



ANNUAL REPORT

JUNE 1, 2023 - MAY 31, 2024



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Thank you!

I need to make a confession.

As an Executive Director, there are detailed expectations of me to drive toward outcomes and have clear KPIs and build sound budgets and manage the innumerable other responsibilities that come with a leadership role. Thankfully, those are things I do well. But deep down it's not the KPIs and balanced budgets that get me revved up every day. It's not even our amazing outcomes.

I'm a dreamer. A hopeful, optimistic, believe-in-what's-possible dreamer.

What gets me excited is finding ways to help young people access their very best selves. For them to have opportunities to lead fulfilling lives of purpose and have the best chance to achieve their individual definition of success.

So, at Breakthrough, we build our KPIs and budgets and programs around accomplishing that: developing and supporting young people into becoming healthy, fulfilled adults who contribute positively to society.

You already know from our results that we are incredible at the college access part of our work—our students graduate high school at very high rates and earn grants and scholarships at levels which significantly reduce, or eliminate, the financial burden after college. But the constantly evolving, and critically important, part of our work is the messy and beautiful effort of engaging with humans.

We don't just want to support a generation of young people who overcome systemic barriers to graduate from college. We want those individuals to become adults who lead classrooms and organizations, who become ethical elected officials, who volunteer and support important causes, and who are amazing parents to the next generation of leaders.

It doesn't matter if you are a student, faculty member, volunteer, donor, or staff member, when you are a part of Breakthrough Twin Cities you are part of a community that invests in one another. We encourage each other to be our full selves, we show up to performances and games, we admit when we make mistakes and we genuinely work to do better, we find ways to constantly improve, and we believe in what's possible when a small group of committed people come together with a purpose.

As you review this report, I hope you'll dream along with us. And then roll up your sleeves because we have meaningful work to do.



Josh Reimnitz
Executive Director



Tanya Schmitt Board Chair

Greetings BTC Community!

In my second year as Board Chair, I continue to be so inspired by the impact of Breakthrough Twin Cities. We are making an incredible impact through our programs thanks to the staff, Teaching Fellows, faculty, and volunteers who give generously of their time, energy, and talents to our scholars. None of it is possible without the commitment, motivation, and engagement of Breakthrough students! They sign up as sixth graders and work toward their future goals throughout all of their middle and high school years - it's impressive!

All of the metrics and outcomes achieved are truly admirable. However, I feel the most extraordinary part of our program is the community—fostering relationships, mutual learning, and giving young people space and time to develop their full selves over the long term. In a world that continues to be divisive, challenging, and full of inequity, Breakthrough has been and continues to be an inspiration and an example of what is possible.

As we look forward to our 20th anniversary in 2025, I invite everyone reading this to think of one new way you can engage. Think of the opportunity and potential impact you can make as part of the BTC Community! There are many ways to be involved and support programming, including Saturday Sessions, essay writing, career panels, senior celebration, and more. The BTC Board is excited to celebrate this milestone with our community at the 2025 Booyah Bash!

I'm endlessly inspired by this organization and community. I believe we should all strive to live the Breakthrough Codes that our students demonstrate: striving to understand, relishing hard work together, being grateful, being curious, living the growth mindset, and persisting. I hope to reconnect or meet you in the year ahead as we support and advance the important work of Breakthrough Twin Cities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Schmitt', written in a cursive style.

Be Breakthrough,
Tanya Schmitt

STRATEGIC PLAN

This was the first year of a three-year strategic journey to explore how Breakthrough Twin Cities can best leverage our model to get the most out of our mission. This strategic direction creates opportunities to try new activities, focuses on improving processes, and emphasizes sustainability in programs and resources.

Please reach out if you would like to learn more!

1 Increasing the impact of student-facing programs



Strengthening the pipeline of diverse future educators

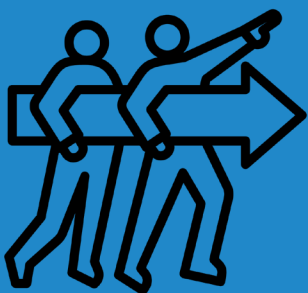
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3 Solidifying the model for a sustainable, scalable program

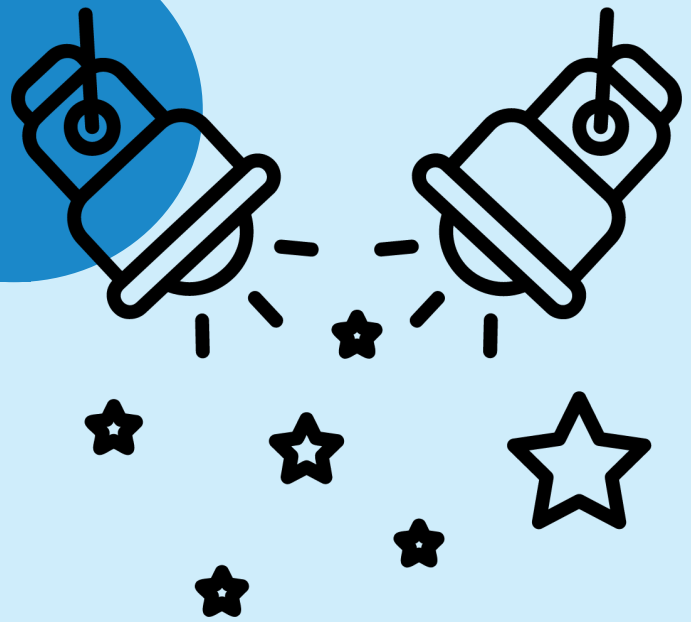


Assembling and developing the human capabilities needed to lead future growth

4



STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS



Best friends **Jaya Chang and Summer Lee** were the first speakers at Breakthrough's second annual Senior Celebration. We honored the Class of 2024 and their families at the Maplewood Community Center on Saturday, May 11th, 2024.

"It truly is a privilege to be a part of such an amazing community with so many amazing people," Jaya began her speech.

She emphasized her gratitude for those who support Breakthrough Twin Cities' program, and the overwhelming support it provided her in turn. It was valuable and inspiring to be a part of such a diverse community.

"It brings me so much happiness to see people who look like me and who come from similar backgrounds as me get an opportunity to pursue their dreams," Jaya said.

Being, and staying, in Breakthrough is a decision students and families don't take lightly. It is a six-year commitment, from 6th to 12th grade.

"We've been a part of Breakthrough for almost a third of our lives. That's insane!" Summer said in her speech. "I would not be here today if it weren't for you guys."

Like many Breakthrough students, Summer is a first-generation college student. This is an incredible accomplishment, which she said was made easier through the resources Breakthrough provided. She gave a special shoutout to College Counselor, Martha Malinski, for being by her side during junior and senior year.

"I really do cherish Breakthrough and all the memories I made with friends and staff," Summer said.

In the Fall of 2024, both girls entered their freshman year of college knowing they have a whole community rooting for them. Jaya is attending Gustavus Adolphus College and Summer is attending the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, loan-free.



Sebastian Trujillo first learned about Breakthrough in fifth grade, thanks to his older brother, Maddox (**BTC Class of 2022**). Two years later, when his own first Breakthrough summer approached, the idea of spending his summers learning felt daunting. However, he had no idea the impact it would have for him and his family.

In his speech at the 2024 Senior Celebration, he fondly recalled those summers at Central High School. Teaching Fellows equipped students with skills to prepare them for the next school year, but also entertained them with (not so great) parody songs.

“As a first-generation college student, it provided me with a crucial head start and guided me through the daunting college application process,” Sebastian said.

Breakthrough helped develop him into a driven and successful student. In 11th grade, Sebastian took Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) classes which allowed him to earn college credit while he was still in high school. He cited the unwavering support of the Breakthrough community as a reason he felt confident entering a program like that.

Sebastian now attends the University of Minnesota, majoring in psychology. Because of all his hard work, he was excited to enter university as a Junior!

“To everyone who has supported me on this journey, thank you for believing in me and being a source of strength,” Sebastian closed his speech. “I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all who have played a part in shaping my path.”

As a 2024 graduate, **Kelly Joachin Valdez** entered high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The traditional experience of freshman year was lost to shutdowns and what she described as “accidentally falling asleep through online classes.”

During the chaos, Kelly and her Breakthrough class unfortunately also missed their third in-person summer, and the college trip that comes with that. They didn’t get to go on the annual 9th-grade, also called Breakthrough Leadership Program (BLP), trip to stay on a college campus, bond, and learn leadership skills. This experience is something students look forward to as part of their last summer with Breakthrough, and the transition from Middle School to High School programming.

However, in February 2023, Breakthrough gave the Class of 2024 a chance to go on a trip in place of the missed BLP trip back in 2020. The group traveled to visit several schools, including University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Chicago, and DePaul University. They were able to reconnect with old friends, many of whom they hadn’t seen in a long time.

“We had all grown into thoughtful and curious individuals,” Kelly said. “Whether we knew it or not, our collective experience at Breakthrough had shaped us into upstanding young adults. Young adults that knew how to be respectful, hardworking, and silly.”

For Kelly, Breakthrough was much more than just a college access program. Following the Breakthrough codes encouraged her to join clubs and sports at school, raise her hand in class, and grow as a person.

“It was the lessons learned during those days [at Breakthrough] that have made me, and many others, who we are today.”



L-R: Sebastian Trujillo ('24), Shana Dukes (TF Alum), Haben Neguse ('24), and Raniya Abawari ('24) at the Senior Celebration



Kelly Joachin Valdez ('24) at the 2024 Senior Trip

BREAKTHROUGH CODES

Live the



Growth Mindset

We embrace hard work, accept feedback, and are willing to make mistakes. We know that the only way to get better at something is through effort and practice. We measure our success in terms of our own effort and growth over time, and not by comparing ourselves to the achievements of others.

Persist

We stick to a task until we complete it, even if it means taking a path we weren't anticipating. We try hard and do not get distracted, even if it is something that is difficult or uncomfortable. We do not give up easily. We use our resources to get the support we need.



Be Grateful

We are grateful for the opportunities given to us and work to make Breakthrough a great experience for everyone. We say "Thank you," take care of others, and go the extra mile to make Breakthrough a fun place to be. We know we are appreciated as much as we appreciate our peers.



We listen carefully to what everyone has to say and make sure that we understand each person's unique point of view. We are patient and try to understand someone who sees things or does things differently from us.



Strive to Understand

Be Curious

We strive to be informed and educated people, actively listening to others because we are interested in learning from diverse experiences.

We are always exploring and learning new things. We ask questions to better understand hard topics and take the initiative to learn something new.



We are passionate about learning and being together. We know that Breakthrough is hard work and that what we learn at is important for our future – but we have fun doing that work because we enjoy doing it together!



Relish Hard Work Together



We take advantage of the time we spend together to get the most out of the experience. We show up on time, come to Breakthrough each day prepared, and have a positive attitude. Being Breakthrough means stepping up and taking ownership of our experiences and approaching new situations and peers as our authentic selves.



Be Breakthrough!

At A GLANCE...

Breakthrough Twin Cities supports students on their journey to college by fostering a community of mutual learning with the next generation of educators so they both can collaborate, grow, and thrive.



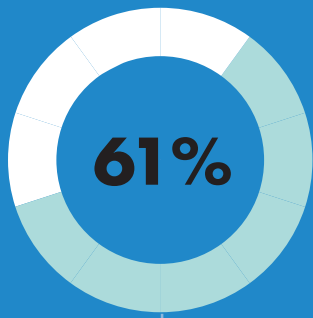
Breakthrough has served
1,648 students
since 2005

During 2023 - 2024,
560 students
were being served in
grades 7 - 12

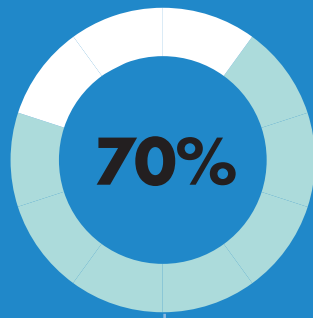


63%
of Teaching Fellow
alumni work in the
field of education

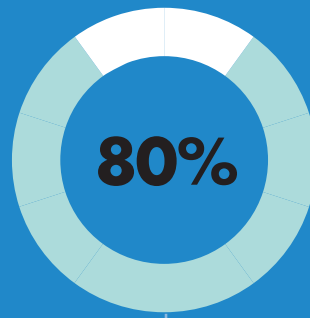
Middle School Outcomes:



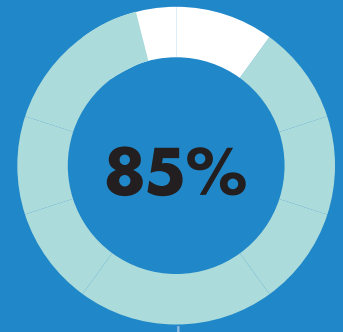
enroll in at least one honors course per term



report feeling better prepared for the next school year because of BTC

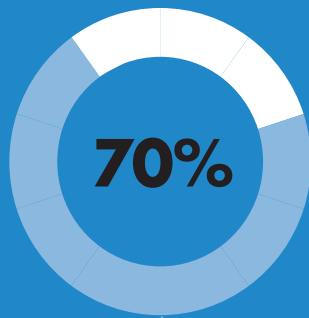


report that they have strong, positive, college-going role models at BTC

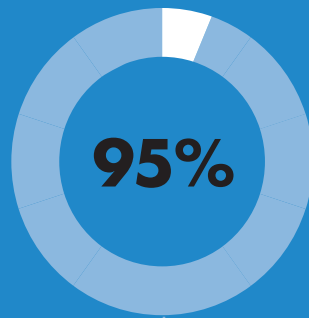


report that they belong in a supportive environment at BTC

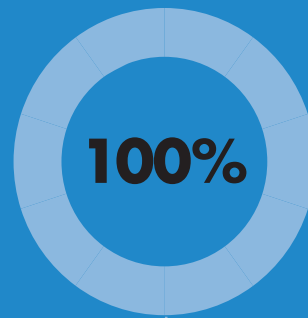
High School Outcomes:



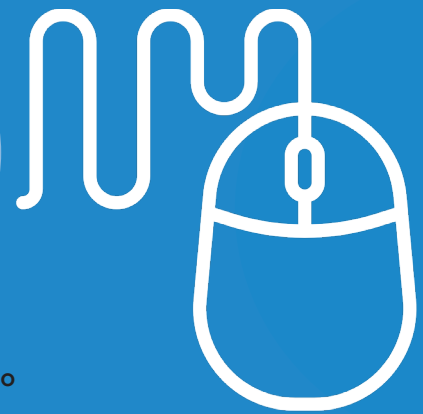
enrolled in at least one honors course



graduate from high school in four years



who apply are accepted to college or university

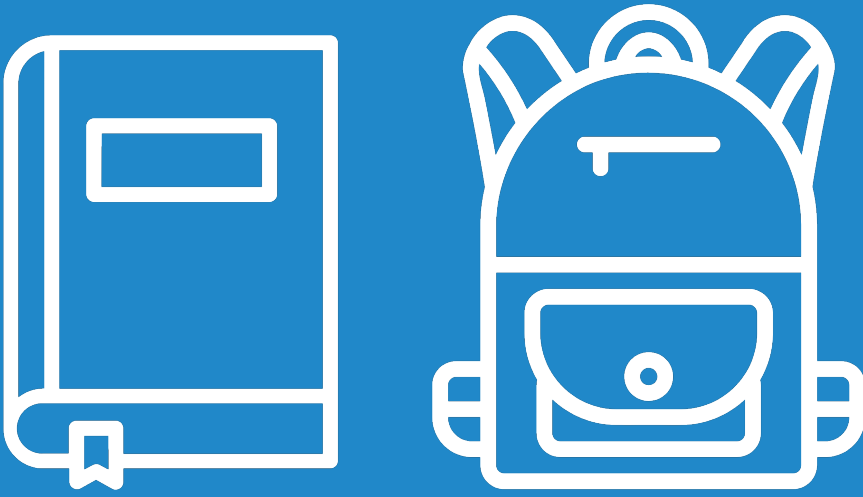


PROGRAM UPDATES

Our **Middle School Program** provides dynamic academic instruction together with social-emotional skill-building and community building, along with hands-on experiences with STEM, the arts, college, and careers. Students gather during a five-and-a-half-week summer program and monthly school year sessions. Students receive ongoing advising through academic monitoring, mentorship, and referrals to community resources.

Our **2023 Summer Program** began on Wednesday, June 28th and ended with a celebration on Saturday, August 5th. We hosted 360 students total—68 at Chanhassen High School, 149 at Washington Tech Middle School, and 141 at Mounds Park Academy. Monday through Thursday, students participated in their academic enrichment classes, with Fridays centering on community building and field trips. Students went on field trips to the Science Museum of Minnesota as part of our intensive STEM week and the Minnesota State Capitol where students presented bills they wrote in class!

The **Breakthrough Leaders Program (BLP)** is for our rising ninth-grade students to develop their leadership skills and get ready for high-school. Ninth-grade students are invited to an extended overnight summer trip at a college! This opportunity is a capstone of their middle school experience, hosted during the students' third summer. Students are introduced to new and challenging scenarios outside of their comfort zone and learn to lean on each other for support. In July 2023, students experienced a four-day/three-night retreat at St. John's University. Upon their return, our BLPs take the lead in developing the theme for a week, determining and leading student activities, as well as supporting the Teaching Fellows.



Typical **School Year Saturday Session** activities featured our core college prep curriculum while incorporating more community building and culturally relevant activities, such as conversations around race and structural inequities in education. This is in addition to our hallmark college preparation support, financial literacy development, and fun.

Our **College Bound (High School) Program** helps students navigate school, the rigors of college preparation, and other challenges as they grow and develop. Students gather at the monthly Saturday Sessions and receive individualized college counseling and mentorship. In July, we also hosted a two-day workshop for our high school students focused on preparing for the upcoming school year, ACT preparation, course selections, preparing for college visits, etc.



Our students demonstrate incredible potential, and face multiple barriers to enrolling in or graduating from college:

98%

identify as a race under-represented in college

86%

eligible for free or reduced lunch

78%

first generation college students

65%

speak a language other than English at home

29%

live in a single parent household

TEACHING FELLOWS



Breakthrough prepares the next generation of effective, culturally competent educators. Over the summer program, Teaching Fellows gain 150+ hours of hands-on classroom experience through instruction to our 7th - 9th grade students. They also learn under the guidance of Instructional Coaches who are licensed teachers.

Our **Teaching Fellow Program** hires diverse and talented young people—college students and mature high school students—to teach our middle-school students in the summer. Fellows are trained by BTC staff and Instructional Coaches (licensed MN teachers) in BTC pedagogical practices that make learning effective, relevant, and fun!

We want to be leaders in the field for equitable pay for aspiring educators. For summer 2023, our stipend for Teaching Fellows increased and we also continued offering free housing as an additional incentive for our Teaching Fellow applicants, especially our international college students and Teaching Fellows from other states. Applicants who applied early action received 100% of housing costs covered and those applied after regular decision received costs covered on a needs basis.

We hired 55 Teaching Fellows in Summer 2023. Of which:

69% identified as people of color
* compared to 5.9% of teachers in MN (2024)

25% had at least one year of Breakthrough teaching experience

16% were previously Breakthrough students

36% were male
* compared to 23% of male teachers nationally (2020-21)

91% were college-aged

TEACHING FELLOW SPOTLIGHTS



Tarrell is a Business Administration and Sports Management student at Hartwick College. This Brooklyn native spent his summer as a math Teaching Fellow at the Eastern Carver County (ECC) site. Although

Tarrell doesn't plan to become a teacher, he excelled in this role. He faced challenges, like submitting lesson plans on time, but overcame them with help from his Instructional Coach.

Tarrell especially enjoyed the community events. The "King of the Valley" competition showcased teamwork among colleges. The program's last day was also memorable, featuring performances and social time.

At ECC, Tarrell discovered a sense of belonging and camaraderie. As he puts it, *"One of my favorite things about ECC is that we were all able to fit well since day one. As each day went by, the relationship with one another got stronger and it became a family."* This experience highlights the importance of building connections with students, fellow Teaching Fellows, and staff.

Tarrell learned that incorporating shared interests, like movies or sports, into teaching can enhance student engagement and learning. His advice for future Teaching Fellows: *"Be yourself and connect with the students. You'll soon feel at ease in your role. The same applies to your colleagues – strong connections lead to a family-like atmosphere."*

Reflecting on his summer at ECC, Tarrell sees it as a journey of personal growth, community building, and educational insights. His experience demonstrates the benefits of embracing new opportunities outside one's comfort zone.

TARRELL CUMBERBATCH

"One of my favorite things about ECC is that we were all able to fit well since day one and as each day went by, the relationship with one another got stronger and it became a family."

SADIE



SADLER

Sadie is a rising junior at Middlebury College in Vermont, majoring in history with a Chinese and education studies double minor. She has plans to become a teacher, making Breakthrough the perfect opportunity for her. She spent the Summer of 2024 as a social studies Teaching Fellow at our Washington site with St. Paul Public Schools.

“The biggest thing I learned about myself through working at Breakthrough is that being a teacher is the career I want to pursue,” she said. “This was the first time I experienced teaching in a formal classroom setting, and I absolutely loved it. I loved teaching social studies, I loved building close relationships with my students and colleagues, and I loved being a mentor.”

Although she faced the challenge of managing two classes with very different groups of students, Sadie learned the importance of adaptability and flexibility in teaching. Her advice to future Teaching Fellows is to remember to be kind to yourself. “You will probably struggle, run into unexpected challenges...but this is expected and does not mean you are not a good teacher,” Sadie said.

As a social studies teacher, one of her highlights of the summer was the annual field trip to the Capitol. Students got to hear from legislators and be a part of a mock bill debate in the House Chamber. “It was really rewarding to watch my students write bills on subjects they are passionate about and become more interested in civic engagement.” Overall, her favorite part of the Breakthrough summer was forming relationships with her students. She enjoyed learning about the students’ hobbies, celebrity crushes, favorite TikTok dances, and more. The classroom became a place where they could all have fun and be silly with one another.



BTC CLASS OF 2024



Raniya Abawari, University of St Thomas
Isse Ahmed, Augsburg University
Qamar Amode, University of St Thomas
War Aung
Henry Brisben, St Paul College
Tolu Busari, University of St Thomas
Wanida Chang, Century College
Jaya Chang, Gustavus Adolphus College
Akeelah Christian, Concordia College
Janicea Coney, Hamline University
Cynthia Dang, University of Minnesota
Nina Her
Dewey Her, St Paul College
Han Hoang, University of Minnesota
Ket Htoo, Augsburg University
Yasir Ibrahim, University of St Thomas
Esra Ismail, New York University
Kelly Joachin Valdez, University of Minnesota
Kong Lee, University of Minnesota
Lena Lee, Augsburg University
Summer Lee, University of Minnesota
Lavender Lee, University of Minnesota
Blong Lee
Toua Lor, University of Minnesota
Jazelle Lozano, Inver Hills Community College
Oswaldo Morales-Hernandez, Augsburg University
Erick Morales-Hernandez, University of Minnesota
Angel Moreno Rodriguez, Rochester Community and
Technical College
Miracle Moye, Texas Southern University
Muaz Mudashir, University of Minnesota
Haben Neguse, Minnesota West Community &
Technical College
Hsa Nu, Augsburg University
Iman Omar, University of Minnesota
Omasirichukwu Onuegbu, Century College
Eh P'True
Autim Perales
Nan Ri, University of Minnesota

Ywa Saw
Vivian Serrano, St. Cloud Technical College
Zebulon Shefa, University of Minnesota
Po Si Si, Augsburg University
Paw Su, St Paul College
Max Tapia Martinez
Lourdes Taylor, Minnesota North College
Ethan Tello, Century College
Dagmawit Tesfaye, Macalester College
Daniel Thao, Metropolitan State University
Elihu Thao, University of Minnesota
Ntxhais Thao, Century College
Sareena Thor, Metropolitan State University
Sebastian Trujillo, University of Minnesota
Davis Vang, Metropolitan State University
Sunshine Vang, Augsburg University
Houa Vang
Adam Vang, North Hennepin Community College
Mason Vue, Minnesota State University, Mankato
Gaokia Xiong, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community
College
Chanida Xiong, Augsburg University
Julie Xiong, University of Minnesota
Windy Xiong, St Paul College
Fayla Xiong, Century College
Ashley Yang, University of Minnesota
Melody Yang
Beautyflower Yang, St. Catherine University
Angela Yang, Concordia University

Congratulations!

BTC CLASS OF 2024 STATS

The average annual

scholarship
awarded to a BTC
graduate:
\$44,818

The average student had

91%
costs covered by
Scholarships and
Grants

3.74

average GPA for
the BTC Class of
2024

100%

of those who applied
were accepted to
college! *

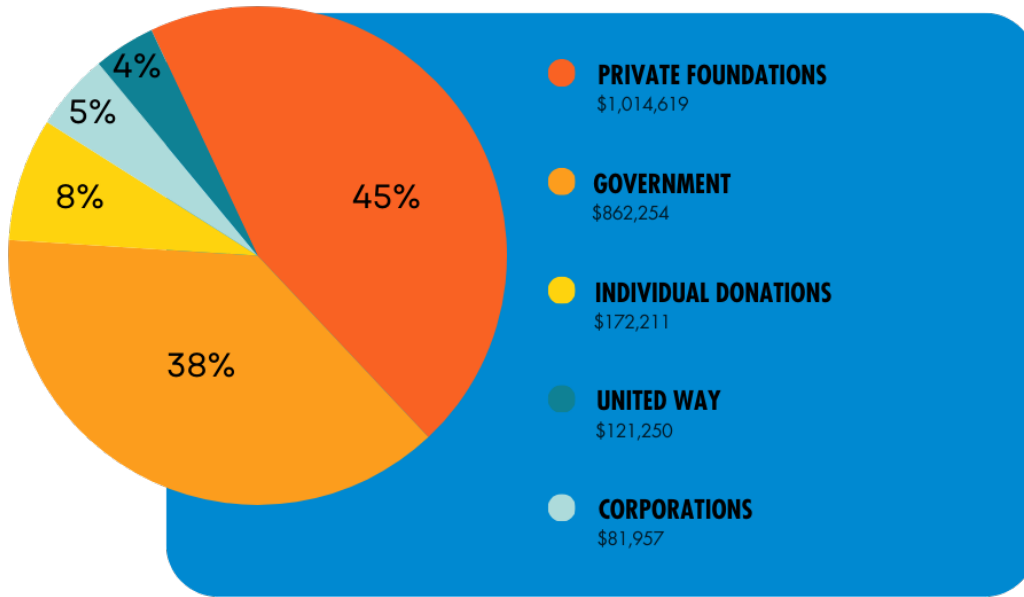
* compared to the 69%
state average

Congratulations to the BTC alumni graduating from college or university!

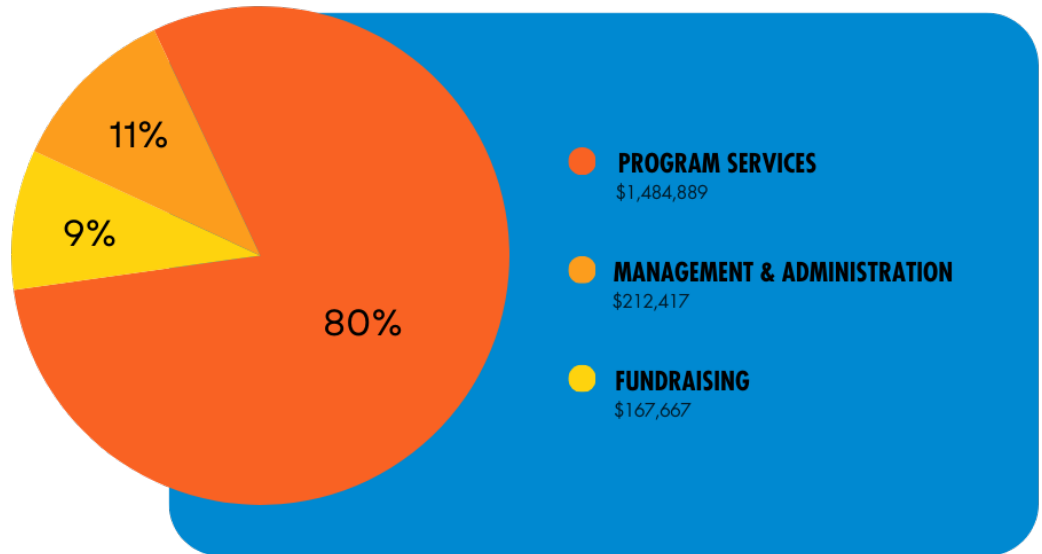
Sami Banat, Macalester College
Angelina Yang, Gustavus Adolphus College
Dominique Edwards, Drake University
Hellen Calderon, University of Minnesota
Kenny Hoang, University of Minnesota
Mainou Lee, St Catherine University
Maixee Lee, Stanford University
Kevin Morales-Hernandez, MSU - Moorhead
John Nguyen, Yale University
Valerie Schuster, University of Minnesota
Dillon Vue, St Olaf College
MK Xiong, University of Minnesota
Cindy Yang, St Olaf College
True Yang, University of Minnesota
Sarah Zalanga, Bethel University

FISCAL YEAR 2023 - 2024

REVENUE:



EXPENSES:



CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

	Without Restrctions	With Restrctions	Total
Net Assets: Beginning of Year	\$1,239,812	\$284,770	\$1,524,582
Net Assets: End of Year	\$1,823,190	\$315,835	\$ 2,139,025
TOTAL CHANGE	\$583,378	\$31,065	\$614,443

Staff & Board Members

BTC Staff Members:

Advancement & Administration

Lesley Chester
Director of Development

Weily Grina-Shay
Development & Operations
Coordinator

Huldah Philips
HR Manager

Josh Reimnitz
Executive Director

Kalli Wilson
Marketing & Development
Coordinator

Program Team

Shana Dukes
Summer Program Director

Simon Lee
Program Manager

Kortni Roberts
Program Manager

Emma Silkey
Program Manager

Cristian Villalobos
School Year Program
Director

Advisors & Counselors

Maya Comfort
Middle School Advisor

D'Azhane Felder
High School Advisor

Martha Malinski
College Counselor

Wade Peterson
College Counselor

Brent Sykes
Middle School Advisor

2023 - 2024 Board of Directors:

Tanya Schmitt
Board Chair
Senior HR Director
Ecolab

Missie Koenig
**Vice Chair & Development
Committee Chair**
Senior Director of New Business
& Policy Administration
The Standard Insurance
Company

Amy Benson
**Secretary & Governance
Committee Chair**
Chief People and
Community Officer
Shipt

Lori Nixon
**Treasurer & Finance
Committee Chair**
Assistant Professor of
Accounting
University of Wisconsin - River
Falls

Kenneth Bailey
General Counsel & Chief
Compliance Officer
Planned Parenthood

Sami Banat
Public and Legislative Affairs
Coordinator
NewPublica

Laura Blomberg
HR Leader, Golf, Grounds, &
Irrigation, International, and
Finance
The Toro Company

Kelly Calendine
Client Director
Dev10

Greg Lepak
Director of Financial and Data
Strategy
Packard Culligan Water

Sarah Peters
Production
Black Dog Homes Co.

Dan Redpath
Managing Partner
Union 32 Crafthouse

Marilyn Rivkin
Independent Non-Profit Organization
Management Professional

Pablo Segovia Torres
Senior Director of Corporate Strategy
and Revenue
Operations
Pentair

Fang Zhou
Laboratory Director
Transportation and Electronics
3M

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Anne and Randy Atchison
Kenneth Bailey
Susan Colby and Lawrence Baill
Aleli Balagtas
Sami Banat
Cynthia Barry
Amy Benson
Robert Blankmeyer
Laura and Ben Blomberg
Kelly Ryan and Steven Bradley
Kristyn Brisnehan
Benjamin Burgum
Kelly and Ben Calendine
Adrienne Campbell
Cargill Foundation
Cargill, Incorporated
Martha Sanford and Tim Casey
Sarah Fjelstul and Francois Charette
Charities Aid Foundation of America
Lesley and Patrick Chester
Ciresi Walburn Foundation for Children
City of Maplewood
Eric and Jennifer Claver
Marlon Cush and Jennifer Coates
Gayle Cole
Anna Connelly
Ann Ruff and John Cooper
Marina N Dale
Nancy and Richard Dana
Stephanie Daniel
Caroline Davidson
Geraldine Van Tassel and Thomas Davies
Patrick Deconinck and Marie Andree
Deconinck
Richelle Gordon and Marie Dillon
Donaldson Foundation
Douglass Brandenburg Family Foundation
Stacy Rubsam and Betsy Draxten

Mark and Kathy Drayna
Shana Dukes
Frances Xavier Durkin
Eastern Carver County Schools
ECMC Foundation
Ecolab
Engdahl Family Foundation
Entegris Company
Enterprise Holdings Foundation
Susan G Erben
Katherine Erickson
Hope Esparolini
F.R. Bigelow Foundation
Judith Fawcett
Joan Felton
Frey Foundation
Peter and Victoria Gallus
Nick and Ingrid Gangestad
Jamie and Cindy Gardner
Joan and James Gardner
GiveMN
Irene Fernando and Kent Goodroad
Greater Twin Cities United Way
Grotto Foundation
Timothy Cotroneo and Judith Grundtner
Paul and Beth Gunderson
Nicholas and Tracy Hamel
Jessica Hammerberg
Hardenbergh Foundation
Robyn and Brett Hare
Harvard Club of Minnesota Foundation
Jeremiah Hawkins
Hayes Family Foundation
Jeff and Lucy Heegaard
Kari and Chris Hentges
Mark Hiemenz and Charlie Rounds
Kenny Hoang
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