

RICHMOND PROMISE

ANNUAL REPORT



2023
EDITION



OUR MISSION

RICHMOND PROMISE AIMS TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS IN RICHMOND EXCEL TO AND THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION, REACH THEIR CAREER GOALS, AND BECOME LEADERS IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

What types of support are Scholars receiving?



Wraparound Support



Richmond Promise Scholarship



Technology Access & Connectivity



Individualized Coaching

A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Community,

It is with great pleasure that my colleagues and I present you with Richmond Promise's 2023 Annual Report.

For our organization, 2023 was filled with profound growth that contributed to several exciting accomplishments and milestones. Among our most significant accomplishments was our summer melt rate. Of the 475 Richmond youth who were awarded a Richmond Promise Scholarship in 2023, 93 percent of them claimed their scholarship and successfully matriculated to higher education. The work our team puts in every summer to make sure Richmond Promise Scholars are better prepared to start college is making a difference, and with a summer melt rate of only 7 percent, more RP Scholars than ever before are making it to campus.

Richmond Promise also achieved a significant financial milestone in 2023, with the total amount of scholarship funding distributed to Richmond students moving past \$10 million. This large payout in scholarships is a strong indication that Richmond youth are making great use of our organization and the unique investment that we provide to our community. In our ongoing effort to ensure we support our students beyond just a scholarship, we spent the year designing important wraparound programs, including a new career accelerator program and an alumni association. These forthcoming programs will ensure that our Scholars are better prepared to gain career-track employment post-graduation and that they remain connected to Richmond Promise and the local community long-term.

Internally, Richmond Promise experienced exciting staff growth in 2023 that is helping us meet our current period of evolution. We hired our first-ever Director of Communications, Ben Enos, and we benefited greatly from the contributions of our Director of Development, Maya Kamath, who introduced new fundraising initiatives to our organization. We also added much needed capacity by creating a new Operations Coordinator position, filled by Faith Flores. Lastly, we concluded the year by creating our first-ever Career Services Manager and Executive Assistant positions.

As demand for our programming has grown over the years, our staff and Board of Directors have understood that our organization's capacity also needs to grow to continue providing high levels of service to our students and community. The information detailed in this report is a testament to the dedication of our Scholars and our staff as we continue the work of building a sustainable college-graduating culture in Richmond.

I remain incredibly grateful to serve Richmond Promise Scholars every day, and for the opportunity to advance higher education access and success in my hometown. I hope you enjoy reading our updates from 2023.

Sincerely,
Christopher Whitmore
Executive Director, Richmond Promise

RP SCHOLARS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Every summer, Richmond Promise welcomes current Scholars to join us as Summer Associates. From the class of 2023 alone, we welcomed future scientists, mental health advocates, educators and civic leaders, just to name a few.

By joining us for the summer, all 19 of our Summer Associates returned to Richmond to make their own impact on behalf of their community. So, we asked them a simple question:

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE ...to Richmond and/or the world?



Richmond is labeled the city of 'Pride and Purpose,' but the way people reacted when I told them I was from Richmond made me question if it was true.

As I grew up, I learned that people from Richmond are some of the most hard-working and determined people I have seen. We have odds against us but still persevere and strive for more. In the future, I would like to pass on this mentality and support the new generation; for now, I can do so by setting an example.”

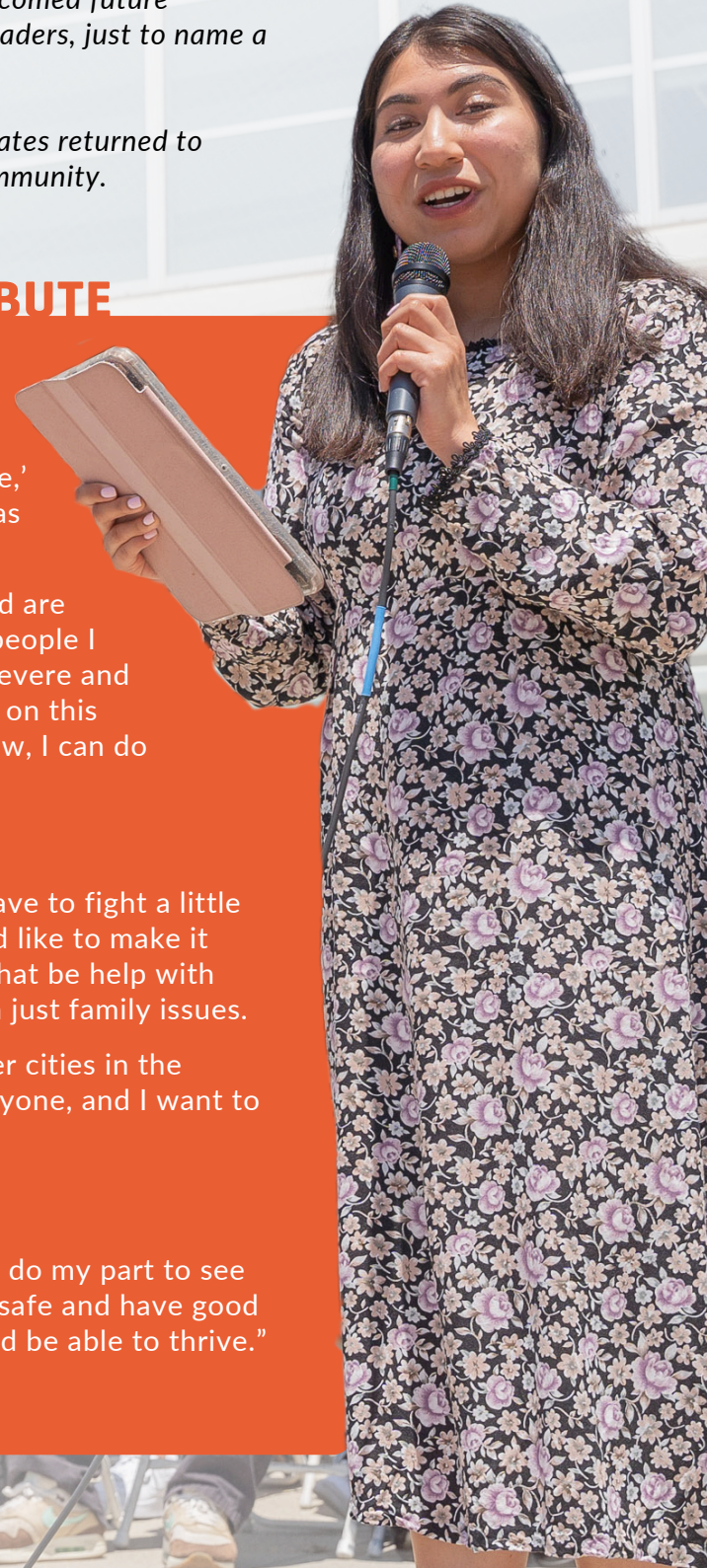


“Being from Richmond, I know what it is like to have to fight a little bit harder for us to get where we want to. I would like to make it simpler for us to go straight to college, whether that be help with tuition, college apps, high school courses, or even just family issues.

I want to start with Richmond then take it to other cities in the world. College should be easily accessible to everyone, and I want to make it possible.”



“I want to represent the underrepresented and to do my part to see children from the communities that raised me be safe and have good educational opportunities so that they can live and be able to thrive.”



2023 IN PHOTOS

Checking in with Scholars at campuses across the country remains one of our staff's favorite ways to provide support!



RP Staff hit the national conference circuit from September through November to share best practices and find new ways to provide wraparound support services to Scholars.



Executive Director Christopher Whitmore stayed busy sharing RP's mission, vision, and impact on a local speaking tour.



In March, RP honored community partners dedicated to furthering a college-graduating culture in Richmond at our Cheers to the Promise fundraiser hosted by East Brother Beer.



Our annual Scholar Celebration in June was truly a community affair. Families, neighbors, and partners all gathered to cheer on our newest class of 475 college-bound Scholars.





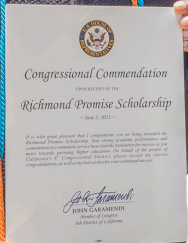
SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

The core of the Richmond Promise model is a community-wide scholarship of \$1,500 that is renewable for up to 4-6 years (depending on a student's path and petition). The scholarship can be used at any 2-year, 4-year, or Career Technical Education (CTE) post-secondary institution. We are proud to support multiple pathways to higher education.

in 2023 we awarded



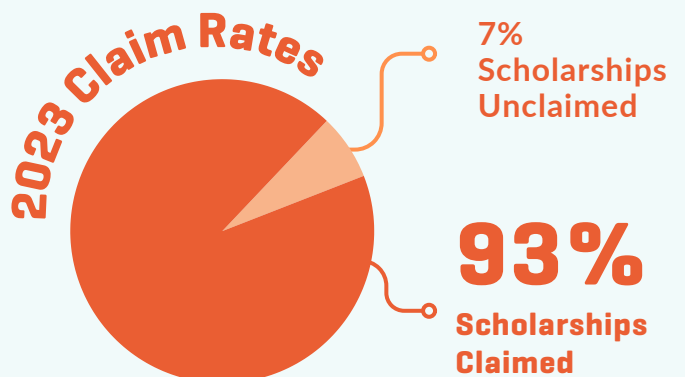
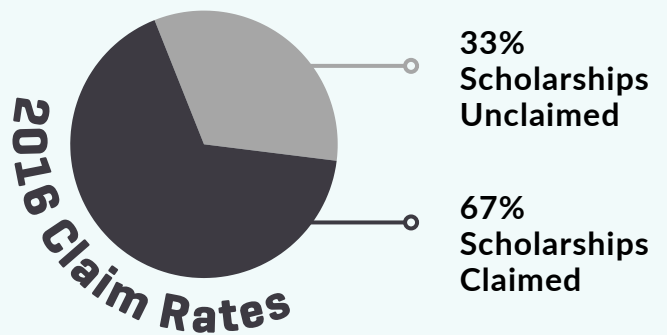
475
scholarships



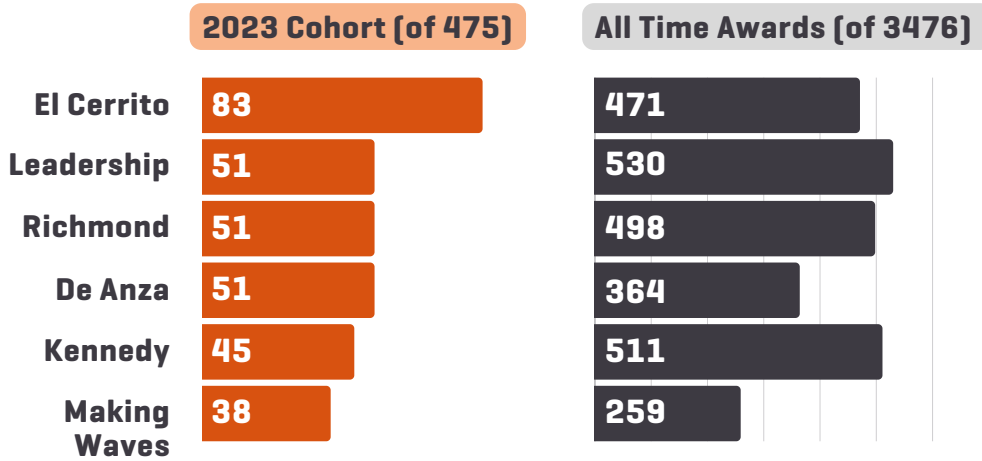
Solving Summer Melt

Through virtual and in-person Summer Bridge programming, Richmond Promise works intentionally to ensure that Scholars who are awarded a scholarship actually claim that scholarship and go on to pursue their postsecondary education. In 2016, 33 percent of scholarships awarded went unclaimed.

In 2023, only 7 percent of scholarships went unclaimed, demonstrating the effectiveness of RP's efforts to bridge the gap from high school to higher education.



Richmond Promise Awardees by High School: 2023 Cohort & All Time Awards*



The charts above highlight schools with more than 30 RP awardees represented in 2023's cohort. Other 2023 high schools include:

- Alvarado
- Aspire Richmond
- Bethel Christian
- Gateway to College
- Hercules High School
- John Henry
- Middle College
- Orion
- Pinole Valley
- Salesian College Prep
- Summit K-2
- Summit Tamalpais
- Sylvester Greenwood Academy
- Vista High School

64%

are the first in their family to pursue higher education.

92%

identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color:

- 66% Latinx Identifying
- 14% Black/African American Identifying
- 12% Asian Identifying





COLLEGE ACCESS



End-to-End Financial Aid Assistance

With delays to the federal financial aid system creating issues for college-bound students across the country, Richmond Promise doubled down on its access work in local schools.

18 “Cash for College” Workshops

Cash for College workshops are hosted by each high school site to provide a dedicated space for students and families to complete their financial aid applications with the guidance of partner organizations, like Richmond Promise, who are trained as financial aid experts.

3 Parent & Family-Specific Aid ID Nights

RP Staff helped conduct Federal Student Aid ID Nights at both Richmond High and Sylvester Greenwood Academy to assist parents in creating their FSAIDs before the FAFSA application opened.

21 RP Scholarship Info Sessions

Additionally, RP Staff increased outreach to ensure access to the Richmond Promise Scholarship, hosting Scholarship Workshops at 14 schools across the area!

Mapping the Future Together

In October, RP partnered with the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD), Richmond High School, and UC Berkeley’s Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) to host Richmond High’s first College & Career Night featuring over 70 colleges, universities, nonprofit partners, and other organizations!



Near-Peer Ambassadors

As integral members of our team, Near-Peer Ambassadors (NPA) join the RP College Access staff in providing in-classroom programming to local high schools. These RP Scholars and other local college students serve as valuable resources for students who are navigating the college application process, and they are a key part of the services Richmond Promise provides to Richmond students.

OUR 2023 NPA TEAM:

Luis Barrera, Contra Costa College

Mia Cacho, UC Berkeley

Frida Gutierrez, Sacramento State University

Anjelika Khadka, UC Davis

Malaika Khan, UC Berkeley

Yanelit Madriz Zarate, UC Berkeley

Cristian Mendez, Southern New Hampshire University

Luis Orellana, San Francisco State University

Norman Reyes, UC Berkeley

Karla Zermeno Gonzalez, San Jose State University

“I am passionate about social justice, community involvement, and supporting underrepresented students in their academic journey. Drawing from my experiences, I am excited to collaborate with the Richmond Promise team and my fellow interns to provide the best support to Richmond’s first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students.”

- Malaika Khan

“I am looking forward to giving back to students. These students grew up in the same city I grew up in, where we lacked lots of opportunities. Helping these kids will be very rewarding to me.”

- Anjelika Khadka

“Being a Near-Peer Ambassador for Richmond Promise is something I value as I get to spread awareness of scholarship opportunities to my community in need. I hear from local families that tuition costs are very stressful to deal with, therefore I am looking forward to helping students with applying for the Scholarship.”

- Luis Orellana





SCHOLAR SUCCESS

Our work to support Scholars thriving through their postsecondary journeys remains student-centered, largely student-led, and sustainably rooted in innovative, cross-sector collaboration.

2nd Year Workshops

Richmond Promise continues to enhance the wraparound services offered to current RP Scholars. For the first time in 2023, the RP Scholar Success team hosted a series of workshops designed specifically for second-year students. Scholars participated in a financial literacy seminar, led by an expert at Wells Fargo, learned how to prepare for interviews thanks to our partners at Health Career Connection, and got a glimpse into studying abroad from an RP Scholar attending UCLA. The series concluded with a virtual workshop on resume building hosted by another former RP Scholar.

Campus Partnerships

Memorandum of understanding (MOU) partnerships allow Richmond Promise to provide intentional support to students on college campuses across Northern California. In 2023, RP partnered with the following schools to collaborate on student success initiatives like data sharing, learning communities, first-year experience programming, and more:

- Berkeley City College
- Contra Costa College
- San Jose State University
- University of California, Berkeley
- San Francisco State University
- University of California, Merced



Exciting Opportunities at Western Governors University

Also in 2023, Richmond Promise welcomed its newest partner, Western Governors University. Now Richmond Promise Scholars can qualify for a partner scholarship that, combined with the RP Scholarship and other funding sources such as Pell Grants, would allow a student to pursue a college degree at little to no cost.

COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

Tech Exchange

Technological access serves as a core component of RP's basic needs support system. In 2023, RP teamed up again with Oakland-based Tech Exchange to host a laptop distribution event for college-bound Scholars. Grant-funded via the City of Richmond's Department of Children & Youth, the organizations partnered to hand out 55 laptops to students who needed them.



Health Career Connection

Richmond Promise collaborated with Health Career Connection to place 10 students into paid internships. For 10 weeks, student interns supported local organizations like RotaCare Richmond, Contra Costa Health Services, YES Nature to Neighborhoods, City of Richmond Planning Division, RYSE Youth Center, West Contra Costa Public Education Fund, and Healthy Contra Costa.



Championing Student Leadership

Scholar Advisory Board

The Richmond Promise Scholar Advisory Board provides essential feedback on the Scholar experience and recommends programming opportunities from the Scholar point of view. With the 2023-24 school year, the Scholar Advisory Board wrapped up its two-year term having offered important counsel to RP Staff.

2023 Scholar Advisory Board

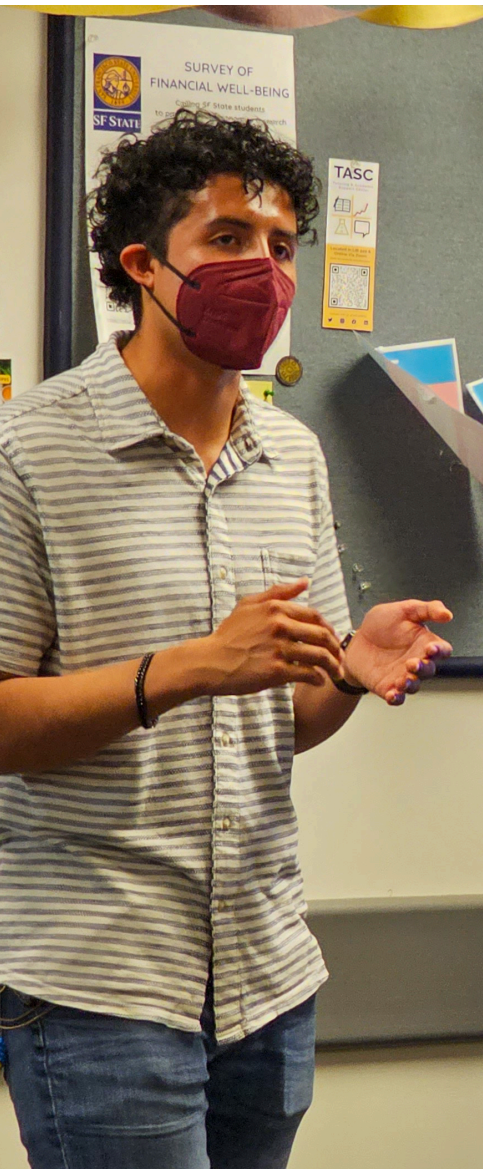
Ammar Iqbal, UC Davis
Havah Aisha Isray, UC Berkeley
Marc Anthony Lopez, Fresno State
Maria Montejano, Contra Costa College
Ricky Rivas, UC Berkeley
Ryan Saechao, USC
Megan Nicole Sanchez, UC San Diego
Jonathan Valenzuela Mejia, UCLA

Campus Network Leaders

At a number of Northern California colleges and universities, Richmond Promise Campus Network Leaders help to develop a sense of community and support the college success of Richmond Promise Scholars. Each semester, RP Staff travels to partner campuses to support these Campus Network Leaders as they host hangouts and offer space to share resources with fellow RP Scholars.

2023 Campus Network Leaders

Mayra Aguilar, San Jose State University
Kellyn Aguirre, UC Merced
Jose Barrios Lopez, San Francisco State University
Regina Gutierrez, Berkeley City College
Stefania Ibarra, Contra Costa College





CAREER & ALUMNI SUCCESS

Planting Promise: Spotlight on the RP Mentor Program

Sometimes, just a little advice can go a long way. This has certainly been the case for Richmond Promise Scholar Ashley Saechao. A Richmond High graduate and first-generation college student in her second year at UC Berkeley, Saechao studies Integrative Biology in the hopes of landing a career that would put her in a laboratory environment.

After experiencing the challenges of her first year transitioning from high school to college, Saechao decided to take advantage of one resource she thought might provide a little extra assistance in navigating postsecondary life: the Richmond Promise Mentor Program. After joining the 2023-24 cohort, Saechao was eventually introduced to her mentor, Estelle Paysinger-Hill. In her role of Director, Nonclinical Project Management at Sangamo Therapeutics, Paysinger-Hill's background in the field of biotech seemed a perfect match, and sure enough, the two hit it off quickly.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have Estelle as my mentor. She consistently provides invaluable advice, is approachable, and demonstrates great understanding," Saechao said. "Estelle actively seeks out opportunities and resources to benefit me, going above and beyond. Beyond our mentor-mentee relationship, I also consider her a friend who is always willing to listen. Our meetings have taught me interview techniques, resume-building strategies, and effective ways to seek assistance when facing challenges."

Paysinger-Hill is now in her third year with the Richmond Promise Mentor Program, and celebrates Saechao's desire to get as much from the experience as she can.

"What has stood out about Ashley is her diligence, enthusiasm and her curiosity," Paysinger-Hill said. "She is so willing to reach out and ask questions or for support."

As Saechao begins to think about what her path after college might look like, she's relying on Paysinger-Hill for valuable guidance.

"Estelle has introduced me to an opportunity to delve deeper into biotech, and since our initial meeting, has diligently noted the healthcare career paths I'm interested in," Saechao said. "Additionally, she has generously shared insights from her own undergraduate experience, providing valuable perspectives on the experiences that have led individuals to their current dream jobs."

The mentor-mentee relationship is certainly a two-way street. For Paysinger-Hill, reinvesting in Richmond's youth provides an opportunity to give back to the community she grew up in.

"What attracted me to take part in the Richmond Promise Mentor Program initially was the opportunity to give back to the Richmond community as a product of Richmond and Richmond schools," Paysinger-Hill said. "As a member of an underrepresented group and a college graduate, I believe it is important to help others in their student journey...and the experience is reciprocal. I gain as much from being a mentor as I hope the mentee gains from me."

For more info on the Richmond Promise Mentor Program, visit richmondpromise.org/mentorship.

Resume Building with RP alum Pooja Sandhu



Helping Richmond Promise Scholars prepare for life after college remains a critical part of the wraparound services that RP provides. During the summer of 2023, RP alum Pooja Sandhu returned to lead a virtual workshop on resume building with current RP Scholars. Here is an excerpt from a Q&A with Pooja conducted shortly after the workshop.

Q: You recently gave back to Richmond Promise by leading a resume-building workshop for second-year Scholars. In presenting to RP Scholars, what were some of the main points you wanted them to take away?

A: I want Scholars to take away the importance of tailoring your (bullet points) with keywords from specific roles you are applying for, and make sure your bullets don't just state WHAT you did, but the IMPACT of what you did.

Q: You're a RP alum, so I'm curious to know how it felt for you to come back to present to current RP Scholars who might be in the same position you were once in?

A: It was so uncanny yet rewarding at the same time. I gave other stories and advice not just around resumes, but also on using their time wisely and getting real-world experience outside of their coursework because I wish someone would've emphasized that more earlier on. I felt like it was uncanny because I remembered who I was a few years ago and my mindset was totally different than who I am now; I saw my growth, and my weaknesses, and realized that I have a lot to celebrate, but also to stay humble, always give back and keep improving.

Q: If you could tell our Richmond Promise Scholars anything about what to expect once they graduate college and enter the workforce, what would it be?

A: It will be unlike anything you have ever experienced before. You will have to work hard, prove yourself, and work smart all while exploring what exactly it is you want to do and your legacy. You will have so much freedom, but it's up to you to use it well. There aren't neat schedules or homework assignments telling you exactly what to do - it's literally up to you to create the rules of the game, or even play the game. Expect disappointment and disillusionment, but also don't be afraid to dream and expect to be surprised by the kindness and collaboration of others. One thing is for sure: if you never stop learning, exploring, and thinking critically, you will never be stagnant.

RP Scholars in the Workforce

As more and more Richmond Promise Scholars graduate and enter the workforce, we are proud to spotlight just a few of the employers that our alums shared their talents with in 2023:

- Richmond Promise
- UC Berkeley
- Contra Costa College
- UC San Francisco
- San Jose State University
- GAP Inc.
- Rivet School
- Morgan Stanley
- Protiviti Global Consulting
- Huckleberry Youth Programs
- California Dermatology Care
- BAL Immigration Law
- Signature Analytics

THE RICHMOND PROMISE TEAM

Staff

Christopher Whitmore
Executive Director

Anjanine Bonet
Chief Operating Officer

Miguel Molina
Director of Programs & Partnerships

Maya Kamath
Director of Development

Ben Enos
Director of Communications

Dariana Zermeño
Scholar Success Manager

Minhal Hanif
College Access Manager

Irvin Hunter
Career Services Manager

Jasmine Gonzalez
Scholar Success Coordinator

Faith Flores
Operations Coordinator

Afaf Alghazali
College Access Coordinator

Nayeli Peña Arias
Communications & Marketing Coordinator

Lily Aiwohi
Scholarship Operations & Data Coordinator

Salwa Alkaheli
Executive Assistant

Board of Directors

Nicole M. Barnett
Chief Operating Officer, Planned Parenthood Northern California

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Senior Vice President, Commercial Banking, City National Bank

Linsi Crain
Public and Government Affairs Senior Manager, Americas Products

Shasa Curl
City Manager, City of Richmond

Ilaf Esuf
District Director, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks

Dr. Kenneth "Chris" Hurst
Superintendent, West Contra Costa Unified School District

Michael Littleton
former Senior Vice President of Finance, Gu Energy Labs (Board Chair)

Mojdeh Mehdizadeh
Chancellor, Contra Costa Community College District

Linda Schmid
Chief Financial Officer, CSW/Stuber-Stroeh Engineering Group, Inc.

Ree'shemah Thornton
Dean of Enrollment Services, Merritt College


2023 OPERATING BUDGET

Total Budget:
\$3,729,642

Below is a breakdown of Richmond Promise's 2023 organizational budget, allocated by expenditure category. This budget was developed by RP staff and approved by the Board of Directors in December 2022. Audited financials for 2023 will be published on our website in the fall of 2024.

 **5%**
Management & General Operations

11% 
Fundraising

 **84%**
Scholarship & Program Costs

We are deeply grateful to all of our 2023 supporters!

Individual Donors


**Nicole Barnett
Anjanine Bonet
Daniel Bort
Noah Brownlow
Jeffrey Butler
Pamela Christian
Rosemary Corbin
Carl Cosmos
Linsi Crain
Shasa Curl
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Lina Velasco
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Alten Construction
Amazon
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City of Richmond - Department of Children and Youth
City of Richmond - Environmental & Community Investment Agreement
Columbia Sportswear
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Industrial Microbes
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Levin Richmond Terminal Corp
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Richmond Wholesale Meats
Sims Metal
The Dido Fund
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Curious about how you can support building a college-going culture in Richmond?

VISIT: [RICHMONDPROMISE.ORG/GIVE](https://richmondpromise.org/give)



OUR SCHOLARS are
leaders who will
shape Richmond
for generations
to come.

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