

CIRCLE MATCH

Where leaders come to light.

2024

YEAR IN REVIEW



CIRCLE MATCH 501(C)(3)

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Circle Match: at a Glance

Our Mission

Circle Match connects driven students from low-income communities to the college-going process by providing near-peer college advising. Rather than charging students, our self-sustaining approach empowers them to return to Circle Match and pay it forward within their own communities.

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:

- Advisor-led peer cohorts
- Individualized essay writing instruction
- SAT/ACT preparation
- Interview preparation
- Personalized college application strategy
- Long-term Circle Match alumni support
- Leadership development
- Community building events
- College precision 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

Executive Team



MICHAEL SANCHEZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
YALE UNIVERSITY 2023
B.A. ENGLISH; EDUCATION STUDIES SCHOLAR



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



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

Advisors



TERENCE TAN
HEAD ADVISOR
NYU 2015
HARVARD 2016



ELISE FULLER
HEAD ADVISOR
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY 2019



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 IN ST. LOUIS 2027



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 2029



CECILIA DE LA CRUZ
UNCOMMON LEADERSHIP HIGH SCHOOL
BROWN 2027

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 an advisor to younger students or staff fellow.



2024 Highlights

Jan

Circle Match Received 4 Proclamations from Local Government Officials



MAYOR NICHOLAS SACCO



MAYOR ALBIO SIRES



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.

2024 Highlights

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. Mr. Doran serves as UVA's Director of Communications and Financial Education.

Financial Literacy Event



We hosted an impactful Financial Literacy Event by Fernando Moyano that dives into essential topics like loans, credit, and investing, aiming to equip our youth with the necessary tools for a financially stable future. Mr. Moyano is an operational due diligence analyst at Morgan Stanley.

Jun

Letter from Senator Cory Booker



We received a letter from Senator Cory Booker. This letter recognized the work we continue to do in order to build a stronger community of scholars, activists, and friends throughout New Jersey.

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.

2024 Highlights

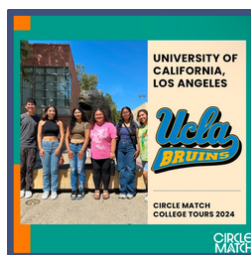
Sept — College Speaker and Networking Panel



Panelists from Brown University, Harvard, Yale, Stanford University, and UCLA, joined us for this year's college speaker panel. Students learned 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 Yale University, NYU, 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.



2024 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.



NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION



HOMETOWNS



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 who have walked in their own shoes. As a result, each advisor who 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.



HIGH SCHOOL VISITS



NYU UNIVERSITY VISIT - NYC



GROUP GATHERINGS

Achievements

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 our students are served or were on free/reduced priced lunch in high school

87% of our students belong to Underrepresented Minority Groups

The average total household income of our students is **\$44,000** per year

BEFORE CIRCLE MATCH:

- ONLY **26%** OF STUDENTS AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT THEY FELT PREPARED TO COMPLETE THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

Program Highlights

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

FOR THE CIRCLE MATCH CLASS OF 2024:

93% were admitted to highly competitive college

100% enrolled in a 4-year college/university

100% felt that Circle Match increased their chances of admission to a 4-year college



AFTER CIRCLE MATCH:

71% have paid it forward within circle match (e.g. offering college advising services)

100% strongly agreed upon the importance of going back to help their home community

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



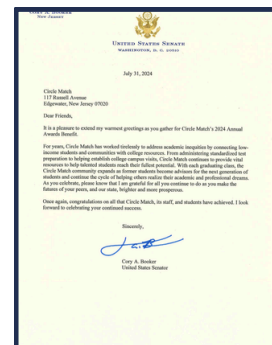
In November of 2023, we received a proclamation from Mayor Albio Sires in recognition of our efforts to create lasting impact on the future of higher education in West New York, NJ!

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. These proclamations recognized our impactful work in Hudson County and beyond where we are making strides in education and social impact.

Letter from Senator Cory A. Booker



In August 2024, we received a letter from Senator Cory Booker who recognized the work we continue to do in building a stronger community of scholars, activists, and friends.

Testimonials

“The most helpful part of Circle Match was the sense of community. While a big focus is on applying to college, having people to rely on when challenges arise or motivation wanes made a huge difference. Being able to connect and talk with others helped me persevere and push through.



Osmel Feliz

Memorial High School 2025



Mame Diarra

Memorial High School 2024
NYU 2028

“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.



“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.



Aimee Perales

Garfield High School 2023
Yale University 2027



Testimonials



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

“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.”

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



Annalie Diaz
Memorial High School 2023
Yale University 2027

“I owe it to Circle Match 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.”



Irenys Reyes
Memorial High School 2022
Cornell University 2026



COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES 2019-2024

Amherst College
Boston University**
Bowdoin College
Brown University**
Columbia University**
Cornell University***
Dartmouth College*
Emory University
Georgetown University
Georgia Tech
Hamilton College*
Johns Hopkins
Middlebury College*
New York University*
Northeastern*
Princeton University*
Rutgers University*
Smith College

Stanford*
Tufts University
UC Berkeley
UCLA*****
University of Pennsylvania*
University of Rochester*
USC*
University of Virginia**
Vanderbilt*
Vassar College
WashU in St. Louis**
Washington & Lee University*
Wesleyan University
Williams College
Yale University****

*= 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

Get Involved

WHY YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS



At Circle Match, we've proven that mentorship and community lead to transformational outcomes. Over the past five years, we've impacted over 80 students at five schools—all through pure volunteerism. To scale, grow, and sustain this success, we need your support.

The Opportunity

With plans to grow to 13 schools next year and 30+ schools by 2027, your support will allow us to:

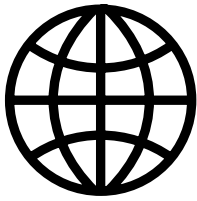
- Expand capacity to serve more students and schools in need of our support.
- Recruit and train advisors to deliver high-quality mentorship and college advising.
- Sustain operations, funding critical programs for college persistence and alumni support.
- Build community programming to guide students to and through college and support their success after graduation.

Your contribution fuels our ability to grow and create lasting change. Join us to bridge opportunity gaps and empower more students to achieve their dreams.

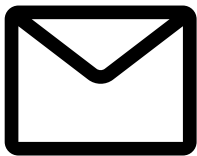
<https://circlematch.org/donate/>

Thank You

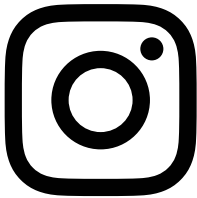
STAY UPDATED



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