

2025



# CIRCLE MATCH

Where leaders come to light.

## 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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2025

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# OUR MISSION

2025



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.



## COMMUNITY MENTORSHIP

Students guided by advisors who share their background



## PATHWAY TO COLLEGE

Structured support to succeed in college admissions



## LEADERSHIP CYCLE

Graduates return to mentor the next generation

# THE CHALLENGE

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## ACCESS GAP

High-achieving, low-income students are **less than half as likely** to enroll in selective colleges.

*Not because of talent — but lack of guidance.*



## COUNSELING GAP

**400+ students** per counselor in most Title I high schools.

*Leaving many students without the support they need to navigate college applications.*



## LACK OF LONG-TERM SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Even when admitted, many programs **fail to encourage persistence** or **create pathways for students to reinvest in their communities.**



# THE CIRCLE MATCH SOLUTION

Circle Match identifies driven students from low-income communities and empowers them to uplift their hometowns through the college application process and beyond.

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## NEAR-PEER MENTORSHIP

Students receive **guidance from advisors who share their geographic and community background**, providing culturally informed mentorship and support.

## SUPPORT BEYOND ADMISSION

Circle Match supports students from admission through college success, not just acceptance

*We don't stop at acceptance — we continue through the journey*

## PAY-IT-FORWARD LEADERSHIP

We believe true impact **extends beyond admission**, supported by **sustained mentorship** and **opportunities to reinvest in one's community**.

# OUR PROGRAM

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE CIRCLE MATCH CURRICULUM

Circle Match supports high-achieving, low-income students through a structured, multi-layered model that combines intensive mentorship with a scalable, community-driven approach. Through both our cohort model and pay-it-forward program, students receive personalized guidance while also contributing to the success of others.

## THE COHORT MODEL

### Matching Students with Advisors

Students are selected in their junior year of high school and placed into small cohorts. Each student is paired with trained advisors (alumni of the program) who provide over 80 hours of consistent, individualized support throughout the college application process. This 1:1 mentorship ensures that students receive guidance tailored to their academic goals, personal context, and aspirations.

### A Holistic Approach to Student Success

Circle Match takes a comprehensive approach to supporting students, addressing both academic and social-emotional needs. Advisors help students navigate challenges, build confidence, and develop the skills necessary to succeed in competitive college environments.

### Building a Strategic College Application Plan

Students work closely with their advisors to develop a personalized college strategy. This includes identifying best-fit schools, crafting compelling personal statements, preparing for interviews, and managing application timelines. The goal is to equip each student with the tools and confidence to navigate an often complex and opaque admissions process.

## A NETWORK THAT EXTENDS BEYOND COLLEGE ADMISSION

Circle Match's impact extends beyond the initial cohort experience through a structured pay-it-forward model.

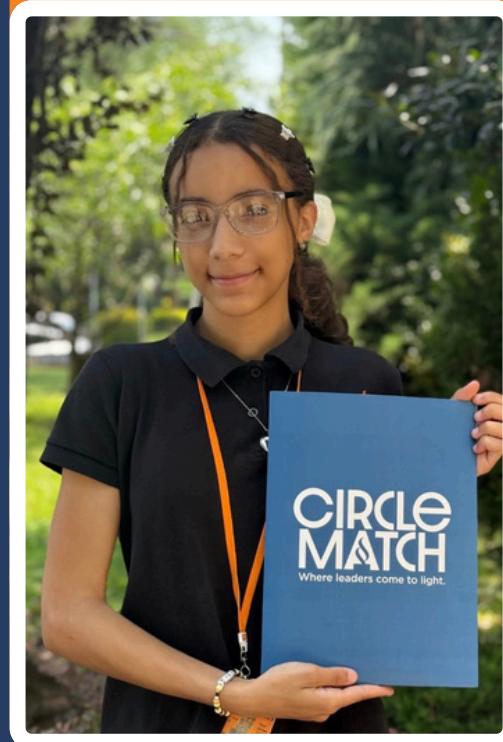
### Alumni Advisors

Circle Match alumni, now in college, return as advisors and provide approximately 80 hours of 1:1 mentorship to an average of five students each. Many remain involved for multiple years, often continuing their support throughout their college experience. Their recent, firsthand perspective makes them uniquely effective mentors.

### High School Peer Mentors

Current high school students in the cohort program also contribute by each mentoring approximately five peers (on average) from their own schools. While navigating their own college application journeys, they extend guidance and support within their communities, helping to broaden access to information and resources.

Through this layered approach, Circle Match creates a self-sustaining model where each student supported has the opportunity to support others—expanding reach, deepening impact, and strengthening communities over time.



OUR UNIQUE APPROACH

# WHAT MAKES CIRCLE MATCH DIFFERENT

**A PAY-IT-FORWARD  
MODEL THAT CREATES  
LASTING IMPACT**



Circle Match doesn't just help students get college, to and through college, it creates a cycle of leadership. Students return as advisors, mentors, and changemakers in their own communities, multiplying the impact year after year.



**ADVISORS WHO  
UNDERSTAND THE  
STUDENTS THEY  
SERVE**



Our advisors come from the same communities and share similar experiences and backgrounds with the students that they mentor.

Students aren't just guided, they are supported by someone who has walked the same path.



## SUPPORT THAT GOES BEYOND COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE



Circle Match supports alumni (current college students) by pairing them with head advisors that support them through:

- Executive function coaching
- Leadership skills
- Transitioning to college

The goal is not just admission, it is long-term success.

## BUILDING LEADERS WHO RETURN TO STRENGTHEN THEIR COMMUNITIES



Circle Match was designed to combat urban brain drain by encouraging students to stay connected to and invest in their hometowns.

Through mentorship, community programming, and volunteer leadership opportunities, students become future mentors and community leaders.



# 2025 Highlights



## Expansion to New York City: First School Launch in Brooklyn

With funding from the Nicholas B. Ottaway Foundation, Circle Match launched its first New York City program at Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School, marking a major step in our geographic expansion.

## Pass the Torch Event: Celebrating Community and Impact

Our Pass the Torch event united students, advisors, and community leaders to celebrate paying it forward. The evening highlighted the strength of our community and the lasting impact of our near-peer model.



## People's Choice Winner: Blackstone Gives Back Challenge

Circle Match was honored as the People's Choice winner of the Blackstone Gives Back Challenge, recognizing the strength of our mission and community support. This milestone reflects the impact of our students and advisors and the growing momentum behind our work.



## Hudson Gives: Exceeding Our Fundraising Goal

Circle Match raised over \$33,000 during Hudson Gives 2025, exceeding our goal and ranking among the top participating nonprofits. This milestone highlights the momentum behind our mission and the breadth of support from our community.



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# 2025 Highlights



## Penguin Party: Annual Orientation Kickoff

Our annual Penguin Party launches each new cohort, pairing students with advisors and introducing them to the Circle Match experience. It's a defining moment that sets the tone for the year ahead and establishes the connections that support students through the college process.

## New Jersey Expansion: East Orange School District Partnership

Circle Match launched in the East Orange School District, expanding to three high schools and supporting a new cohort of juniors through our programming. This milestone reflects our growing reach and ability to bring college access support to new communities.



## First-Ever Circle Match Retreat

Circle Match hosted its first-ever retreat, bringing together rising seniors, advisors, and alumni for a day focused on connection and reflection before application season. This milestone introduced a new way to support students beyond programming, creating space for community, celebration, and reset.

# THE IMPACT OF CIRCLE MATCH

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY WHERE IT'S NEEDED MOST

100%

ADMITTED TO A 4-YEAR COLLEGE

96%

ADMITTED TO A TOP 25 UNIVERSITY

33%

ADMITTED TO AN IVY LEAGUE COLLEGE

75%

PAY IT FORWARD AFTER COMPLETION

ABOUT OUR STUDENTS (Class of 2025 Survey)

83%

FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

94%

UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY GROUPS

89%

FREE/REDUCED PRICE LUNCH IN SCHOOL

~62K

AVG. ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

100%

FELT CM INCREASED ADMISSION CHANCES



# CIRCLE MATCH

Where leaders come to light.

## COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES 2020-2025

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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**
Harvard University*	Washington & Lee*
Johns Hopkins	Wesleyan University
Middlebury College**	Williams College
New York University*	Yale University****
Northeastern*	
Princeton University*	
Rutgers University**	
Smith College	

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

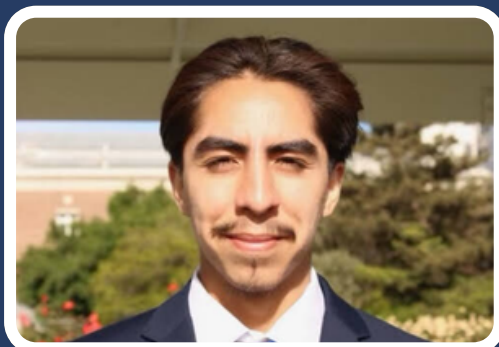
**100%** of Students Admitted to 4-year college/university (250+ Total college Acceptances)

**96%** of Students Admitted to Highly Selective Universities

**33%** of Students Admitted to Ivy League Colleges

# TESTIMONIALS

2025



## ALEX MARTINEZ

*UCLA 2027 | GARFIELD HIGH SCHOOL 2023*

"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."



## DAMIAN CHAMALE

*BROWN 2029 | UNION CITY HIGH SCHOOL 2025*

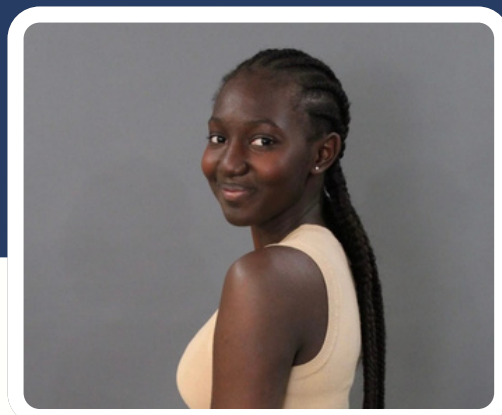
"While working on essays, I was able to reflect introspectively on my identity, allowing me to grow as both a person and as a writer. Circle Match broadened my perspective and gave me the confidence I needed to look outside the colleges in my area and consider some of the best in the country."



## LEXA RIVAS

*MIDDLEBURY 2027 | MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL 2023*

"Because of Circle Match advisors and peers, I didn't have to go through the college application process alone. The near-peer advisors understood how we felt as incoming first generation college students. The parent resources also allowed my parents to familiarize themselves with the process"



## MAME DIAKHATE

*NYU 2028 | MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL 2024*

"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."

# WHY YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

2025



## HELP US SUSTAIN SUCCESS

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



## THE OPPORTUNITY

With plans to grow to 20 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

