

Project Name: **Student's Rising Above Pre College Bridge**

Project Need

Today's first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds face compounding barriers to college completion: rising tuition costs, FAFSA disruptions, and the recent elimination of federal TRIO funding that abruptly stripped college advisors from hundreds of Bay Area high schools. In low-income communities, youth disconnection and unemployment rates are two to three times higher than in neighboring affluent areas. Of Bay Area high school graduates who are economically disadvantaged, only 11% are projected to complete college — a crisis that perpetuates poverty across generations.

In 2025, when four East Bay high schools suddenly lost TRIO-funded college counselors just weeks before application deadlines, SRA mobilized immediately — embedding advisors directly on campuses to fill the gap. That emergency response revealed a powerful insight: school-based advising dramatically increases student access and trust.

Building on that foundation, the Pre-College Bridge Program represents the next step: a fully implemented, school-based initiative that brings SRA's proven curriculum and advising practices directly onto high school campuses. The program will serve 200 high school juniors and seniors in Oakland Unified School District with individualized 1:1 advising, college list development aligned to financial fit, college application support, financial aid application assistance, and early scholarship planning. What makes it transformational is not only the direct service — it is the strategic pipeline it creates. By meeting students where they are in high school, SRA builds the trust and relationships needed to support them all the way through college graduation and into economically mobile careers.

Organization

Founded in 1998, Students Rising Above (SRA) empowers first-generation students facing systemic barriers to define and achieve success through education and career. For nearly 30 years, SRA has provided comprehensive, individualized support — academic advising, financial aid coaching, mental health support, healthcare navigation, career development, mentorship, and emergency financial assistance — to students from high school through their first professional role after college graduation. We have a proven model that has worked for decades; a wrap-around advising model that addresses the full range of barriers students from low income backgrounds face. Our credibility is demonstrated by our outcomes: Our 76% six-year graduation rate is nearly 7 times the 11% national average for first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds. Eighty percent of our graduates complete college with less than \$10,000 in student loan debt and SRA graduates secure employment at twice the rate of first-generation peers nationally.

Transformational Impact

For first-generation students from low-income families, getting into college is only the beginning. Without the right support, most won't finish — and without a degree, the cycle of poverty continues. The Pre-College Bridge Program and SRA's college success work breaks that cycle. This project will support our work with 200 high school students and will result in over 180 of them applying to college and 160 of them matriculating to college. Our goal is for 60% of them to continue with SRA programming while in college.

The impact extends far beyond the 200 students served directly. When a student graduates, it doesn't just change their life — it redefines what their family believes is possible. One student. One family. One neighborhood at a time — that is how we break the cycle of poverty for good.

Project Finances

Our total project cost for one-year is \$135,600. The grant will primarily fund advisor salary, oversight and coordination, direct student support and data & evaluation. We have funding secured to launch this program. This grant enables us to expand from our emergency pilot to a fully staffed, year-round program serving 200 students. Beyond the grant period, sustainability comes from two directions: access to K-12 funders previously unavailable to SRA and an annual giving campaign anchored to Bridge Program outcomes leading to expanded foundation and donor support.