



IMPACT REPORT

2023
2024

Helping high school students plan and prepare for a future that's *best for them.*

LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In a world where talent is universal but opportunity is not, Project Next stands as an **essential** resource for high school students. Our mission is simple, yet crucial: to help high schoolers plan and prepare for a **future that's best for them**.

As a former high school counselor of nearly 20 years, I've witnessed first-hand the challenges our schools face in preparing our young people for life. High student-to-counselor ratios, budget constraints, and limited access to support services are significant obstacles. This is why Project Next exists: to bridge these gaps and partner with our local schools and businesses to ensure every student has the individualized support they need to succeed.

Through Project Next, we equip students with **3Cs: clarity, confidence, and connections**. We believe that with clarity comes direction, with confidence comes empowerment, and with connections comes opportunity. This year we offered comprehensive guidance to 2,880 students in the San Marcos Unified School District, equipping them with the knowledge and resources to make well-informed decisions about their next steps. This school year, we are proudly expanding our reach to include two new partner sites in Escondido, significantly broadening our impact.

By offering a diverse array of programs such as Focused Futures which helps first-generation, historically marginalized students realize their college dreams, to our Xcelerate program which helps shift workforce-bound students to more economically secure jobs, we're exposing students to a wide range of opportunities, ensuring each student's unique talents and aspirations are nurtured, and fostering meaningful connections with industry professionals and the community at large.

Together with our partners, we're ensuring that no talent goes unnoticed and no opportunity goes unexplored- regardless of one's background or zip code. Collectively, we're helping high schoolers become prepared, poised, and equipped to **OWN THEIR NEXT!**



Key Accomplishments

- Recipient of San Diego North Economic Development Council's Economic Excellence Award
- Partnered with the University of San Diego's Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate to bring the Real Estate Awareness Diversity Initiative (READI) Program to our students
- Successfully partnered with two new schools, adding programming at Escondido High School and Escondido Charter High School

**Join us in helping local teens grow from uncertain to unstoppable!
Get involved today... Who's Got Next?!**

Lisa Stout

LISA STOUT | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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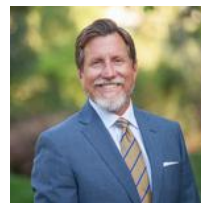
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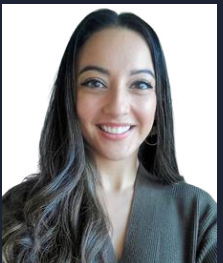
LISA STOUT
Executive Director

CAREER COACHES

New Career Coaches 2024-2025



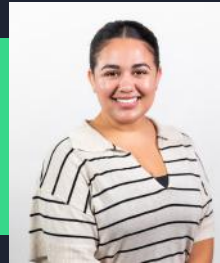
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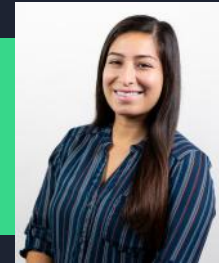
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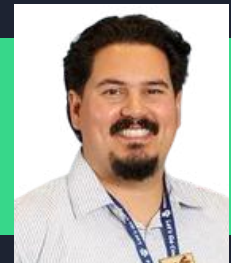
ALEJANDRO ARELLANO



TIANI KETCHER



AMANDA MORALES



CLINT TYSALL

FUTURE CENTERS

PROGRAMS, SERVICES, & EVENTS

Future Centers are high-tech hubs onsite at partner high schools that bring college and career readiness programs, mentors, resources, events, and opportunities directly to students before, during, and after school.

Unique Features & Services

- Full-time presence on partner high school campuses, unlike many other programs that are only available after school
- Drop-in services available to all students
- Robust programs for students needing extra support
- 350+ cross-sector partners, maximizing exposure to diverse options after graduation
- Strong collaborations with school staff
- Career Coaches serve as trusted adults on campus

Last year, we supported students at all three San Marcos Unified School District (SMUSD) high schools. Here's how we helped them grow:



Improved Self-Awareness

We begin students' career exploration journey with the SuperStrong Assessment, which helps students align their interests with their innate abilities and directs them to career paths that would be both meaningful and economically secure.

676 *students completed the SuperStrong® Interest Assessment and understand their results*



Demonstrated Proficiency in Career Readiness Skills

We emphasize practical skills development, such as resume creation and interviewing techniques, which equips students with tangible tools for workforce success.

224

*students participated in **17 Skillshops** covering life skills, financial education, resume writing, job search strategies, interviewing techniques, and tools to help determine their future goals*

213

students gained interview skills through our Interview Skills Day

260

students created professional resumes

OPEN ^{TO} ALL STUDENTS



Increased College and Career Exploration and Professional Connections

We empower students to explore all their post-secondary and career options through various events and, when possible, directly connect them to relevant training programs, companies, professionals, jobs, and apprenticeships aligned with their strengths and interests.

782

with the support of

245

students participated in 33 events

professionals



Mentoring

We ensure that students have access to trusted adult mentors on their high school campuses who can help them plan their careers, address obstacles, and feel a sense of belonging. Our Career Coaches have provided

847

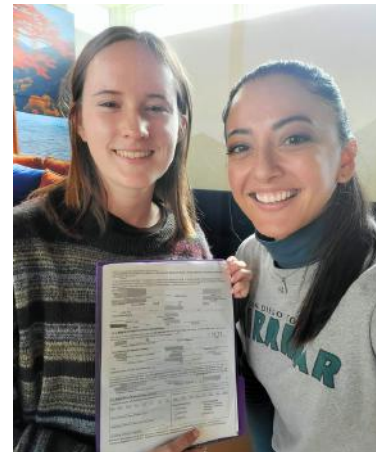
1:1 Coaching sessions

and facilitated

10 in-class presentations for

362

students



Financial Aid Application Completion

We help students plan a path to and through post-secondary education, including how to pay for it.

Our Financial Aid Coach supported over

350

students

helping them complete the FAFSA, CADAA, and other financial aid applications, review aid awards, and complete award paperwork



Informed Career and College Decisions and Successful Transitions

Though our work will help many students make informed decisions about their futures, we focus our data collection on program participants.

80%

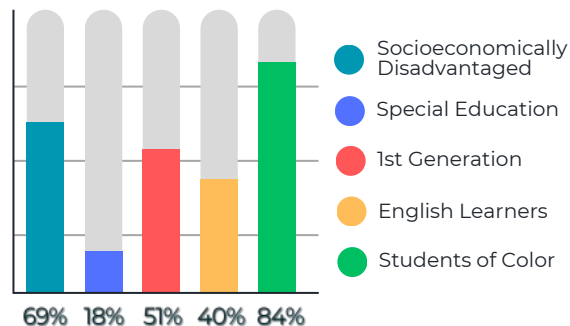


At the end of the school year, 80% of program participants had a plan for their future. We will offer ongoing support to students who need additional time to decide on their next step.

FOCUSED FUTURES PROGRAM

Many students have self-limiting beliefs about their post-secondary options, lack mentors, and have no idea how they would pay for college if they wanted to go, especially those from historically marginalized groups.

Focused Futures guides students from historically marginalized groups to transition to post-secondary training and education programs through 1:1 mentoring, financial aid support, career exploration events, and skill-building activities. Our program shows students what is possible and helps them build the confidence, clarity, and connections to choose and pursue their best post-secondary path.



This year, we supported 88 juniors and seniors across all three partner schools. Among seniors, 23% planned to attend a 4-year college, 32% opted for community college, 14% chose vocational schools, 1% enlisted in the military, and 1% entered the workforce. We continue to support those still exploring their best path forward.

Looking Ahead: In the 2024-25 school year, Focused Futures will expand to a 3-year program, allowing students ample time to prepare for a 4-year college if that is their chosen path. Students at our partner alternative high school will continue with the 1-year program since students typically transfer in their junior or senior year.



"I needed help planning and preparing for college, but Focused Futures also helped me hone my abilities to communicate effectively, build relationships, and embrace the role of a leader with passion and purpose. The mentorship and guidance provided by my Career Coach has been invaluable in helping me navigate challenges, set goals, and realize my potential." — Participant

"This program changed my life. It made me confident in the decisions I'm making for my future." — Participant

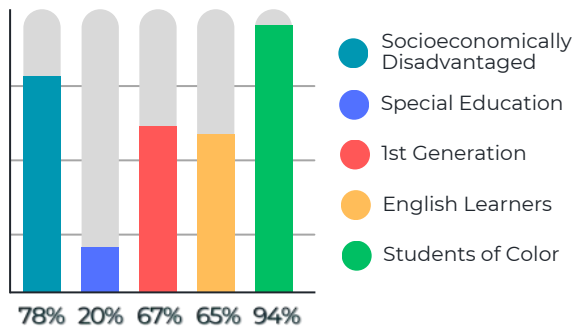
XCELERATE PROGRAM



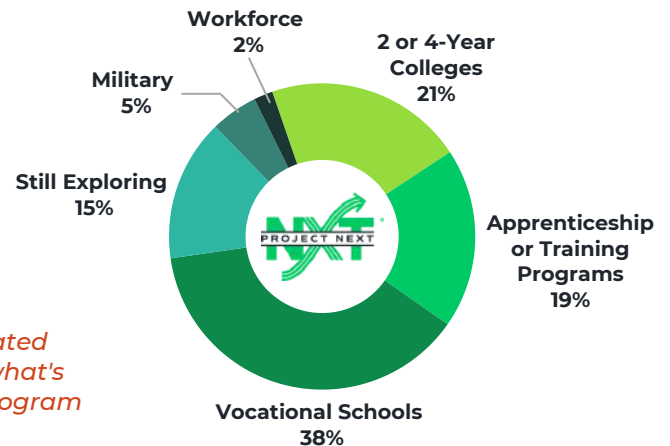
Many students facing hardships or academic challenges feel pessimistic about their future and choose to enter the workforce after graduation, often in lower-paying, less secure jobs. Xcelerate empowers these students to explore their post-secondary training and education pathways, and more stable, higher-paying careers that align with their talents and interests.

Xcelerate targets students who plan to enter the workforce immediately after graduation, providing support through 1:1 mentoring, skill-building opportunities, exposure to local companies, apprenticeships, and vocational schools, and financial aid support if applicable.

We served 49 students this year, including 42 seniors.



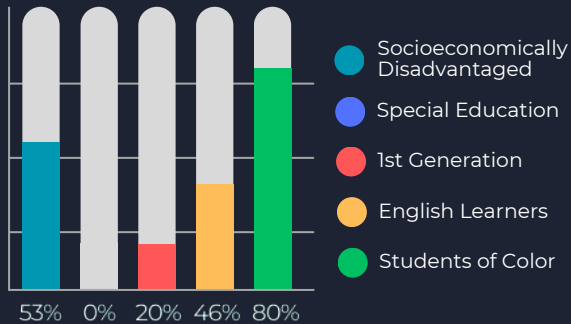
We shifted 78% of students to post-secondary training and education pathways



"I wish I knew about the Future Center and Project Next earlier. I hated school and might not have graduated but now I'm excited about what's next for my future. I am enrolling in Pacific Rim's apprenticeship program thanks to my career coach not giving up on me." — Participant

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The Ambassador Program empowers students to develop crucial leadership and professional skills, serve as a bridge to their peers, and bring their voices to our planning. Our 15 Ambassadors have not only represented Project Next with distinction at Future Center activities but have also become essential advocates at school and community events, amplifying our mission and fostering a stronger, more connected student community.



100% of seniors transitioned to 4-year colleges



2023-2024 Project Next High School Ambassadors

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Samara Allen Lanum | Kai McGee |
| Toluwalase Banjo | Alexa Montes Matias |
| Cassidy Baum | Janice Merino |
| Nadia Campos Almazo | Paige Mumma |
| Casey Carroll | Harish Saravanakumar |
| Jenni Cruz | Thien Vu |
| Betsy Duran | Irene Wu |
| Shagun Kamboj | |



"I'm a first-generation student from a low-income family, so getting into college felt like an impossible feat. Through Project Next, I have received personalized help learning about my strengths and interests, exploring possible career fields, meeting industry professionals, exploring education options, completing college applications, financial aid, and more. Thanks to Project Next, students like me are not only getting the help we need to GET to college- they're helping us BELIEVE that we belong there. Because we do!" — Ambassador



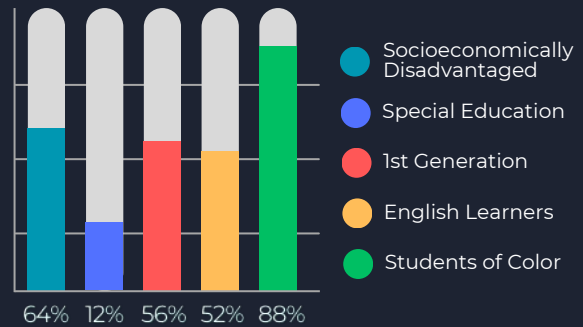
READI PROGRAM POWERED BY PROJECT NEXT

In partnership with The University of San Diego, we supported two cohorts of sophomores and juniors from Mission Hills High School to participate in the semester-long Real Estate Awareness Diversity Initiative (READI) program. This program, supported through USD's Burnham-Moore Center for Real Estate, addresses a critical need to increase diversity within the real estate industry.

Students learned from real estate industry professionals about development, finance, property and asset management, brokerage companies, market research, capital markets, and architecture. Company visits allowed students to connect with professionals, gain insights into different aspects of the commercial real estate industry, and explore potential career paths.



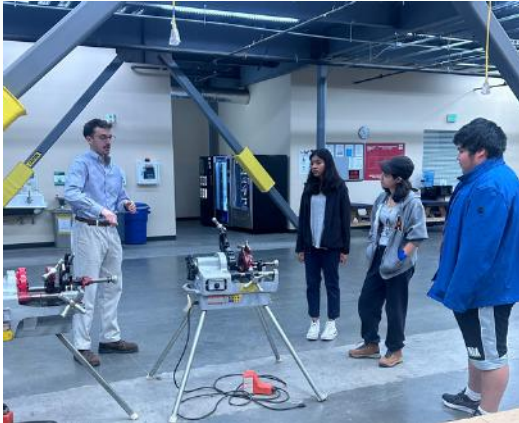
PARTICIPATING COMPANIES

"This program made a big impact on my life because I got to learn so much about real estate and further my knowledge. This program has brought many more opportunities to me and opened doors for me and allowed me to further expand my knowledge even after finish the program. I now have the chance to attend more meaningful events and learn from them BECAUSE of this program and what it taught me. I built connections along the way, it was very worth it." — Student

EVENTS

Build students' awareness about all possible career paths and provide the experiences and connections necessary to make informed career decisions.



"I liked learning about company culture as well as getting to see how the company worked within its many departments and the different jobs." — Student

CAREER NEXTPEditionS

Career NEXTpeditions immerse students in real-world work environments through job shadowing. These days are crafted to provide students with a firsthand look at various careers, offering insight into day-to-day responsibilities and skills required across different careers and industries. Special thanks to our partners: **ABC, Action Heating and Air, Mesa College Culinary Program, MiraCoasta College TCI, Pima Medical Institute.**

75
Students

6
Events

22
Professionals

CONNECT TO CAREERS

Connect to Careers events are vital for bridging the gap between education and the workforce. These events connect high school students with local professionals and industry leaders, providing crucial exposure to career opportunities. For many students, this is a rare chance to build networks and gain insights that directly impact their future career choices.

180
Students

4
Events

108
Professionals

18
Companies

"I loved the connections I was able to make with such a variety of occupations." — Student



NEXTWORKING

NEXTworking events offer students the opportunity to develop essential skills like communication and professional etiquette. Through direct interactions with local professionals, students learn how to present themselves and build meaningful connections. Professionals not only share their expertise but also help students cultivate confidence, adaptability, and the practical know-how that are critical for success in any industry.



123
Students

3
Events

127
Professionals

"I learned how to introduce myself to strangers and start meaningful conversations with everyone I talked to and I have a new feeling of confidence in my social skills. I also learned a lot about different types of careers and paths you can go down." — Student

INTERVIEW SKILLS DAY

At Project Next, we believe every student deserves the opportunity to walk into an interview with confidence and poise, whether it's for their first part-time job or a career-defining position. Our Interview Skills Day was designed with this goal in mind—providing students with the tools they need to succeed in any interview setting, and more importantly, empowering them to believe in their own potential.

246
Students

60
Professionals

"I learned a lot about skills to apply in any interview, and always be prepared to learn." — Student

"I loved that we got to hear from real professionals about their experience being interviewed and how they were able to give us the feedback and advice we needed to thrive in our future interviews." — Student



2023-2024 FUNDERS

We are deeply grateful to each of our generous supporters. Together, we've empowered thousands of students to take control of their futures with confidence and purpose. Your belief in our mission has allowed us to provide life-changing opportunities, opening doors for young people who might otherwise never have realized their full potential.

Thanks to your partnership, we've been able to expand our reach, serve more students, and make a lasting impact on the lives of those who need it most. Together, we are shaping a future where every student is prepared and unstoppable.



\$15,000+

- City of San Marcos
- Green Oak Ranch
- Issa Family Foundation
- Judith Campbell Educational and Community Foundation
- Samuel H. French and Katherine Weaver French Fund
- State Farm

\$10,000+

- Allison and Robert Price Family Foundation
- Charles and Ruth Billingsley Foundation
- Hand to Hand (Coastal Community Foundation)
- Hunter Industries
- Nordson Corporation
- Walter J. & Betty C. Zable Foundation

\$5,000+

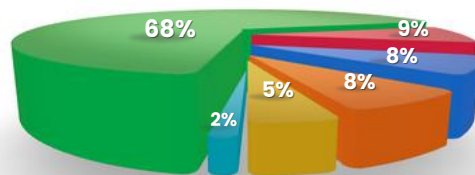
- Banc of California
- C. J. and Dot Stafford Memorial Trust
- Jack in the Box Foundation
- James C. Stewart Charitable Foundation
- North City
- SDG&E
- Thomas Ackerman Foundation

\$1,500+

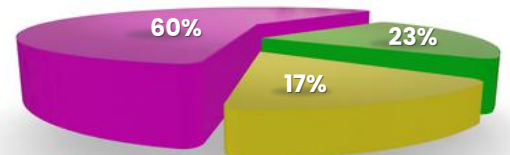
- Albertsons, Vons, Pavilions
- Boys and Girls Foundation
- Collins Areospace
- C. W. Driver
- HTM Electric
- Largo Concrete
- McParlane & Associates
- PSSI Concrete
- Safdie Rabines Architects
- Samuel & Henry Fox Foundation
- San Marcos Community Foundation
- Sherwood Mechanical
- Stater Brothers Charities
- Turner Construction Company

● Foundation Grants	68%
● Government Grants	9%
● Corporations	8%
● In-kind	8%
● Individuals	5%
● Fundraising Events	2%

FUNDING SOURCES



● Programs	60%
● Administration	23%
● Fundraising	17%



EXPENSES

OUR NEXT

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

At Project Next, we envision a world where every high school graduate has the clarity, confidence, and connections to direct their own future. When every student leaves high school with a plan and purpose of their own choosing, our mission is complete. They're all ready for their next.

FUTURE GOALS: EXPANDING OUR IMPACT

As we continue to serve students across the San Marcos Unified School District, Escondido High School, and Escondido Charter High School, we're excited to expand into new school districts in North San Diego County. With every new partner, we open doors for more young people, ensuring that talent is nurtured and opportunities are available—no matter their background or where they come from.

GET INVOLVED

You can make a difference! By supporting Project Next, you'll help students see what's possible—not only in their lives but also right here in our local community. Many students simply aren't aware of all the opportunities available to them. Whether you give your time, talents, or treasure, you'll be helping to open their eyes to the paths they can take in their own backyard and beyond.

But the most valuable gift you can give them? The confidence to step into the “real world” knowing they are prepared for whatever comes next.

Join us in shaping a brighter future—because every student deserves to own their next.

projectnext.org/donate



projectnext.org/volunteer-opportunities

