



**TCAT**

# YEAR IN REVIEW 2022



**TIGER COLLEGE ADVISING TEAM,  
501(C)(3)**

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# TCAT in a Glance

## Our Mission

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Tiger College Advising Team (TCAT) 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 TCAT college advising context and beyond.

## What We Provide

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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, TCAT provides:

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

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



# Letter From the Executive Director

Dear Reader,

This has been a monumental year in TCAT's history. The past year, 2022, finally brought back a sense of normalcy in the wake of a world-shattering pandemic. Yet, in this year, our hope was to hold onto and remember the instances of systemic racism and classism that the pandemic brought to light. We used these reflections to guide us forward in our journey toward making college accessible to students from our partner schools and beyond. In the silent winter of the pandemic we reflected, but now we are empowered to use those insights we gained in order to inform and propel our activism.

During 2022, we took actionable steps to build community within TCAT. We have worked to empower our students and staff members to understand that they are members of a larger macrocosm. We believe that the students we are serving in TCAT have the potential to be huge leaders in their communities and through the pay-it-forward approach, we hope to mobilize our students to become stakeholders within their respective communities. Together, through the help of TCAT and their dedicated work, we hope to cultivate thoughtful and engaged college students and leaders.

As you read on, I want to thank you for your willingness to support and engage in the TCAT mission. We appreciate you so much.

Best,

Michael A. Sanchez  
Executive Director





# Our Team

## Board of Directors

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



**ELIZABETH AGUIRRE**  
**DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS**  
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY 2022  
B.S. COMPUTER ENGINEERING



**MAX KAPLAN**  
**DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY**  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA 2016  
B.S. POLITICAL SCIENCE AND ECONOMICS  
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT PROFESSIONAL AT  
ACCENTURE



**LIZZETT CUERVO**  
**DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY**  
RUTGERS NEWARK 1996, UNIVERSITY OF  
PHOENIX 2011  
B.A. POLITICAL SCIENCE  
M.A. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

# Advisors

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**IRENYS REYES**  
3RD/4TH YEAR ADVISING FELLOW -  
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL  
EMORY UNIVERSITY 2026  
B.S. BIOLOGY



**JAYLAAN LIMON**  
3RD/4TH YEAR ADVISING FELLOW -  
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL  
HAMILTON COLLEGE 2026  
B.A. PUBLIC POLICY



**IVAN JEREZ**  
3RD/4TH YEAR ADVISING FELLOW - NORTH  
BERGEN HIGH SCHOOL  
BROWN UNIVERSITY 2025  
B.A. PSYCHOLOGY



**ANGELICA GARCIA**  
3RD/4TH YEAR ADVISOR - GARFIELD HIGH  
SCHOOL  
UC BERKELEY 2024  
B.A. SOCIOLOGY, CHICANX STUDIES, EDUCATION



**OZZY CABRALES**  
3RD/4TH YEAR ADVISOR - GARFIELD HIGH  
SCHOOL  
YALE UNIVERSITY 2024  
B.S. ECONOMICS, DATA SCIENCE



**EMMANUEL ZAPATA**  
1ST/2ND YEAR ADVISOR - NORTH BERGEN HIGH  
SCHOOL  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA 2024  
B.S. BIOLOGY, COGNITIVE SCIENCE

# Advisors and Staff



**ERICK MARROQUIN**  
1ST/2ND YEAR ADVISOR - MEMORIAL  
HIGH SCHOOL  
YALE UNIVERSITY 2024  
B.S. ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING



**SHELYN CASTELLANOS**  
1ST/2ND YEAR ADVISOR - MEMORIAL  
HIGH SCHOOL  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY 2025  
B.S. MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



**AILEEN RANGEL**  
MARKETING FELLOW  
RUTGERS NEW BRUNSWICK 2026  
B.S. COMPUTER SCIENCE



**LEWIS STIVAL**  
ADMISSIONS SPECIALIST  
LAFAYETTE COLLEGE 1979, DREW UNIVERSITY 1993  
A.B. ENGLISH, M.A. ENGLISH



**SUMMER 2022 TEAM BBQ**

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# Our Program

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE TCAT CURRICULUM

In January, students in their junior year from our partner high schools find out whether they have been admitted to the TCAT 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.

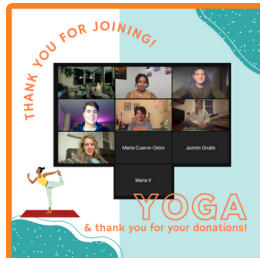
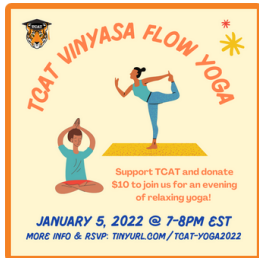
Upon completion of the program, students join our robust support network where they pay it forward and begin working as a staffer or advisor to younger students.





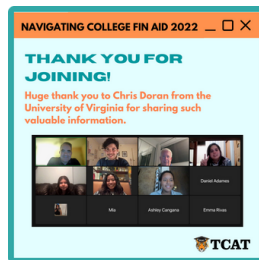
# Special Events

## Jan Vinyasa Flow Yoga Fundraiser



This relaxing yoga session is TCAT's inaugural fundraiser. Thank you to Maura Santana-Kaplan for leading the call. We raised over \$1,000 because of your generous support!

## 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.

## Blair Academy College Fair



Our TCAT juniors spoke with several college admissions representatives from over 90 colleges at the Blair Academy college fair.

## Aug Summer Dinner Fundraiser



Our inaugural Summer Dinner Fundraiser was held at Lolita's Mexican Cantina in North Bergen. We had a lot of fun celebrating the success of TCAT with food, music, and dancing. Because of you, we were able to raise over \$3,000 to help us expand our outreach and support efforts!

# Special Events

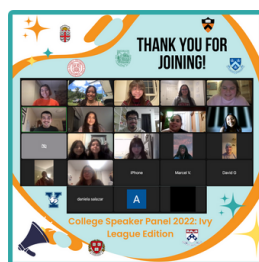
## Oct — College Speaker and Networking Panel : Ivy League Edition



Thank you to our featured panelists from Brown University, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, and Yale who joined us for this year's college speaker panel! Students were

able to network and hear about what it's like to be a student at their dream universities from current undergraduates who shared their college experiences.

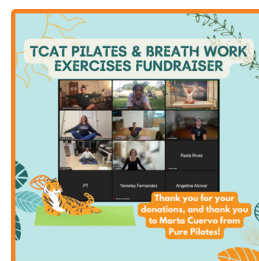
## College Speaker and Networking Panel



Part two of our College Speaker and Networking Panel 2022 Series featured current undergraduates from Johns Hopkins University, MIT, Northwestern, Pomona College, Stanford, University of Virginia, Wesleyan University, and

Williams College. Thank you to the panelists for your time and insights!

## Nov — Pilates & Breathwork Exercises Fundraiser



Thank you to everyone who donated and came out for our pilates class! Thank you to Marta Cuervo from Pure Pilates for her wonderful instruction. We had so much fun learning about body control movements and new breathing techniques.

# Our History

Almost four years have passed since we launched the TCAT 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 61 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.

In March of 2020, as a fairly new program that was running for slightly less than a year, everything seemed to be running smoothly. However, once the COVID pandemic emerged, we shifted our advising program to a fully virtual format. Instead of having in-person meetings, we conducted virtual meetings and panels. At first, we thought that this was going to halt our progress, but we relied on these new forms of communication as leverage and continued our growth as an organization at an even more rigorous pace. The TCAT program has hosted panels with multiple speakers from various parts of the world, while also continuing to advise its students from virtually anywhere. Not only that, but we have also been able to build our brand through social media platforms such as Youtube and Instagram in order to share our message.





# 2022 and Beyond

While still at an early stage, we have expanded to a total of four schools in California, New Jersey, and New York. In 2022, TCAT decided to remove our freshman and sophomore program in order to serve more students by shifting our focus to juniors and seniors who need college support most immediately.



**IN-PERSON STUDENT ADVISING**



**HOMETOWNS GROUP ACTIVITY**



**COLUMBIA COLLEGE VISIT**

In 2023, we look forward to working with our current schools and aim to expand to three additional Title I schools through diligent research and community outreach activities.



# What Sets Us Apart

Unlike other non-profit college advising programs, TCAT focuses on community, grassroots efforts to combat the injustices currently present in our academic environment. Instead of paying for our services, we provide them 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 TCAT's mission of ending educational inequity.



TCAT ADVISOR TRAININGS



COLUMBIA COLLEGE VISIT - NYC



ICE CREAM BREAK

# Achievements

## Program Highlights

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

For our 2019–2022 cohort of students

- **61.5%** of our students have been admitted to Ivy Leagues Colleges (vs 5.2% average)
- **84.6%** of our of students have been admitted to a top 25 university and/or liberal arts college\*
- **53.8%** of our students have been named Questbridge (QB) finalists over the 38% normal acceptance rate\*
- **44%** 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

## About our Cohorts

Data 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 TCAT 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 TCAT program
- Only **36%** (7 of 19) felt that there was a college-going culture at their high schools

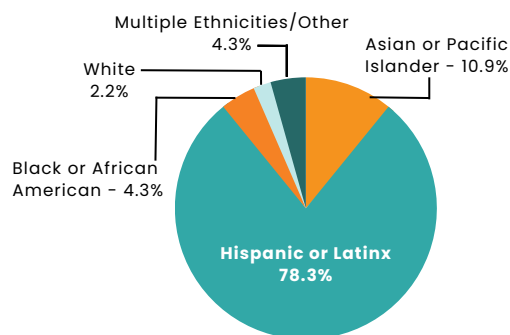
Of seniors who completed the TCAT program (25 students between 2019 and 2023):

- **100%** agreed that TCAT 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 TCAT 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 TCAT 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

### OUR ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN



\*Sources cited on tigercollegeadvisingteam.org

# 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  
Emory 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 2019-2022

Amherst College  
Boston University  
Bowdoin College  
Brown University\*\*  
Columbia University\*\*  
Cornell University\*  
Dartmouth University\*  
Drexel University  
Emory University\*  
Fordham University  
Georgia Tech

Stevens Tech  
The College of New Jersey  
Tufts University  
University of Georgia  
University of Pennsylvania\*  
University of Virginia\*  
Vassar College  
WashU in St. Louis\*  
Wesleyan University  
Williams College  
Yale University\*\*

Hamilton College\*  
Johns Hopkins  
Middlebury College  
Monmouth University  
Montclair State University  
New York University  
Rutgers University\*  
Seton Hall University  
Smith College  
St. Peter's University

\*=student has enrolled at this college

# Get Involved

## HOW YOU CAN HELP



With each student we advise, we continue to forge a stronger community of scholars, activists, and friends. We encourage you now to join our community and continue supporting us with donations in our fight toward making college accessible for all.

### **Where your donations go:**

- TCAT Support Network
- Professional development workshops
- SAT/ACT prep
- Fundraiser activities
- Funding college visits
- Internal operations
- Advisor trainings
- Running our website

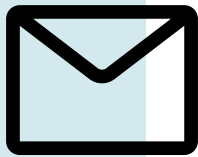
<https://tigercollegeadvisingteam.org/donate/>

# Thank You

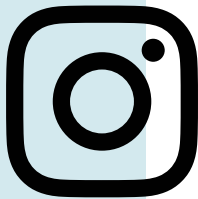
## STAY UPDATED



<https://tigercollegeadvisingteam.org/>



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@tigercollegeadvisingteam

