



2019-2020 Annual Report



Every student. Every chance. Every day.

LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Dear Friends and Supporters,



It's often said that true character isn't built but revealed in the face of adversity. I've always agreed, and if the pandemic has revealed one thing about Access Academies, it's the resiliency of our students.

It's no secret that our young scholars possess an acute ability to rise above life's struggles to achieve academic success. But to watch them overcome the obstacles of Covid-19 and remote learning, and continue to excel, was inspiring.

This year, 53 Academy graduates enrolled in private, college-prep high schools. Twenty-three high schoolers were named St. Louis Post-Dispatch 'A' Students. Four sophomores were selected to the prestigious Washington University College Prep Program. And many more entered college or earned a degree and started their first jobs.

It wasn't only our students who stepped up though. Our Graduate Support team worked tirelessly to stay connected while our College & Career Counselor ensured no student's path to graduation was jeopardized. Seeing firsthand the economic strain on Access families, we delivered \$20,000 in gift cards for groceries and necessities. And when safety concerns forced the cancellation of the 12th Annual Celebration Dinner — leading to a substantial deficit in our programming budget — our faithful donors helped raise over \$315,000 in our summer fundraising campaign. It was a remarkable feat and one for which we cannot thank you enough.



Surprisingly, the biggest highlight of 2019-2020 had little to do with the pandemic. I'm thrilled to announce that Access and Saint Louis University forged an innovative new partnership to expand resources and college opportunities for our students. You can read more about it on page 5, but the Access enrichment and graduate support programs will now be a part of the SLU School of Education.

Meanwhile, our development staff and Board of Directors will continue to fundraise and pay for all Access/SLU programming, as well as for all of our

high school and college scholarships — which means your generosity remains critical to our students' success. We couldn't be more excited about this collaboration and believe it will allow us to serve more students in more schools across the region.

The year, however, was not without its bittersweet moments. In the spring, one of our partner middle schools, Most Holy Trinity, closed due to budget shortfalls related in part to the Covid-19 pandemic. And while we were saddened by the loss, know that many of the students transferred to St. Louis Catholic Academy, and their Access Grad Support Director will continue to guide them through high school and college. In addition, Access will still fund the scholarships of every MHT student in high school, including the 17 freshmen who started this fall.

I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Tom Mackowiak (at right), who after seven years with Access Academies — four on the Board of Directors and three as Executive Director — retired this summer. Tom's enthusiasm and passion for our students are unwavering. His steady leadership and focus on the future were instrumental in developing our long-term strategic plan and moving the organization forward. We are grateful for his service.



Similarly, after two years as Chair, my term has ended. It has been a privilege to serve in the role, and I look forward to continuing my work on the Board. I'm also pleased to announce that our Finance Chair, Brian Day, will serve as the new Board Chair and am confident that he will skillfully guide us through this next exciting chapter. The organization is in good hands.

Finally, I would like to thank you — our dedicated supporters, donors, and partners — one last time for your loyal and thoughtful commitment to our mission. In these challenging times, your support has never been more important — or necessary. Thank you for believing in our students, trusting our staff with your gifts, and walking this path with us. The future is bright for Access Academies, and I hope you will continue to support every student, every chance, every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Bob Mathias".

Robert Mathias
Chair, Board of Directors

Investing in Our Students



\$16,560

average 4-year
investment in each
high school student



\$7,041

average 3-year
investment in each
middle school student



175

STUDENTS

in 4 city
middle schools



191

STUDENTS

in 26 college-preparatory
high schools



142

STUDENTS

in 59 colleges or other
post-secondary programs



97%

represent minority
populations



94%

qualify for free/
reduced lunch



66%

live in single-parent
households



\$734,174

total amount awarded in
high school scholarships
and fees



\$3,346

average annual
high school tuition
award per student

SINCE OUR FOUNDING IN 2005:

\$6.1 million

awarded in high
school scholarships

1,240 students

benefited from
our programs

MISSION

Access propels at-risk middle school students through high school and on to college and career success with enrichment, counseling, and scholarships.

HISTORY

Access was founded in 2005 by a small group of St. Louisans convinced that education was the most enduring path out of poverty. Embracing an innovative model that emphasized extended school days, a challenging enrichment curriculum, and hands-on counseling, they started the first Academy with 15 students in a single South City middle school. In 2019-2020, Access served over 500 students in four partner middle schools, 26 partner college-prep high schools, and 59 colleges and post-secondary institutions across the country.

VALUES

Access is committed to...

- Supporting a top-quality, values-based education
- Focusing on the individual student
- Strengthening our communities
- Leveraging our partnerships

Our Partner Schools



Our Partner Middle Schools



Our Partner High Schools

Althoff Catholic High School
Bishop DuBourg High School
Cardinal Ritter College Prep
Chaminade College Prep
Christian Brothers College High School
Cor Jesu Academy
De Smet Jesuit High School
Duchesne High School
Incarnate Word Academy
Lutheran High School South
Lutheran High School North
Marquette Catholic High School
Nerinx Hall
Notre Dame High School
Principia School
Rosati-Kain High School
St. Louis Priory School
St. John Vianney High School
St. Joseph's Academy
St. Louis University High School
St. Mary's High School
Trinity Catholic High School
Ursuline Academy
Villa Duchesne
Visitation Academy
Westminster Christian Academy



2019-2020 Highlights

Access Academies and Saint Louis University Launch Exciting New Partnership

Access and Saint Louis University joined forces this year, launching an innovative partnership that expands educational opportunities for all Access Academies' students. As of July, our successful middle school enrichment and high school and college graduate support programs were integrated into the Saint Louis University School of Education. It's a move that allows us to leverage the department's expertise, data research resources, and Billiken Teacher Corps to further enhance our programming. Better still, the agreement opens doors at SLU for our students and provides resources for Access employees, including the opportunity to collaborate with SLU educators. "The Access partnership with SLU will open up new

and wonderful opportunities for the students we serve," says John Vatterott, Access Founder & Chair Emeritus. "New opportunities that will enable each student to reach their full potential."

To kick off the partnership, we teamed up to develop a High School Summer Bridge Program for our recent 8th grade graduates. Over the course of four weeks in June, our partner middle school teachers, Access alumni, and tutors from SLU worked virtually with students to develop important reading, math, and digital literacy skills. The program was a huge success and left the graduates feeling more confident and better prepared for the challenges of 9th grade.



2019-2020 Highlights

Access Delivers \$40,000 in Financial Relief During COVID Crisis

This year, we established two initiatives to assist Access families adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crisis.

Thanks to a generous grant from the **Boniface Foundation**, in August

we outfitted all 53 of our rising high school freshmen with \$400 worth of school supplies and uniforms. Each student received a backpack,

a graphing calculator, pens and pencils, notebooks, and a set of school uniforms for their respective high school.



Earlier this spring, we sent the parents of every middle and high school student in our program a \$50 Schnucks gift card to help pay for groceries and other essentials.

Meanwhile, each college student received a \$50 Target gift card to help ease the transition from the dorms to alternative housing when colleges moved to remote learning.



New Access Scholarship Helps Students Offset Rising College Costs

In a continued effort to equip our students with much-needed financial resources, we added a scholarship to our College & Career Success Initiative. The new Access College Scholarship provides up to \$3,500 per student over the course of a 4-year degree and requires students complete a series of benchmarks — such as submitting the FAFSA, writing a resume, and applying for an internship — to remain eligible. This fall, 24 Access collegians have successfully applied for and will receive scholarship funds.



Brianni Townsend (MHT '16) completes her FAFSA with Amy Clark, our College & Career Counselor. Brianni graduated from Cardinal Ritter College Prep this spring and is currently majoring in communications at Missouri Western State University.

53 Access 8th Graders Enroll in Top Private High Schools

Access celebrated another banner year as 53 eighth graders graduated from three Academy middle schools — Most Holy Trinity Catholic School, St. Cecilia School & Academy, St. Louis Catholic Academy — and enrolled in 19 college-prep, private high schools. We also welcomed our second year of 6th graders into our newest Academy, Sister Thea Bowman Catholic School in East St. Louis.



Four Academy Students Named Washington University College Prep Scholars



Only 50 local high school sophomores are selected annually to participate in the prestigious Washington University College Prep Program, which prepares future first-generation college students to thrive academically and socially in college. This year, four Access students joined that distinguished group.

Congratulations to Judith Vazquez-Perez of St. Joseph's Academy, James Townsend of Christian Brothers College High School, and Joseph Olascoaga and David Garcia (pictured above) of St. Louis University High School. Not only will these rising stars receive year-round academic and enrichment support, but they will spend the next two summers living on the Washington University campus, studying with top university faculty, earning undergraduate credits, and attending college preparation workshops.

Our Program



Enrichment

Access offers more than 80 after-school and summer enrichment programs to challenge students in important STEM subjects like robotics, coding, and computer science, as well as in key areas such as leadership and character development, entrepreneurship, and the arts.



Counseling

Starting in 6th grade and continuing through college, our Graduate Support Directors build strong, enduring relationships with each student, providing individualized mentoring, guidance, and advocacy at every step of their 11+ year educational journey. Our GSDs are located within each partner middle school and maintain frequent, consistent contact with our high school students throughout their entire four years.

Our College & Career Counselor works closely with our high school and college students (and their families) to select the right post-secondary path, organize campus visits and informational sessions, process admissions and financial aid paperwork, and choose classes towards completing their degree.



Scholarships

Access invests over \$730,000 annually in scholarships and registration, technology, and testing fees so our students can attend one of 26 local, college-preparatory private high schools. Meanwhile, the new Access College Scholarship helps our collegians reduce their debt burden and our Work-Study program allows high school and college students to earn money toward their education, gain valuable work experience, and give back to the community.

\$645,762 Total financial aid (scholarships and grants) secured by Access collegians this year



99%

ACCEPTED

to college-preparatory
high schools



98%

GRADUATED

high school on-time
(compared to 84% nationwide)



96%

ACCEPTED

to college or other
post-secondary institution

GRADUATE SUPPORT SPOTLIGHT:

Galicia Guerrero

As a first-generation college graduate, Galicia Guerrero understands the challenges that Access students face on their path to earning a college degree. She also knows first-hand how critical early graduate support can be to a student's ultimate academic and career success.

It was an eagerness to share the lessons she's learned — and to give back to students like herself — that led Guerrero, a 2014 graduate of St. Mary's College (Indiana), to join Access after earning her Master's degree in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis.

Now in her second year as the Graduate Support Counselor at St. Cecilia School & Academy, Galicia manages the day-to-day operations of the extended-day enrichment programs and summer school, guides our eighth graders as they transition into high school, and helps Access high school students gain acceptance into college. She's a tireless advocate for our students and serves as a daily reminder that, with hard work, they too can succeed.

What do you find most fulfilling about your job as a Graduate Support Counselor?

Getting to know the students and their unique personalities on an individual basis is fun. But it's also really fulfilling to see students grow, problem solve, and think about how to resolve mistakes and keep moving forward. It is rewarding to see students be resilient.

How do you define success for your students?

When I see students learn how to advocate for themselves and speak up for what they need. This is a life-long skill that will help them be more confident and able to achieve their individual goals.

What one lesson do you hope your students take with them through life?

Take advantage of every opportunity that's made available to you. You are more capable than you think. Take the risk and trust your ability.

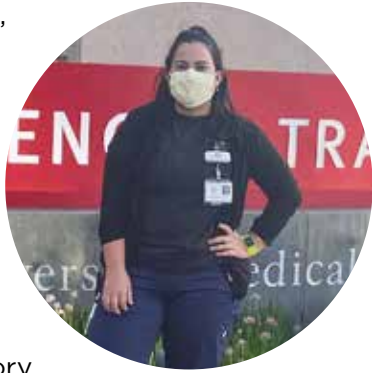


Alumni Success

Maria Trujillo Escobar

(Chamberlain University '19 /
Nerinx Hall '14 / St. Cecilia School
& Academy '10)

Five years ago, Maria Trujillo Escobar stepped up to the microphone at the 7th Annual Celebration Dinner and, after sharing her moving story of coming to the United States as a refugee from Colombia, announced her goal to be a nurse — and eventually an orthopedic surgeon.



Last winter, the Nerinx Hall alumna made the first part of her dream a reality when she earned her nursing degree from Chamberlain University. Maria successfully passed the NCLEX exam on the first attempt and, in February, started as a staff nurse in the emergency department at Barnes-Jewish Hospital — the same hospital where her mom worked as a janitor after arriving in St. Louis with Maria and her brother.

"I work in the Trauma Center at Barnes, and although I see a lot of things that no one should have to witness," Maria says, "I honestly don't see myself doing anything other than helping others." She plans to return to graduate school in the fall of 2022 to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA).

"Having someone from Access Academies simply check in on me, that kept me going. I wanted to show them that I was capable of getting ahead in life."

"I like how Access Graduate Support pushed me to do my best. They always made sure I tried to be the best student and person that I could be."

Gabe Garcia

(SLU '18 / SLUH '13 / St. Cecilia School & Academy '09)

This year, Gabe Garcia was promoted to Lead Lab Processing Assistant at the Mayo Clinic's Bone Marrow Lab in Rochester, Minnesota. The St. Cecilia School & Academy alum works with the Clinic's pathologists to order and ensure the accuracy of patients' bone marrow tests. "The most fulfilling part of the job is solving problems," says Gabe, who graduated from Saint Louis University in 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering and has always wanted to work in the medical field. "I know that every problem I fix helps a patient get care, so that makes me feel useful to society." While Garcia is currently taking graduate level courses and applying to the Masters of Biomedical Engineering program at the Mayo Clinic, he's also "toying with the idea of medical school."



Jarred Hall

(Mount Mercy University '20 / Bishop DuBourg High School '16 / Central Catholic Academy '12)

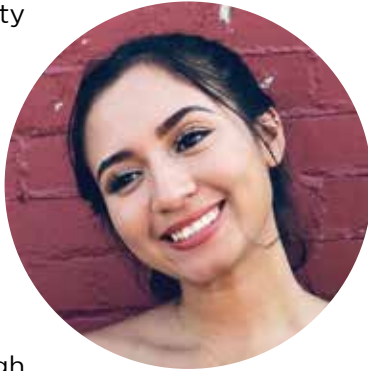
Jarred Hall graduated from Mount Mercy University this spring with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a minor in Sports Health and Exercise. Upon graduation, the honor student and member of the Mount Mercy Men's Volleyball team accepted a position as a Psychiatric Nursing Assistant at University of Iowa Hospital & Clinics. Jarred currently lives in Iowa City and is applying to graduate school to pursue a Master's degree in Nursing with a focus on Psychology. "Mental health is a big topic that often gets overlooked," says Jarred, who aspires to be a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner and a university mental health counselor. "A healthy mind creates an even healthier lifestyle."



Jessica Barreras

(STLCC '20 / Nerinx Hall '17 /
St. Cecilia School & Academy '13)

Jessica Barreras graduated from St. Louis Community College in May with an Associate in Arts degree. This fall, she transferred to the University of Missouri-St. Louis and is working toward her BS in Computer Science. "Jessica is a super hard worker who keeps pushing on through all the ups and downs that life throws her way," says Amy Clark, Access' College & Career Counselor. "Her smarts, kindness, and resiliency will carry her far!"



"We believe every child can reach his or her potential if given the right structure, environment, education, motivation, and inspiration."

—JOHN C. VATTEROTT,
FOUNDER & CHAIR EMERITUS

A gift to Access helps pay for essential after-school enrichment programs, eases the tuition burden on our students' families, and ensures Graduate Support Directors are available at every stage of the 11+ year education journey. Help put our students on a path to success by giving to Access today.

ONLINE

Make a donation by credit/debit card or set up a recurring gift at accessacademies.org/donate.



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St. Louis, MO 63103.



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Rachel DeNoyer

(STLCC '20 / Ursuline Academy '18 /
St. Cecilia School & Academy '14)

This spring, Rachel DeNoyer graduated from St. Louis Community College with an Associate in Arts degree. Rachel transferred to Columbia College Chicago in the fall and is earning her Bachelor's degree in Theater with a concentration in stage-management. "I prefer being behind the scenes and found love in stage-managing," Rachel says. "I get to call the show and be a part of it without actually being on stage."



"My Graduate Support counselor was always there for me when I needed help or had questions about school. And when I was stuck in a financial aid crisis, she gave me great advice and helped me through it."

Our Donors

Bold designates donors who contributed \$1,000 or more.

“Support for Access is an investment in the future leaders of our community.”

—STEVE LAWLER, ACCESS SUPPORTER

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Joan & John Vatterott Family Foundation



Patrick & Mary Sly



"Access is an organization committed to results. While many not-for-profit organizations help people through rough times in life, few take a long-term approach like Access Academies does."

—MONETA GROUP
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

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"I'm excited about what Access is doing to address the persistent disparity in education and academic achievement across the St. Louis region. The Access program helps students achieve academic success, and that leads to success in life. I am thrilled to be a part of this mission."

—CHERYL PETTUS,
FIRST-YEAR BOARD MEMBER

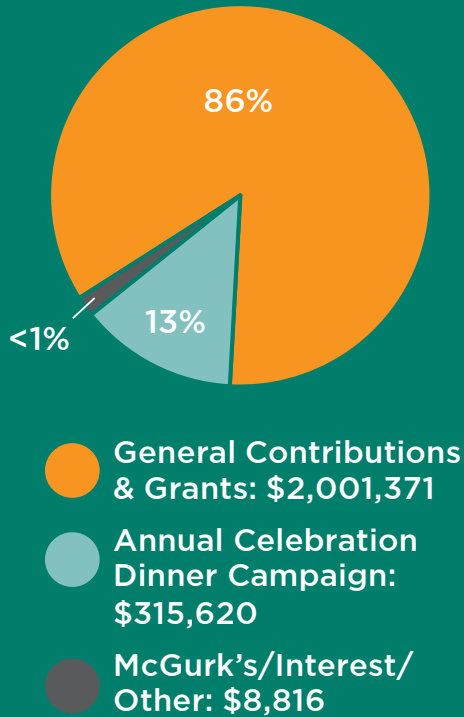
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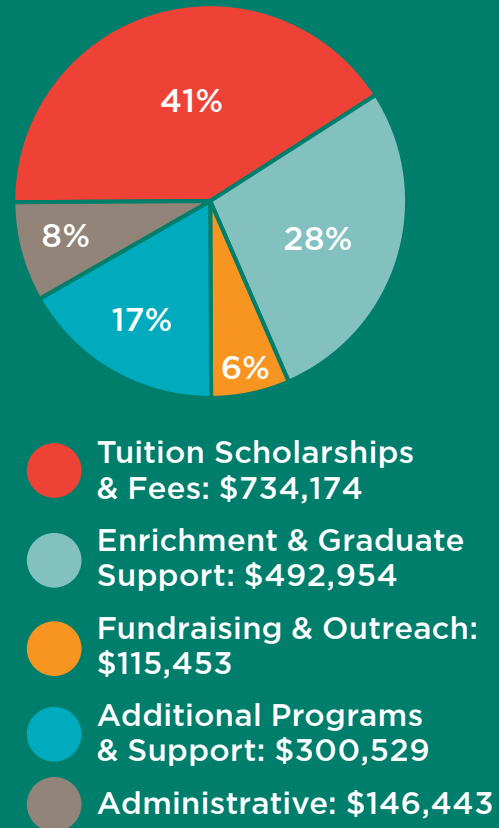
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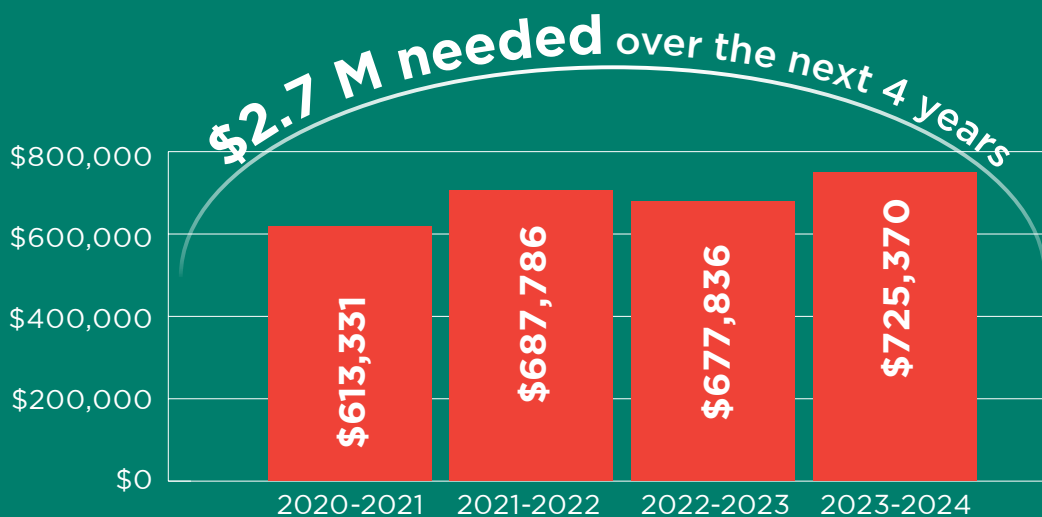
2019-2020 Revenue



2019-2020 Expenses



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Access

Every student. Every chance. Every day.

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