

CIRCLE MATCH

Where leaders come to light.

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023- 2024



CIRCLE MATCH 501(C)(3)

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Circle Match in a Glance

Our Mission

Circle Match is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that serves students attending Title I high schools; the organization targets students who are disconnected from the college-going process. Through our grassroots approach to college advising, we encourage our students to pay it forward within the Circle Match college advising context and beyond.

What We Provide

Students receive expert guidance from advisors who are from the same geographic area, and oftentimes, from the same high school community, so that they have a better social and cultural understanding of where the students are from. Starting from January of their Junior year, Circle Match provides:

- Individualized essay writing instruction
- Advisor-led peer cohorts
- SAT/ACT preparation
- Interview preparation
- Personalized college application strategy
- Long-term Circle Match alumni support

Circle Match also hosts public events where all students and friends are invited to learn about various college application topics and the post-secondary education scape.



Our Team

Board of Directors



MICHAEL SANCHEZ
DIRECTOR OF ACADEMICS
YALE UNIVERSITY 2023
B.A. ENGLISH AND EDUCATION STUDIES



MAX KAPLAN
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA 2016
B.S. POLITICAL SCIENCE AND ECONOMICS



LIZZETT CUERVO
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY
RUTGERS NEWARK 1996
B.A. POLITICAL SCIENCE
M.A. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Advisors



IRENYS REYES
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
CORNELL 2026



AIDEN CLAROS
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
CORNELL 2028



MELISSA VERGARA
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
YALE 2028



ANNALIE DIAZ
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
YALE 2027



NOUR FARHAT
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
WASHINGTON & LEE 2028



ASHLEY CANGANA
NORTH BERGEN HIGH SCHOOL
WASH U

Advisors



LEXA RIVAS
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
MIDDLEBURY 2027



NICO RIVAS
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
MIDDLEBURY 2029



RAYMON ESPARZA
GARFIELD HIGH SCHOOL
UCLA 2028



KAYDEE GARCIA
GARFIELD HIGH SCHOOL
UCLA 2028



DAMIAN CHAMALE
UNION CITY HIGH SCHOOL
BROWN 2026



CECILIA DE LA CRUZ
UNCOMMON LEADERSHIP HIGH SCHOOL
BROWN 2026

Our Program

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CIRCLE MATCH CURRICULUM

In January, students in their junior year from our partner high schools find out whether they have been admitted to the Circle Match program. Students are placed within a cohort of around five students and assigned two advisors who receive on-going training to address the students' academic and social-emotional needs throughout the college application process. Within the program, students:

1. Apply for various programs that serve as formative assessments
2. Refine their writing abilities through 1-on-1 essay feedback
3. Curate a personalized college application list
4. Learn about college application theory
5. Receive interview preparation

Within the curriculum, students apply to the College Prep Scholars program and QuestBridge, which help students understand the rigor of submitting a highly competitive application.

Through each application iteration, advisors provide students with 1-on-1 essay feedback, identifying ways for students to

reflect upon and convey their own stories. With constant practice and constructive feedback, students are able to sharpen their prose while learning ways to hone their writing voice to convincingly and maturely portray themselves. Prior to applying to colleges, students curate a college list based on their many rounds of research and advisor feedback. Simultaneously, students learn about college application theory and implement strategies, such as applying to schools Early Decision (ED). Lastly, students also receive interview preparation and individualized resume feedback.

Upon completion of the program, students join our robust support network where they pay it forward and begin working as a staffer or advisor to younger students.



Special Events

Jan

Circle Match Received 4 Proclamations from Local Government Officials



MAYOR NICHOLAS SACCO



MAYOR ALBIO SIRE



SENATOR BRIAN STACK

Holiday party



Our Circle Match Holiday Party brought together students, advisors, and staff to celebrate and strengthen our community.

Feb

Partnership with Union City High School



In February, we announced our partnership with Union City High School. A huge milestone for expanding college access in NJ and beyond. This collaboration highlights our journey with amazing students and educators toward a brighter and united future.

Mar

NACAC National College Fair: New York City



Circle Match students in junior year cohorts from MHS, NBHS, and UCHS participated in the New York City National College Fair! Students learned about more than 400 colleges and universities, including four-year colleges, two-year colleges, and technical and business schools.

Special Events

Apr

Navigating College Financial Aid



Led by Chris Doran from the University of Virginia, our annual webinar discusses what makes up a financial aid offer. Chris serves as UVA's Director of Communications and Financial Education.

Financial Literacy Event



We hosted an impactful Financial Literacy Event that dives into essential topics like loans, credit, and investing, aiming to equip our youth with the necessary tools for a financially stable future.

Jun

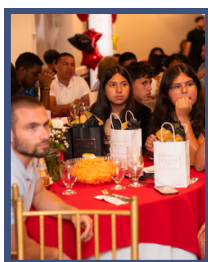
Letter from Senator Cory Booker



Honored to have received a letter from Senator Cory Booker. Grateful for this recognition of the work we continue to do in order to build a stronger community of scholars, activists, and friends.

Jul

Summer Dinner Fundraiser



Our Annual Summer Dinner Fundraiser at Las Palmas in West New York was a joyful celebration of Circle Match's impact. Together, we raised vital funds to support our students' college journeys. This event highlighted the power of community in creating life-changing opportunities for the next generation.

Special Events

Sept — College Speaker and Networking Panel



Thank you to our panelists from Brown University, Harvard, Yale, Stanford University, and UCLA, who joined us for this year's college speaker panel. Students were able to learn what it's like to be a student at their dream universities

and network with current undergraduates who shared their college experiences.

Oct — College Tours



Our high school students visited NYU, Yale University, and UCLA for a 2024 college tour led by

dedicated advisors from their high schools. The experience provided a unique experience to explore what it means to thrive in a dynamic, urban environment. It inspired students to envision themselves in spaces they may not have considered before, expanding their goals and possibilities.

Nov — College Access Information Sessions



We hosted several information sessions throughout the year for over 300 students, discussing the college application process and hearing from current students/advisors who shared their experiences in the program and encouraged students to apply to Circle Match.

Our History

Almost six years have passed since we launched the Circle Match program. During this time, we have studied rigorously; gained deep expertise through application cycles; refined our approach through shared knowledge transfers with community connectors; and helped students navigate the college admissions process. We look back with gratitude that we had the conviction to start our journey and look forward knowing that we are just getting started; indeed, the program has never been better positioned than where we stand today.

The past year has been a transformative year for Circle Match, marked by growth, milestones, and deepened impact. We expanded our reach to serve more schools and students than ever before, celebrated recognition from local and state leaders, and started to establish partnerships with corporations and universities to empower our advisors and students. As we look to the future, we are excited to continue building pathways to college and beyond, creating opportunities for the next generation of changemakers. None of this would be possible without your unwavering support—thank you for being part of our journey toward equity and opportunity.



2023-24 and Beyond

While still at an early stage, we have expanded to a total of six schools in California, New Jersey, and New York. In 2025, we look forward to working with our current schools and aim to expand to a total of 13 Title I schools through diligent research and community outreach activities.



IN-PERSON STUDENT ADVISING



HOMETOWNS GROUP ACTIVITY



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA VISIT

What Sets Us Apart

Unlike other non-profit college advising programs, Circle Match focuses on community, grassroots efforts to combat the injustices currently present in our academic environment. Instead of paying for our services, we provide students with a platform to advise future generations of students from their own communities. This grassroots model and approach ensures sustainable growth for our program.

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After completing the program, our students pay it forward by joining the team to advise students that have walked in their own shoes. As a result, each advisor that works with students understands the context in which they are coming from: whether it be from attending the same high school or being from a town with very similar demographics and culture. This unique perspective ensures that our students know what a compelling college application can look like from their specific high school.

We also prioritize forming a close-knit community among our students and advisors. This creates a support network that aids the student especially when applying to selective colleges and universities which may feel like uncharted territory. It is through this, that our students ultimately attain the college experience of their dreams and choose to come back to continue paying Circle Match's mission of ending educational inequity.



ADVISOR TRAININGS



NYU UNIVERSITY VISIT - NYC



GROUP GATHERINGS

Achievements

Program Highlights

Since 2019, Circle match has served **80 students** across Memorial High School, North Bergen High School, Garfield High School, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt HS in Brooklyn.

For our 2023-2024 cohort of students

- **43%** of our students have been admitted to Ivy Leagues Colleges (vs 5.2% average)
- **98%** of our of students have been admitted to highly selective colleges*
- **78.57%** of our students have been named Questbridge (QB) finalists over the 38% normal acceptance rate*
- **35.71%** of our students were accepted to the College Prep Scholars Program (CPS) over the 30% acceptance rate
- **100%** of our high school advisors are near-peer advisors, i.e. similar in age as our students
- **98%** of students college costs are covered

About our Cohorts

Data from 2023-2024 based on 44 collected anonymous responses from students currently in our junior year program and students who have completed our senior year program:

- **80%** of our students are or will be **first-generation college students**
- **95%** of the students we serve/have served are or were on **free/reduced priced lunch** in high school
- On average, the total family income of our students is **\$44,000 per year**

Of juniors who are currently in the Circle Match program (19 students in 2023):

- Only **26%** (5 of 19) agreed or strongly agreed that they were prepared to complete and submit their college applications prior to joining the Circle Match program
- Only **36%** (7 of 19) felt that there was a college-going culture at their high schools

Of seniors who completed the Circle Match program (25 students between 2019 and 2023):

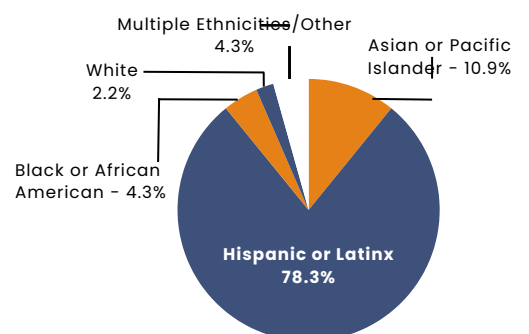
- **100%** agreed that Circle Match helped prepare them for the college application process and increased their chances of getting into a 4-year college or university as a result of the program
- **100%** felt that Circle Match broadened their knowledge of college attainment and felt supported by their advisors to be able to attend a 4-year college or university
- **100%** agreed that the program has made them think more critically about the college application process
- **100%** strongly agreed that they want to pay it forward within the Circle Match program in order to make sure that the help that they received to be admitted to college does not start and end with them.
- **100%** strongly agreed that It is important that they go back to help their home community

Of current student advisors and staff:

- **100%** strongly agreed that they would be willing to help their communities after graduating from college

*Sources cited on circlematchadvisingteam.org

OUR ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN



Achievements

Proclamation from Mayor Nicholas Sacco



This award recognized our steadfast commitment to fostering college access and community development in collaboration with students and school administrators at North Bergen High School!

Proclamation from Mayor Albio Sires



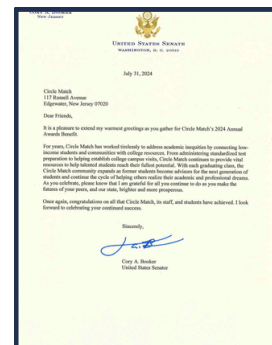
In November of 2023, we received a proclamation from Mayor Albio Sires in recognition of our efforts to create lasting impact on the future of higher education in West New York, NJ!

Received Two Proclamations from Senator Brian Stack



In December 2023, we received two proclamations from Senator Brian Stack, representing both the New Jersey Senate and Union City. Recognizing our impactful work in Hudson County and beyond, we're making strides in education and social impact.

Letter from Senator Cory A. Booker



In August 2024, we received a letter from Senator Cory Booker. Grateful for our recognition of the work we continue to do to build a stronger community of scholars, activists, and friends.

Testimonials

“Circle Match didn’t just help me get into my dream. school-they supported me beyond the application process. They’ve helped me adapt to college, build my network, improve my resume, and find a community of real, meaningful connections.”



Mame Diarra
Memorial High School 2024
NYU 2028



Aimee Perales
Garfield High School 2023
Yale University 2027

“My advisors attended the same high school and know the struggles of our East LA community. Seeing them achieve great things in college provided my cohort the confidence we needed to give it our all. I was able to narrate parts of my story I didn't think I would be comfortable sharing.”

Testimonials

“As a first-gen student, I was worried about the college application process, but through Circle Match there was always an advisor available to reach out to for advice. It was easy to be comfortable in my cohort because I was familiar with the other students being from the same community, going to the same school, and knowing the same teachers.”



Alex Martinez
Garfield High School 2023
University of California,
Los Angeles 2027



Annalie Diaz
Memorial High School 2023
Yale University 2027

“Being able to attend college without any financial burden because of TCAT put me one step closer to repaying my immigrant family for all their sacrifices and getting me to where I currently am.”

Testimonials

“TCAT helped me and provided me with the resources to overcome my writing challenges. I owe it to TCAT for guiding me through every step of the college process. TCAT continued to push me beyond my limitations in every college I applied to, even when I doubted myself. I am grateful for TCAT for the immense love and support they have given me.”



Jaylaan Limon
Memorial High School 2022
Hamilton College 2026



Irenys Reyes
Memorial High School 2022
Cornell University 2026

“I owe it to TCAT for teaching me how to write proper college essays and giving me the resources to improve my writing overall. They gave me the needed support and advice. From introducing us to new people through informational webinars and having one-on-one conversations to check-in on us—I’m glad to say that I survived the college application process.”

”

Testimonials

“TCAT allowed me to explore beyond what I thought was possible. The advice they provided helped me become more confident throughout the college admissions process. They guided me through college essays, interviews, and introduced me to countless opportunities I wasn't aware of. TCAT taught me how to manage my schoolwork and college applications efficiently.”

2022 Amazon Future Engineer Scholarship Recipient



Connie Ortiz
Memorial High School 2022
Brown University 2026



Aileen Rangel
Memorial High School 2022
Rutgers University 2026

“TCAT provided me with the resources I lacked. From having one-on-one meetings with me to discuss my writing abilities to giving me advice on how to find my passion, TCAT made the college application process less stressful than it is. TCAT taught me to never think less of myself because of my background. I am forever grateful to TCAT for pushing me out of my comfort zone and for believing in me.”



COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES 2019-2024

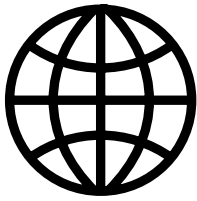
Amherst College	Stanford*
Boston University**	Tufts University
Bowdoin College	UC Berkeley
Brown University**	UCLA*****
Columbia University**	University of Pennsylvania*
Cornell University***	University of Rochester*
Dartmouth College*	USC*
Emory University	University of Virginia **
Georgetown University	Vanderbilt*
Georgia Tech	Vassar College
Hamilton College*	WashU in St. Louis**
Johns Hopkins	Washington and Lee University*
Middlebury College *	Wesleyan University
New York University*	Williams College
Northeastern*	Yale University****
Princeton University*	
Rutgers University*	
Smith College	

*= a Circle Match student has enrolled in this college or university

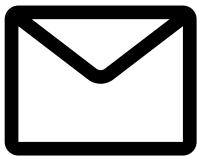
- 100% of Students Admitted to 4-year college/university (200+ Total college Acceptances)
- 98% of Students Admitted to Highly Selective Universities
- 43% of Students Admitted to Ivy League Colleges

Thank You

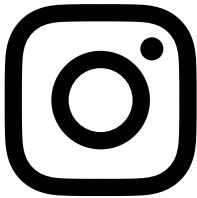
STAY UPDATED



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