Empowering students to and through college
Overview

Bright Prospect empowers low-income students to gain admission, succeed and graduate from four-year colleges and universities. **How do we do it?** We provide students with comprehensive college counseling and support from ninth grade through college graduation. While academics are important, Bright Prospect teaches problem-solving, social and emotional skills that make the difference for low-income students to get “to and through” college. Bright Prospect works because it prepares students for college—and for life.

Bright Prospect graduates have commended our program for years and now hard evidence supports our model. With funding from The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, we engaged the Institute at Indian Hill of Claremont Graduate University to evaluate the Bright Prospect program and determine the attributes most important to student success.

**The findings?** Bright Prospect has one of the highest college access, persistence and graduation rates of any college access program in the country. Our unique Crews™ Program establishes trust and cultivates intimate peer-to-peer and near-to-peer relationships that provide support and mutual commitment to college graduation. Moreover, the Bright Prospect model costs substantially less than most college access programs.

We want to share our success and we are assisting other organizations to improve graduation rates and help low-income students throughout California get to and through college.
Low-income students face two major hurdles to a college degree: gaining access to college and persisting to graduation.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation identified many non-academic reasons why low-income students enroll in college at a lower rate than their peers. These include a lack of skills to succeed in college and limited guidance on choosing a school, applying for admission and filling out financial aid forms. Bright Prospect closes the access gap.

But, experts have shown that “getting to college” often doesn’t equate to “getting through college.” Nationally, only one in nine low-income college students graduates with a Bachelor’s degree within six years.* In contrast, nine out of ten low-income Bright Prospect students graduate from college.

Although most college access programs cost $2,000 to $5,000 per student per year, the Bright Prospect model provides access and retention—for just $1,000 per student per year.

How it Works

Bright Prospect equips low-income students with the non-academic skills they need to overcome obstacles on their way to college graduation—skills that low-income students routinely do not develop without this support.

While our program includes counseling on how to apply, complete financial aid forms and choose the right college, we also develop our students' social and emotional skills, including how to ask for help, access resources, build support networks and maintain confidence. Students consistently report they have “transformed as human beings as a result of their participation.”

Bright Prospect is open to any student at the high schools we serve. Most begin after 9th grade in our one-week Summer Academy where they are introduced to the pathway to college and begin to develop a deep commitment to graduating college.

Students are then organized into peer support groups called crews. The Crews™ Program exposes students to a series of structured learning and social events that contribute to their academic, social, emotional and cultural development.

“I always assumed I would join the family gardening business after high school. But in 11th grade, Bright Prospect students came to my English class and introduced me to the program. I was later accepted to Yale University and several others. My parents didn’t understand why I would leave home to go to college, but after speaking with the parents of a Bright Prospect student already at Yale, they finally accepted my decision. But they still didn’t entirely understand … until I sent home Yale hats for my parents to wear at work, and when they saw how impressed their wealthy clients were, my parents finally began to understand the value of a Yale education. I am now a graduate, with a degree in biology and I plan to attend medical school.”

Adriana Briones, Bright Prospect/Yale University Class of 2011
According to the evaluation, the Bright Prospect model is one of the most promising:

1. **High matriculation rate:** 100% of Bright Prospect students go to college; 88% of Bright Prospect students from Pomona Unified School District (PUSD) graduate from college.* Only 21% of students in the control group graduated from college.

2. **Strong persistence rate:** Bright Prospect college students persist at a rate of 92%.

3. **Institutional quality:** 80% of Bright Prospect students attend a 4-year institution, compared to 49% in the control group.

And beyond the evaluation:

4. **Cost effectiveness:** Bright Prospect spends just $1,000 per student per year; many other college access programs spend two to four times more and achieve substantially lower college graduation rates.

5. **Alumni job success:** Alumni are working in education, medicine, genetics, chemistry, graphic arts, finance, law, fashion, commercial real estate, social work, engineering (aerospace, civil, computer), human resources, nursing and automotive design.

*The Evaluation compared Bright Prospect students from Pomona Unified School District to a control group from the same schools. Graduation rates were 88% for Bright Prospect and 21% for control students. The overall Bright Prospect six-year graduation rate, including students from all school districts served by Bright Prospect, is 91%.

The evaluation by The Institute at Indian Hill of Claremont Graduate University (CGU) utilized qualitative and quantitative methods, including a matched control group selected from 14,000 PUSD graduates, to address four research areas:

1) The effect of Bright Prospect program participation on students’ high school performance, college attendance, college persistence and college graduation.
2) The aspects of Bright Prospect programming that are most closely associated with students’ academic achievement and personal growth.
3) Students’ perceptions of the effect of Bright Prospect participation on their efficacy on social, psychological and academic program indicators.
4) Changes in the overall rates of honors/AP course enrollment, high school performance, college attendance and college persistence among Pomona Unified School District students since the inception of Bright Prospect.

An executive summary of the evaluation final report is available free of charge. Call Stephanie Campbell, Executive Director, at (909) 623-9007 or email her at stephanie@brightprospect.org.

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“College was never discussed in my family ... I couldn’t have gotten where I am today without Bright Prospect. They opened up a whole new world for me.”

> Criselda Haro, Bright Prospect/Swarthmore College Class of 2007, UC Berkeley School of Law Class of 2014

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**What types of colleges do Bright Prospect students attend compared to students in the control group?**

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<th>Top 50 National Universities or Top 50 Liberal Arts Colleges*</th>
<th>* Per US News &amp; World Report</th>
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*Bright Prospect Students | Control Group
The core of Bright Prospect is the Crews™ Program, our innovative peer-to-peer model that facilitates students’ success. In the simplest form, “crews” are groups of students who trust and support each other. The Crews™ structure empowers students to take initiative, solve problems, access resources and develop skills on the path to and through college.

High School Crews™ Program
At each high school, crews of three to six students encourage each other to overcome life obstacles to succeed academically and socially. Each crew has a trained leader who organizes crew activities and shares with staff any issues that jeopardize a crew member’s health or academic success.

College Crews™ Program
No Bright Prospect student goes to college alone. At each college or at nearby colleges, our students are organized into crews. College crews meet regularly to share experiences, knowledge and resources. Trained crew leaders communicate regularly with staff and alert us if any student needs help with an academic, financial, family or social adjustment challenge. We then work hand-in-hand with campus resources to resolve each challenge.

High school students report that the Bright Prospect Crews™ structure provides strong support.

- Creates a safe space where “it’s cool to be smart” 95%
- Encourages everyone academically 94%
- Fosters a can-do, motivated attitude 93%
- Inspires everyone to do their best 90%
On January 8, 2013, three members of a Bright Prospect crew from Garey High School in Pomona, California shared their crew experience. All high school seniors, they met three years earlier through the Bright Prospect Summer Academy. This is their discussion:

Claudia > My crew supported me when we were filling out applications for college and trying to figure them out. Everyone was there to help me. If I didn't understand something, they were all there to help explain it to me.

Lynn > I'm a person who gets stressed out a lot from schoolwork—or even personally. My crew members are so sweet. They always come up to me and try to hug me, even though I don't like hugging. Especially Denise, she'll always come up to me and hug me. All of them just cheer me up. And that's how I know I have support.

Denise > And they're always there to push me and tell me, “OK, we have to do this.” They're there for support always.

Lynn > As the top 10 group at our school, we get made fun of a lot. We get picked on in class, especially in Calculus ... we're always the center of attention. But here, in our crew, being smart is the thing. We want all of us to go to college. And we want everyone to get 4.0 GPAs. So yeah, in this crew we're really proud to be smart.

Denise > Even when there's work to do, my crew always manages to make it fun and easy and clear. They're always there if you need anything at all. They're really like a second family. You can go to them for anything. They're awesome.

Lynn > Bright Prospect emphasizes that they will follow us all throughout college. I'm in another program as well—a college readiness program—but their main goal is to get me into college. After I get into college, they're just going to work with the next group. They won't follow me. But I know that's when I'll need the most support. Entering college will be a new part of my life. Bright Prospect guarantees that they'll be there with us to guide us through that process. I really appreciate that.
On January 11, 2013, two members of a Bright Prospect college crew who are freshmen at University of California, Santa Cruz shared their experience. They were part of the same high school crew before college. This is their discussion:

**Alberto >** After the Summer Academy, I realized that this is really a great program. Not just because of the connections and finding great schools, but at the core of it all, it sends us to a campus where we feel we fit. But most importantly ... they really put in the effort to make sure that everyone knows someone when they go start college.

**Adam >** And Bright Prospect instilled in me that you go to college to find something that you’re good at and you make that your own.

**Alberto >** The first few weeks our crew would hang out, simply because we thought it was a good idea to get to know the campus and explore the resources available to us as a group instead of by ourselves ... We confide in each other. We understand where we’re coming from; we have the most similar backgrounds, similar home towns.

**Alberto >** [The crew] is like our own little niche, our own little family on campus and we can always rely on them for support. That’s really what the crew program is ... just knowing that there’s someone looking out for us while we look out for them.

**Adam >** We have a Facebook page that we use to keep in contact with each other. And when this quarter began, the older students that were taking the GE classes, would say, “We have this book; we'll sell it to you or let you borrow it.” So I think that’s ... camaraderie.

**Alberto >** With the older UC Santa Cruz Bright Prospect students ... we're able to talk to them and ask them: “What do you recommend we do this quarter? Any tips? Any advice?” So in that sense, the older students are able to get us more connected to the resources.

**Alberto >** When the Bright Prospect high school seniors came to visit us in their fall semester, it was comforting knowing we were able to answer their questions, knowing we could show them college life. It's comforting because it's knowing that someone did this for us and now we're giving it back.

Listen to an NPR interview with our UC Santa Cruz crew at: [http://blogs.kusp.org/education/2012/11/15/the-right-support-makes-all-the-difference/]
While crews provide an important peer-to-peer resource, our staff provides higher-level support to all students. According to the evaluation, relationships between Bright Prospect students and staff are one of the most important factors in the success of our students.

99% of Bright Prospect high school students believe our staff members expect every student will graduate from college. Our high expectations for our students raise their own expectations, which in turn build their confidence, resilience and curiosity—attributes essential to their college success.

"We empower Bright Prospect students to develop the character qualities and virtues they need to be successful in school, in their careers and in their communities."
> Timothy Sandoval, Program Director, Bright Prospect

"Bright Prospect staff members showed me that asking for help is not a sign of weakness."
> Phuong Nguyen, Bright Prospect/Haverford College Class of 2013

"Bright Prospect helped me secure a $200,000 financial aid package for college. It turns out college was the hardest and most exciting four years of my life. And, now I want to encourage other kids to do the same thing for themselves."
> Jason Cordova, Bright Prospect/Connecticut College Class of 2010

"I brought my wife and four children to the United States 16 years ago from Guadalajara, Mexico. This fall, Miriam is going to Pomona College on a full scholarship to study journalism. My wife and I still can't believe that this is actually happening for our daughter. We are so proud of her."
> Diego Aguirre, Bright Prospect Parent
In ten years, we’ve grown from serving 12 students to 1,500. The core of our program is applicable in any community: continuity of support, character development, the Crews™ Program and trusted relationships with staff mentors. Our high success rate for college access and graduation, combined with our low $1,000 annual cost per student, make the Bright Prospect model a best practice worth replicating and expanding.

Our goals are two-fold: 1) to support 3,000 students from our own community by 2018 and 2) to disseminate the Crews™ model to serve students across the nation.

We are already helping other college access organizations implement the Crews™ Program. We welcome funding partners, college access organizations and other stakeholders to join us in empowering low-income students to get to, and through, college.

“Bright Prospect has developed an effective, low cost and replicable way to help students get to and, critically, through college. Organizations that share that objective should look very carefully at the model they’ve created.”

> Tessa Carmen de Roy,
The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation

“Bright Prospect has been instrumental in providing leadership for the development of the SoCal CAN Crews program. Their openness to collaboration and sharing of their Crews model has already benefitted other programs.”

> Alison DeLucca,
Southern California College Access Network
Bright Prospect prepares students for college, and for life.

Bright Prospect, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, empowers low-income students to gain admission, succeed and graduate from four-year colleges and universities. We have one of the highest college access, persistence and graduation rates of any college access program, and one of the lowest costs per student.

Bright Prospect is supported by national, regional and family foundation partners as well as individual donors. Supporters have included the Annenberg Foundation, Union Bank of California Foundation, the California Community Foundation and many other foundations, corporations and generous individuals.

Bright Prospect was founded in 2002 with 12 students and serves 1,500 today—at seven high schools and over 60 colleges and universities. Our technical assistance program can help organizations develop a new college access program or enhance an existing one.

Learn more. Call Stephanie Campbell, Executive Director, at (909) 623-9007, or email her at stephanie@brightprospect.org.

Learn more about opportunities to partner with us or support Bright Prospect. Call or email:

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Visit Bright Prospect at www.brightprospect.org.