



BREAKING BARRIERS, EMPOWERING STUDENTS

DREAM PROJECT

2019 - 2022 STRATEGIC PLAN



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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Challenges Facing Dreamers

Young people with uncertain immigration status face immense obstacles in pursuing the ambitions that fire most young minds, including the central dream of higher education. These young people, the Dreamers, are the focus of the Dream Project's mission. They face legal ambiguities and limitations that can be overwhelming; they may not know how to navigate the higher educational system; and they often assume that there is no legal avenue to college and that higher education falls well outside their financial means.



Dreamers face unique challenges in navigating their way through the higher education labyrinth. The majority are the first in their families to consider college. So, there are few precedents on which they can rely, including social networks, alumni networks, parental counseling and understanding and access to information. Many must balance jobs with schoolwork. Many others have entered the high schools from which they will graduate midstream, and so must struggle with linguistic, cultural and social barriers, while others have had the continuity of their educations disrupted.

A critical barrier is the relative lack of resources and adequate support concerning the approach to higher education. The American system of higher education varies significantly from the systems abroad, in the application procedures and in the financing methods. Many school professionals, including teachers, counselors and other personnel, are not always aware of their state's policies concerning admission, tuition and financial aid for undocumented students and are ill-prepared to offer cogent advice or point students to the proper resources. Adding to this is the fear and uncertainty that undocumented students face, and the resulting low profile that they tend to maintain. Because of this, professionals who do have knowledge and commitment to help these students often do not know who they are. The mentoring of these students by well-informed educators, then, becomes a critical component of advancing them to their dreams.

The Dream Project's History

The Dream Project started in 2010 when a small group of parents, students, educators and community members met at the home of Dream Project founder Dr. Emma Violand-Sanchez to discuss their concerns about college costs for undocumented immigrant students in Virginia. "Well, I can cook," one parent said, and the first fundraiser for the Dream Project was organized, raising money to support scholarships for four outstanding undocumented students.

The Dream Project's Mentoring Program began with these four students meeting in a Georgetown University dorm room with a volunteer mentor who helped them complete college and scholarship applications. This was, and continues to be, one of the only programs offering scholarship and mentoring assistance available to undocumented students in Virginia.

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By 2018 the Dream Project was providing 95 high achieving immigrant students with annual scholarships in the amount of \$1,500, renewable for five years. The Dream Project's Mentoring Program also has flourished, serving as many as 40 students each year, with the help of up to 25 volunteer mentors. In 2018, the organization also hired its first full-time Executive Director, and has recently been designated as one of the best nonprofits in the greater Washington DC metropolitan area by the Catalogue for Philanthropy. The Dream Project is at a key inflection point of growth and stabilization.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning process was funded by a capacity-building grant from a Dream Project donor, and was facilitated by Dr. Kevin Coray and Kathleen Loehr, strategic planning and development consultants whose partnerships with non-profit, university and business leaders as trusted advisors is grounded in thirty-five years of experience. Through individual and facilitated group work, Kevin and Kathleen help institutions navigate change and create effective and sustained impact through the change management model of Appreciative Inquiry.

The Dream Project's Board of Directors authorized the creation of the Strategic Planning Task Force, which consisted of six board members and the Executive Director. The goals of the Task Force were to plan and design the strategic planning retreat and analyze data, which would allow the Board to make informed decisions. Representatives from all of the Dream Project's constituent groups were engaged, along with the Board of Directors, in the development of this strategic plan, including parents, mentors, mentees, donors, scholarship recipients (our Dream Scholars) and alumni. The Board of Directors and staff will review progress quarterly and update the annual operation plan as needed.

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STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

Our commitment for the next three years is to make a more meaningful and focused offer to support and empower our Dream Scholars to sustain their educational pursuit through graduation. To accomplish this, we have identified the following 5 key goals and the metrics and evaluation process to track our achievement of these goals.

I. Dream Project Programs: Award increased scholarships to more students, so that we can sustain four years of scholarships to a cohort of 100 Dream Scholars. Focus our mentoring program to identify immigrant students who need the support we provide in order to apply for college and to be funded by Dream Scholarships. Identify and focus our partners to support students in areas where our partners can offer our Scholars services they need to succeed.

II. Fundraising: Increase fundraising to meet the promise of up to \$10,000 over four years to each of our 100 Dream Scholars as well as the funding needed to sustain operations.

III. Communications: Improve communication to reach the hard to identify immigrant students and their families to make them aware of significant offer and support.

IV. Governance: Focus our Board and other volunteer structures, processes, training, and evaluation to better meet our goals.

V. Operations, Staffing & Infrastructure: Increase our staffing and infrastructure to have a full time focus on operations, fundraising and program delivery.

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DREAM PROJECT MISSION, VISION, & VALUES

MISSION

The Dream Project empowers students whose immigration status creates barriers to education by working with them to access and succeed in college through scholarships; mentoring; and scholar, alumni and family support.

VISION

Our vision is a supportive and inclusive community where Dreamers and their families are empowered through education to pursue their dreams and achieve their full potential.

VALUES

EQUITY: The Dream Project strives to ensure that all students have fair and equal opportunities to achieve their academic goals, regardless of their immigration status.

EXCELLENCE: The Dream Project believes that a rigorous and enriching education builds students' capacity to overcome the formidable challenges they face as a result of their immigration status and fosters their intellectual, professional and personal growth.

COLLABORATION: The Dream Project cultivates a community of Dream Scholars, alumni, families, mentors, volunteers, donors, board members, educational institutions, partnering organizations, community leaders and elected officials, and believes that through intentional collaboration and solidarity we can more effectively serve and support our students.

HOLISTIC SUPPORT: The Dream Project believes that providing financial, social, and emotional support is foundational to ensure that students thrive in a holistic way.



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STRATEGIC PLAN & GOALS

Goal I. Dream Project Programs

The Dream Project will continue and enhance support for its students through scholarships, mentoring, and the annual Dream Summit, as well as through collaborative partnerships by the end of FY 2021/2022. Dream Project mentees, Dream Scholars and alumni will be active participants in advancing the organization's mission, vision and values.

Sub Goal A. Scholarships

Provide larger scholarships to more students with improved application, selection and administrative processes.

Objectives -

- 1. Financial:** Increase the number of Dream Scholars to 100, and increase the amount of the Dream Project Scholarship award to \$2,500 by 2022.
- 2. Process Optimization:** Improve the processes of attracting applicants, processing applications (through updated software), selecting Dream Scholars, awarding scholarships, contracting with Dream Scholars and disbursing scholarship funds to educational institutions.

Sub Goal B. Dream Scholar Support

Focus, refine and grow the annual Dream Summit; improve awareness of the Herman Loan Fund; build community by increasing scholar engagement in Dream Project programming and activities; and expand services to Dream Scholars, alumni and families through additional and strengthened community partnerships.

Objectives -

- 1. Dream Summit:** Increase the breadth and quality of the Dream Summit program and increase Dream Summit attendance by working closely with partner organizations. Intentionally evaluate and adapt the program based on participant feedback.
- 2. Emergency Financial Support:** Improve awareness of the Herman Loan Fund to support Dream Scholars. The Herman Loan Fund is a zero-interest loan available to Dream Scholars for emergency funding of up to \$2,000.
- 3. Student Engagement:** Build a strong, committed cadre of Dream Scholars and alumni engaged in and supporting our mission, values and activities. The Dream Project network will be fortified by a restructuring of the scholarship application process and required participation in the annual Scholar Survey and the Dream Summit. Also, develop and implement a system of internal communications and accountability within the network.
- 4. Partnerships:** Maintain current and forge new well-established, meaningful partnerships with colleges and universities, Northern Virginia school districts, other non-profit organizations and service providers that can provide supplemental services to Dream Scholars, alumni and parents in alignment with our holistic support value.

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Sub Goal C. Mentoring

Expand the Dream Project's comprehensive Mentoring Program to include high school juniors, who will participate in a modified curriculum. The Mentoring Program will create a robust process for identifying and recruiting immigrant students who are college ready. The Dream Project will use technology to develop a virtual mentoring capability to supplement its existing on-site program.

Objectives -

- 1. Mentee Scholarships:** Ensure that mentees are well represented among new scholarship recipients.
- 2. Recruitment:** Create a formalized communications structure and plan to help systematically identify, recruit and form ongoing relationships with high school juniors and seniors throughout the school year.
- 3. Formalized Partnerships:** Maintain Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with current partners and establish new ones with other educational partners.
- 4. Database:** Integrate mentors, mentees, recruiting contacts and partner organizations into the existing Dream Project database.
- 5. Explore and employ virtual:** Pilot and then develop virtual/online capabilities for both group presentations and 1-on-1 mentoring sessions for mentees unable to attend all sessions in-person. Evaluate and update the mentoring curriculum and technological platform to meet the evolving needs of the mentees and mentors.



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Goal II. Fundraising

The Dream Project will increase its annual fundraising capability so that in FY 2021/2022, we will raise \$625,000 from a sustainable pool of donors including individuals, foundations, corporations, government and faith communities. We also will have a strong structure in place to support fundraising operations. This goal will allow us to provide more substantial scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 per scholar as well as sustainable funding for all programs and operations. This goal will be accomplished by diversifying funding streams such that by FY 2021/2022, approximately 55% of our funds will come from individual donations, 30% from foundation grants and 15% from corporate, government and faith organization gifts.

Objectives-

- 1. Diversification:** Diversify and increase total fundraising to \$625,000 by end of FY 2021/2022. This will result from increasing: total individual donations; the number of major donors (giving \$10,000 or more); the number of Named Scholarship donors (who support Named Scholarship recipients for up to five years); the number and dollar amount of foundation grants; and corporate, government and faith organization contributions.
- 2. Capacity Building:** Hire a full-time development staff member by June 2020 in order to grow all categories of giving.
- 3. Database:** Fully implement the Salesforce database system to support our development efforts.



Goal III. Communications

The Dream Project will improve its ability to spread awareness about the struggles our Dream Scholars and families face and to support partner organizations who advocate for their rights by the end of FY 2021/2022. This will be accomplished through traditional and social media streams, participation in community coalitions/groups, and educational events. Through these activities, the Dream Project will build a recognizable brand which is well-respected in the community.

Objectives-

- 1. Collaborate:** Participate in events, functions and coalitions that enable Dream Project representatives to educate others about the challenges faced by our students and families, while identifying additional potential partners.
- 2. Educate:** Raise awareness of our students' challenges and their proven ability to overcome them by sharing student experiences and successes at events, on our website and in regular dialogue with community members and leaders.
- 3. Communicate:** Revamp and follow the Strategic Communications Plan and create an annual communications calendar, while continuing to develop and update promotional materials.

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Goal IV. Governance

The Dream Project will increase operational excellence with guidance and support from a diverse and well-rounded Board of Directors, and with the benefit of streamlined organizational procedures and guidelines by the end of FY 2021/2022. In addition, the Advisory Board will continue to provide counsel in their areas of expertise as needed and to make connections for the Dream Project with potential donors and partners.

Objectives-

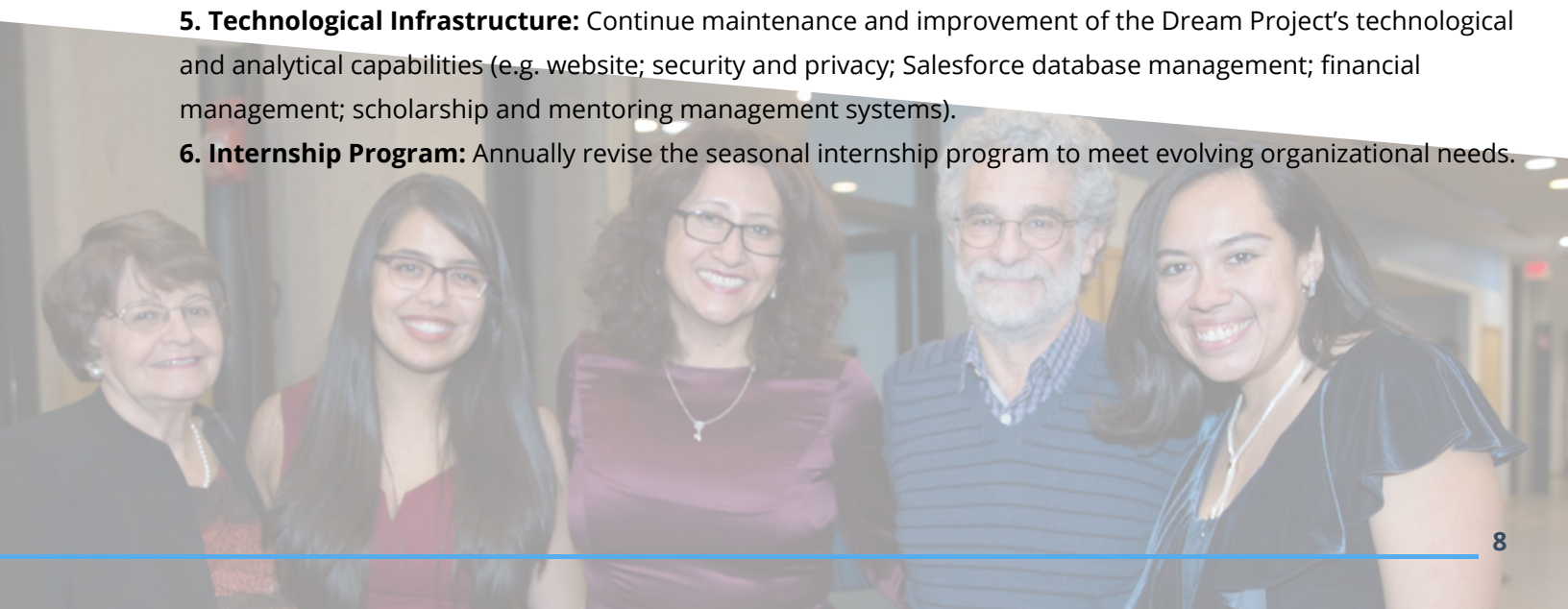
- 1. Structure:** Redesign Committee structure to reduce redundancy and enhance collaboration among committees.
- 2. Onboarding:** Create Board member orientation and development materials and then annually provide orientation for all new board members.
- 3. Strategic Nominations:** Intentionally fill vacancies on the Board of Directors with new members in order to provide for specific fiduciary and fundraising responsibilities, to support the organization functionally and to include the voice of Dreamers.
- 4. Train and Evaluate:** Provide annual fundraising training for all Board members. Also, create a self-evaluation tool and annually evaluate the effectiveness of the Board.

Goal V. Operations, Staffing, & Infrastructure

The Dream Project will possess the staff capacity required to efficiently and effectively execute the growing development, communications and administrative functions necessary to deliver outstanding programs and services by the end of FY 2021/2022. The organization will also occupy a new operations location providing improved facilities and resources necessary to support our staff and programs.

Objectives-

- 1. New Staff Members:** Hire a full-time development and a full-time program staff member.
- 2. High Performance:** Optimize workflow among staff, Board members and volunteers.
- 3. Professional Development:** Maintain a work culture where staff members continue to develop their individual talents and abilities to better serve the organization.
- 4. Work the Network:** Consult with partners and constituents about possible solutions for in-kind office space.
- 5. Technological Infrastructure:** Continue maintenance and improvement of the Dream Project's technological and analytical capabilities (e.g. website; security and privacy; Salesforce database management; financial management; scholarship and mentoring management systems).
- 6. Internship Program:** Annually revise the seasonal internship program to meet evolving organizational needs.

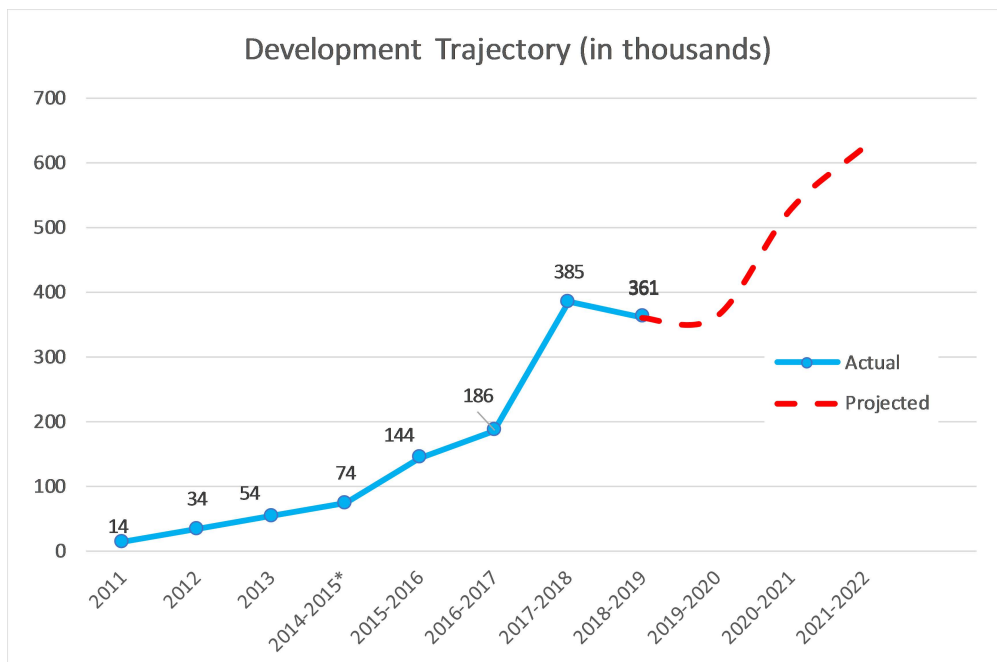


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PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

The Dream Project will need to increase its resources in order to support the goals of its three-year Strategic Plan. This includes all expenses related to recurring annual costs, such as salaries for outstanding staff to support and advance the organization’s strategic goals; operational costs; training; and evaluation. The Dream Project will strengthen its current staff with the addition of two permanent full-time positions over the next three years in order to fulfill the goals outlined in the plan. We anticipate that total operating revenue will increase from \$360,000 in FY 2018/2019 to \$625,000 in FY 2021/2022. The resources needed for these investments will be raised through a targeted fundraising plan that will engage individuals; foundations; corporations; government and faith communities.

DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY



FOR THE SAKE OF WHAT?

It is our belief that supporting Dream Scholars to achieve their educational goals is a major contribution to the well-being of our community, if not our nation. Our commitment to attaining and sustaining our fundraising goal is all about making a significant increase in our financial support of our Dream Scholars, and of the support network we have focused on immigrant students as they navigate the college experience from application through graduation as well as enhancing our operating capacity.

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STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM & CONTACT INFORMATION

Dream Project Staff:

Lizzette Arias

Executive Director

Patricia Sanguinetti

Mentoring Coordinator

Cecilia Morales

Bookkeeper & Administrative Associate

Carlos Puerta

Program Assistant

Board of Directors:

Emma Violand Sanchez, Ed.D. (Chair)

Jane Powell (Vice Chair)

Julie Zalkind, Ph.D. (Treasurer)

Mark Habeeb, Ph.D. (Secretary)

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Special thanks to Dream Project parents, mentors, mentees, donors, scholars and alumni who participated in the strategic planning process and provided valuable insight regarding the evolving needs of the Dream Project community.


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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



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