor to these students and their families throughout their educational journeys.

In the spring of 2015, the **17 remaining STEP UP students** graduated from high school ready to embark on their postsecondary journeys, attending schools such as Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland State University, The Ohio State University, University of Toledo, Hampton University, Bates College, Ohio University, Wright State University, University of Cincinnati, Alabama A&M University, University of Akron and Cuyahoga Community College. The graduating seniors were celebrated in June at a gala at the 78th Street Studios with their families. At the end of the night, students bid farewell to their long-time advisor and friend, Ms. Hutson, as she sent them on their way to put their skills into action at the colleges of their choice.

With STEP UP scholarships filling the gap between their financial aid award packages and the total cost of attendance at their respective postsecondary institutions, and College Now mentors paired with each STEP UP student, College Now looks forward to the successes these students will achieve as they pursue their college degrees!





John Adams High School Targets Students Early to Encourage Postsecondary Studies

C tudents are at the highest risk of dropping **J**out of school between the eighth and tenth grades, making early intrusive advising work vital to achieving high school graduation and successful completion of postsecondary education.

At John Adams High School in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), a Community Wraparound strategy led by College Now is working to support all students with college and career access planning, with intense focus being placed on students in grades eight through ten. The College Now team has a goal of helping **80 percent** of ninth graders complete requirements for promotion to the tenth grade in order to keep them on the path to graduation. College Now advisors closely monitor student progress, engage students in credit recovery and help the ninth graders feel welcome and supported at John Adams. Attendance is also heavily addressed, as students with low attendance rates have significantly lower chances of achieving on-time high school graduation. As a result of this focused effort, **79 percent** of ninth graders moved up to the tenth grade after the spring of 2015.

To further help students in this important grade

range, a new strategy was developed to help the students feel more comfortable with the transition to high school. Rising freshmen took part in a summer bridge program before the start of the 2015-2016 school year. The program, dubbed "Rebel Up" after John Adams' mascot, sought to help students leaving middle school experience a fluid transition to high school. The four-week Rebel Up experience allowed students to make new friends, learn how to transition from class to class and prepared students for what high school life would be like.

Of the 49 students who enrolled in the Rebel Up Summer Bridge, 22 are continuing their high school education at John Adams, and the others enrolled elsewhere within the CMSD. First quarter data for the 22 students still at John Adams shows a 90 percent attendance rate, with 77 percent of these students on track for promotion to tenth grade.

While progress is being made, the true impact of these early awareness and transitional programs will be felt in coming years. The first cohort of ninth grade students receiving early advising services will graduate in 2018, at which point the effectiveness of these programs can fully be understood.

College Now Donors

lacktriangler his list reflects cash payments and multi-year pledges from January 1 - December 31, 2015. We have made every effort to ensure the completeness and accuracy of this report. If an error or omission has occurred, please accept our sincere apologies.

\$1,000,000 and above The Cleveland Foundation

\$500.000 - \$999.999

AmeriCorps Ohio Cuyahoga County **Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation** The John Huntington Fund for Education

\$250,000 - \$499,999

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