



Green Halo

SCHOLARS

Annual Report

2022



OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

Wow! What a year. In our first year of having a full-time program director, we were able to enhance and expand the support that we can provide to first-generation and low-income high school seniors across the western suburbs of Chicago. We adjusted our sails and set our direction through a strategic plan, solidified our curriculum for our scholars, and added a team member to support our alumni. In December, we found out that our third scholar in three years received the QuestBridge National College Match scholarship and will be attending the University of Notre Dame with no out-of-pocket costs. We have so much to celebrate!

Early in 2022, we crafted our first strategic plan with help from Rachel Accavitti -- a non-profit consultant and former Chicago Scholars staff member. This was a massive undertaking for our small team, but we saw the benefits play out immediately. We were able to forge ahead with a clear vision and laser-sharp focus on our purpose: leveling the playing field of college admissions in the western suburbs of Chicago. This plan was crafted with input from our board, our scholars, our volunteers, and our staff, and it will serve as our guiding principles for the next three years. Much of the work we did this year was because of the vision we set forth in early 2022.

As we solidified our programming, we tried out new ways to engage with our scholars. Our Class of 2027 is the first class with whom we meet regularly - every Tuesday evening - and we've seen the benefits of our weekly counseling sessions pay off in dividends. In addition to individualized college counseling with our program director, our scholars spent the fall meeting with college admissions officers who are committed to college access. This group is now well on their way to college, and we can't wait to see which college campuses are lucky enough to have them join their communities in the fall.

As we continue to calibrate and codify our college counseling programming, we've also invested in the support we offer our alumni, too. Melissa Burke joined our team as our first College Success Coach, a role designed to increase the persistence of our college students and expand the support we offer to our scholars. Melissa's primary role is to engage with and support our young people as they progress through their college journey, and her work has been incredibly well-received by our alumni. We know it will continue to impact our alumni persistence and provide additional resources to our scholars on their journeys.

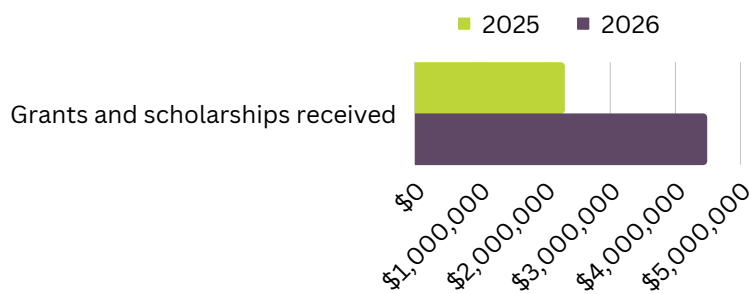
In this report, you'll read more about the success of our scholars and the impact of our organization. Please remember that our success is your success, and we appreciate all that you do to support our work and move our vision forward.

With gratitude,
Green Halo Scholars

Class of 2026 Recap

Our Class of 2026 committed to their chosen colleges in May, and we were thrilled with the success of these scholars. Below are some key facts and takeaways from their college decisions.

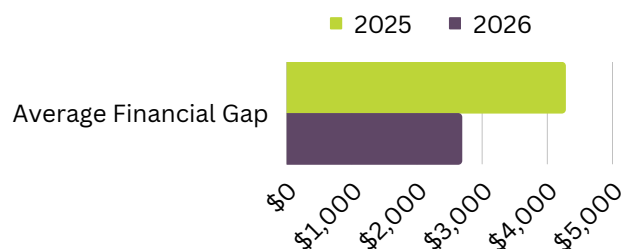
- The Class of 2026 was awarded **\$4.48M in grants and scholarships from the institutions they chose to attend**, up \$2.3M from 2021. Per student, this is a \$28,018 increase from 2021-22. As we continue to enhance our college counseling, we're able to better and more strategically advise our students on where to apply, ensuring that they are submitting applications to colleges that are historically generous to underserved communities.



- Twenty scholars out of our cohort of 28 had **100% of their estimated family contribution (EFC) covered**. This means that they applied to and matriculated to colleges that provided a financial aid package that makes a college education affordable and attainable for our scholars and their families.



- The average financial gap per student was \$2690, down 59% from 2021. In other words, scholars from this class needed to take out significantly less student loans compared to previous cohorts, cutting down on debilitating student debt.



Did you know? In 2023, the Illinois MAP Grant and the Federal Pell Grant were both expanded. The MAP Grant will award a maximum of \$7,200 per student per year and the Pell Grant will award a maximum of \$7,395.

These programs help make college affordable for our scholars and their families.



Where Are Our Green Halo Scholars?

Arizona

Arizona State University

Florida

University of Miami

Illinois

Aurora University

Concordia University

Columbia College - Chicago

DePaul University *

Elmhurst University *

Illinois State University *

Illinois Wesleyan University

Knox College

Loyola University

North Central College *

Northern Illinois University *

Northwestern University *

Southern Illinois University *

University of Illinois - Chicago *

University of Illinois - Urbana Champaign *

Western Illinois University *

Indiana

Purdue University *

Iowa

Cornell College

University of Iowa

Maine

Bowdoin College

Michigan

Hillsdale College

Hope College *

Michigan State University *

Missouri

St. Louis University

New York

Colgate University (QuestBridge)

University of Rochester

Parson's - The New School

Ohio

University of Dayton *

Pennsylvania

University of Pennsylvania
(QuestBridge)

Texas

Texas Southern University

Washington, D.C.

Howard University *

Wisconsin

University of Wisconsin - Madison *

(* indicates multiple scholars attending)



[Click here to see this list on a map!](#)

Our Class of 2027

24

Scholars

19

Volunteer Mentors

6

Partner High Schools

3.64

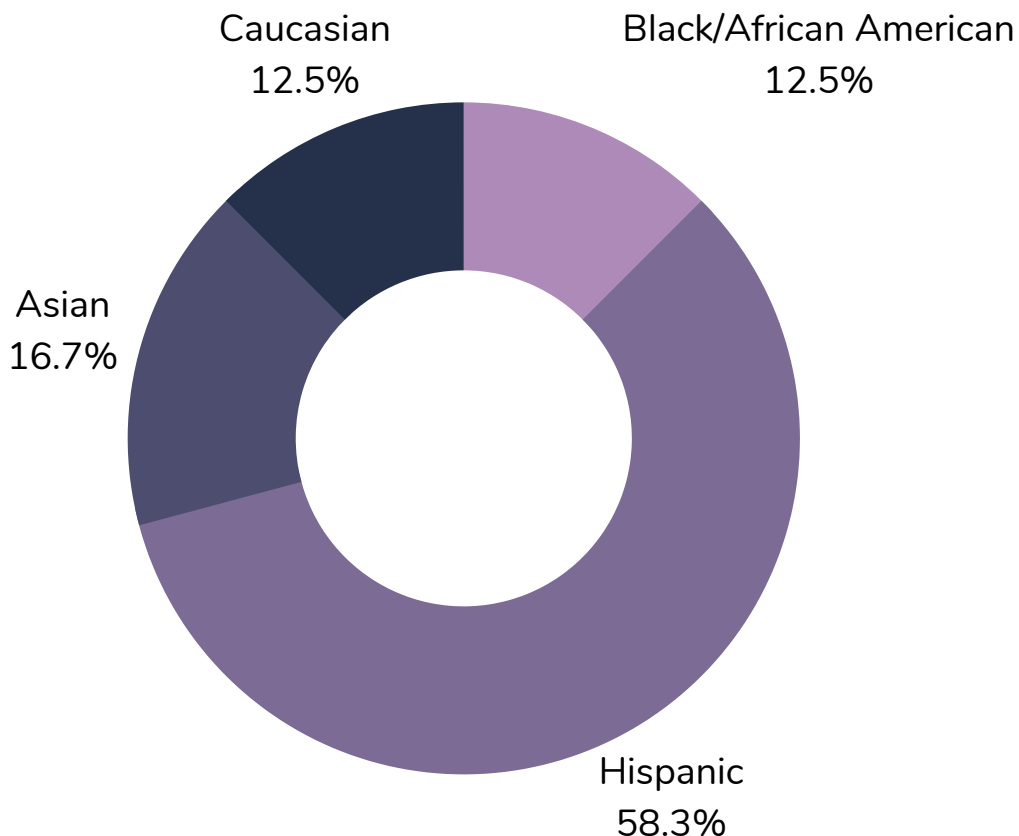
Average Unweighted GPA

90%

are the first in their family to go to college

70%

qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch



Our Mission and Vision

As part of the strategic planning process, we fine-tuned our mission statement and created a brand-new vision statement.

Mission

We aim to change what people think is possible.

Green Halo's mission is to support, mentor, and expand opportunities for motivated and committed first-generation and low-income students in the Western Suburbs of Chicago. Through college counseling, financial guidance, and career resources, we stand with our scholars as they apply to college, navigate campus, and pursue their postgraduate dreams.

Vision

A level playing field.

We envision generational transformation in the Western Suburbs of Chicago and a mindset shift on college campuses nationwide. First generation and low-income students complete college at their best match and fit schools without the burden of unreasonable debt and find supportive community in careers where their unique voices and talents are celebrated and cultivated.



Our Year in Review

Weekly Meetings

As part of codifying our college counseling curriculum, we asked our newest cohort to meet weekly as a group. We knew it was a lot to ask of scholars who already have significant responsibilities – at school, in sports and clubs, and at home – but we believed that providing consistency among our college counseling would serve them best. It's been a massive success. Each week, our scholars join our program director to learn about each part of the college admissions process, from building their college lists to writing essays, completing the FAFSA and deciphering confusing financial aid packages. These weekly meetings have built camaraderie among our scholars and ensured that they're getting high quality, consistent, strategic college admissions support.

College Visits

We love introducing college admissions officers from across the country to our scholars, and - more importantly - introducing our scholars to incredible colleges. In August, September, and October, the following colleges and universities hosted personalized college visits for our students during our weekly meetings.

Augustana College
Boston University
College of Saint Benedict and
Saint John's University
Hope College
Illinois State University
Kalamazoo College
Michigan State University

Purdue University
St. Ambrose University
University of Dayton
University of Illinois - Urbana Champaign
University of Illinois - Springfield
University of Rochester
Vanderbilt University
Western Illinois University



QuestBridge Scholarship Recipients

Green Halo Scholars supports qualifying scholars in applying to the QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship. Our third scholar in as many years was awarded the scholarship in December 2022 and will be attending the University of Notre Dame with no out-of-pocket costs. This highly competitive scholarship includes a loan-free financial aid package that covers 100% of tuition, room and board, books, and travel.

The QuestBridge application process includes a significant amount of writing and an equal amount of strategy and counseling to ensure scholars are positioning themselves to be competitive applicants at the right participating colleges. Students complete two rounds of applications and finalists are able to rank up to 12 schools to which they could receive a binding offer of admission and generous scholarship.

Our third recipient, Mai-Jeanna, will be attending the University of Notre Dame. She is a senior at Hinsdale Central where she is incredibly active in sports, extracurricular activities, and service. Her sister, Myriam ('25, Saint Louis University), is also a Green Halo Scholar.

Two other Green Halo Scholars are part of the exceptional group of QuestBridge scholars. Joyce ('25), is a sophomore at Colgate University, and Yanfu ('26) is a freshman at the University of Pennsylvania. Each year, less than 10% of over 18,000 applicants are "matched" with a scholarship. To learn more about QuestBridge, visit questbridge.org.



Class of 2027 Kickoff

After our Class of 2027 applied and interviewed with our team, we wanted to kick off their senior year as a Green Halo Scholar by setting our expectations and building enthusiasm for the year ahead. We were thrilled to welcome back Rick Clark, Director of Admissions at Georgia Tech University as our guest speaker for our kickoff event. Mr. Clark, who also co-authored “The Truth About College Admissions: Getting In and Staying Together,” spoke to our students about the multitude of college options that exist and the importance of self-reflection during their senior year. We always appreciate when leaders in college admissions join us, and Rick brought great insight into the admissions process.

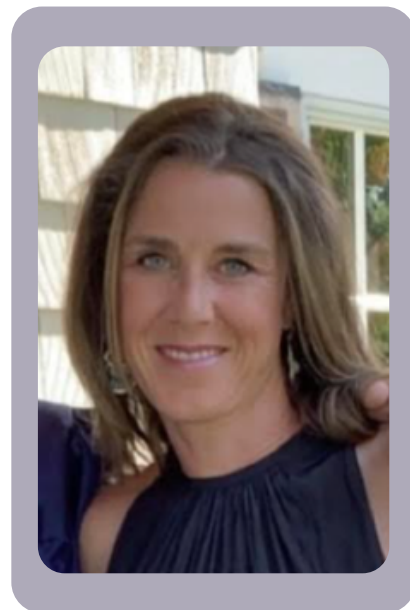
OnSite College and Leadership Forum

We were excited to once again attend the OnSite College and Leadership Forum and, for the first time in two years, it was held in person at Navy Pier. At this event, scholars have the opportunity to attend up to five interviews with college admissions officers from across the country. Our scholars completed 92 interviews and received 32 admissions offers that day. They wowed the representatives they met with, too; feedback from admissions officers included that they were "so prepared" and "impressive and thoughtful." Many thanks to our high school partners for helping with the transportation logistics, our mentors for preparing scholars and attending to cheer them on, and Chicago Scholars for hosting this event.



Welcoming Our First College Success Coach


We were thrilled to welcome Melissa Burke as our first College Success Coach in mid-2022. Melissa will be the main point-of-contact for our alumni and is committed to their college persistence and success. She'll manage our textbook fund, maintain consistent communication with our alumni, and assist our scholars with finding resources to help them succeed. Melissa is a former school counselor and lives in Hinsdale with her husband and two sons. We're thrilled to have her as a part of our team; her impact has already been felt widely among our alumni!



Textbook Funding

Green Halo Scholars supports scholars throughout their college career. One way that we do this is by providing textbook reimbursement to our alumni (current college students). During Giving DuPage Days in May 2022, we raised \$7,000 for our alumni textbook fund. Half of this amount - \$3,500 - was distributed in the Fall 2022 semester.

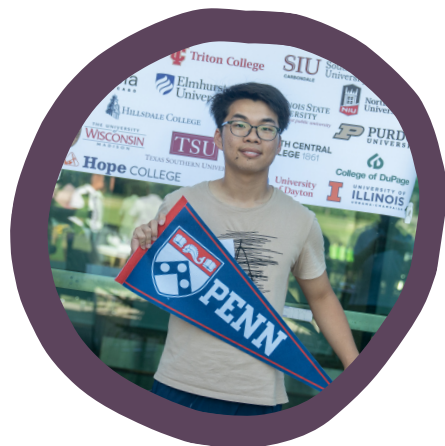
The average amount of reimbursement requested was \$240, and we were able to cover about two-thirds of that request with each scholar receiving \$160 in reimbursement funds.



According to the Education Data Initiative, a quarter of students worked **extra hours** to pay for books and course materials and 11% **skipped meals** to pay for materials.

Class of 2026 Picnic

One of our favorite traditions is our alumni picnic. This event celebrates the accomplishments of our graduating cohort while giving them the chance to meet our older alumni. The Community House graciously offers up their space for our alumni and their families to meet each other, reflect on their accomplishments for the year, and share in their excitement for their next chapter.



Strategic Planning

In early 2022, we set out to create our organization's first strategic plan. After hours of conversations with stakeholders, our strategic plan was crafted. The direction is grounded in four core tenets that drive our mission and vision:

1. Fortifying internal operations
2. Solidifying and documenting key programmatic elements
3. Elevating our external presence and leveraging impactful relationships
4. Focusing on scholar experience and alumni outcomes

We've been focused on accomplishing these tenants through a variety of goals, and it made for an incredibly impactful year. We're excited to see it continue to take shape through 2024!



Rebranding and Website Redesign

If you've been on our website recently, you might have noticed that we got a new look! After completing our strategic plan, we set out to refresh our brand and build a website that more accurately reflected our program and growth. Be sure to share our new website - www.greenhaloscholars.org - with someone who might not have seen it yet!

Our Partners

College Partners

Our college partners commit to meeting full demonstrated financial need for at least one admitted scholar -- and, in some cases, up to 12 -- from each Green Halo Scholars cohort. These institutions also provide an array of additional support, including hosting workshops for our scholars related to the application process, paid opportunities to visit campus, and additional on-campus support once they matriculate. Since 2021, we've established five partnerships and look forward to expanding the program in the coming year!



Hope college commits to meeting full need for up to 12 admitted scholars. They also provide workshops for our scholars, travel assistance to campus, and an opportunity to interview with their admissions officers. Two scholars are currently attending Hope.



The University of Rochester meets full need for at least one admitted Green Halo Scholar each year. They also host case studies and workshops for our scholars and provide travel assistance to visit campus during their programming for first-generation and low-income students. One scholar is attending University of Rochester.



Augustana College meets full need for all qualifying scholars through their new Augustana Possible scholarship. Augustana also provides workshops and visit opportunities for our scholars, in addition to on-campus support.



Knox College commits to meeting full need for all qualifying Green Halo Scholars through their Prairie Promise program. Knox also provides travel assistance for students to visit campus. One scholar is attending Knox (and a member of the volleyball team!).



Elmhurst University invites admitted Green Halo Scholars to participate in their United Scholars program, a college persistence program for first-generation and low-income students that includes mentorship, programming, and an on-campus learning community. Four scholars are attending Elmhurst.

High School Partners

All Green Halo Scholars are nominated by their high school counselors to participate in our program. These school counselors help us find the scholars in their communities who would benefit the most from additional resources, and help us ensure that our scholars are engaged in the program from the time that they're nominated. We know school counselors are stretched thin, and we appreciate all that our high school partners do to help us serve their students.



**PROVISO EAST
PIRATES**

If you are interested in becoming a Green Halo Scholars partner high school, please contact Sara Miller at sara@greenhaloscholars.org

Community Partners

Our community partners provide services to help us level the playing field. From ACT and SAT tutoring to college essay writing support, and academic tutoring to interview preparation, these organizations provide resources to our scholars pro bono or at a highly discounted rate. We're grateful for their generosity and shared commitment to equality.

[College Bound Consulting](#)

[The Community House](#)

[Nurturing Wisdom Tutoring](#)

[Riley Baker Educational Consulting](#)

[The Village Tutors](#)

Our Supporters

Corporate Sponsorships

This year, we launched our corporate sponsorship program. IMC Trading is our first corporate sponsor with a commitment of \$20,000 over two years. Their gift will allow 8 scholars to participate in our program. Thank you to IMC for investing in our mission!



If your organization is interested in becoming a corporate sponsor, reach out to Sally Guglielmo at sally@greenhaloscholars.org.

Grants and Foundations

These organizations support Green Halo through grants and other generous donations and sponsorships. We appreciate their partnership and philanthropy!

[Palumbo Family Foundation](#)

[Darien Rotary Club](#)

[YMCA of Greater LaGrange Men's Club](#)

Individual Donors

Our work could not exist without the generosity of our donors. To each individual and family who have invested in our mission, we are so grateful. Your impact can be seen in the pages of this report and on the faces of our scholars. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Mentors

We are so grateful for the individuals who dedicate their time and energy to the success of our scholars. Our program's reach is magnified thanks to the dedicated volunteer mentors who commit to serving a scholar for a year (and beyond). Many thanks to the following individuals for their commitment to our scholars.

(*Indicates multiple years as a mentor.)

Nupur Bahl *
Vandana Bahl *
Beena Deshmukh *
Mika Deshmukh *
Hannah Jensvold
John Korntheuer *
Aidan Kelly *
Michele Lekas *
Amanda Mancini
April Marron

Tracy Mehr *
Rachel Mejdrich
Billy Miller *
Dayna Murphy *
Jen Peckenpaugh
Eva Rosol
Charley Salk
Peg Sloyan *
Mary Jo Wangelin *



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PO Box 124

Hinsdale, IL 60522