

Catalyst to College



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The Challenge

Fewer than 70% of Silicon Valley students from low-income backgrounds graduate from high school. Only 23% of Santa Clara County youth from low-income backgrounds complete the UC/CSU required courses to be eligible for college. The reasons are many, including social and institutional barriers, limited guidance, lack of understanding college requirements, lack of positive role models, and misconceptions of available financial resources.

A Pell Institute study reveals that in America, only 1 in 10 students from low-income backgrounds who start college actually graduate within six years.

The Solution

The ALearn Catalyst to College program engages and prepares high school students from low-income, underserved backgrounds for college by creating a college-going culture on their high school campus and providing them with a peer support system in college. The program focuses on leadership, growth mindset, and key skill development through after-school programming, STEM exposure, college campus visits, and cultural field trips. Students are recruited in their sophomore year of high school and begin participating in team-building and cultural activities on a regular basis. Highlights include:

- **Crews®.** Small groups of 5-6 students, led by peer leaders, form in high school and continue through college.
- **Deep peer relationships.** Students develop deep relationships with fellow students, most of whom are the first in their family to attend college.
- **College admission process.** ALearn staff works with students to prepare for admissions tests, fill out college and financial aid applications, and practice for interviews.
- **Build life skills.** Monthly programs focus on broadening students' perspectives and building life skills through activities that require students to use initiative, planning, organization, communication and follow-through.
- **Mentoring.** 360° mentoring and support from student peers, ALearn staff, school personnel, parents, alumni, and volunteer professionals.

Success of Model

91% of Crews® model students graduate from a 4-year college vs. 11% of students from similar backgrounds. (Source: Bright Prospect, 2014).

Crews is a registered trademark of Bright Prospect.

“My Crew is determined because they will not stop trying until they have the results they want.”

- Student

“My Crew is cooperative because even though we're all different, we have learned to work together.”

- Student