



Higher Education Mentoring Program

Developed in 2001, the **HIGHER EDUCATION MENTORING PROGRAM** is a six-year program that provides Latino high school students from the city of Santa Ana with academic, social and financial support during high school and throughout college. This after-school program offers highly individualized services for youth and parents, as well as leadership training for our volunteer mentors.

The Higher Education Mentoring Program is unique in that it matches high school juniors and seniors with university students or young professional mentors who are familiar with the culture, have overcome traditional barriers, and know first-hand what it takes to succeed in college. Many past program graduates serve as mentors or volunteer speakers, giving their time to help young Latinos who share the same goal of obtaining a college degree. In doing so, they gain valuable leadership and volunteer experience. Each mentor is screened and provided with training and guidance. Mentors arrange to meet with their students

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individually and in small groups to assist with researching colleges and majors, completing admissions applications, researching scholarships and financial aid, and to motivate and encourage.

Parent involvement is another key component of the Higher Education Mentoring Program. Parents are invited to attend all monthly workshops as well as quarterly “platicas” given in Spanish. In addition, bilingual/bicultural program staff members are available to provide parental support, to motivate and assist parents as they navigate educational

systems alongside their child. Parents of past program participants have become a support group speaking at workshops and providing Q&A sessions for new parents.

The Higher Education Mentoring Program has had tremendous success assisting young students to pursue their dreams of obtaining a college degree. Upon completion of the program graduates are recognized at a congratulatory celebration, where they receive college-starter kits and backpacks filled with educational supplies to start them on their journey to becoming tomorrow’s leaders.



The Problem

Orange County has become iconic for its wealth and upscale beach communities. And yet at its heart is the city of Santa Ana—a city that has become crippled by high poverty rates, crime, and gang activity.

Nearly 80% of Santa Ana’s residents are Latino. And while Latinos represent 47% of Orange County’s youth, they account for 78% of the juvenile probationers, 96% of the youth gang members, 87% of teen mothers and 64% of all high school dropouts.

Living in poverty, the students we serve have experienced firsthand how challenging life can be without a college education. Only 55% of the adults in Santa Ana over the age of 25 have a high school diploma. In our program, 92% of our youth are the first in their family to go to college, and for many, the first to even graduate high school. The Santa Ana Unified School District has the highest drop-out rates and the SAT scores in Orange County. Life in Santa Ana is undoubtedly hard. So hard, that the Rockefeller Institute has named it the nation’s toughest city in which to live, both economically and socially.

The Solution



Education is a critical part of the solution. Through the Higher Education Mentoring Program youth are given intensive academic, social, and financial support during high school and throughout their undergraduate studies. Our goal is to not only help youth get in to college, but to provide the support and resources they need to beat the odds and graduate.

The Higher Education Mentoring Program changes lives; its impact is far-reaching. The OCBF is proud to report that 100% of the students that successfully complete the program attend college. Moreover, 75% of these students complete their bachelor’s degree, compared with the 21% college completion rate of Latinos statewide.



Services Offered

We attribute the great success of our program to the fact that each student receives 18 months of highly-individualized services prior to entering college. These services focus on the academic, social and financial preparation needed to succeed in college.

- Individual mentoring sessions
- Group sessions focusing on financial literacy
- Emphasis on STEM subjects and careers
- Evening workshops for students and parents
- FAFSA workshops that are open to the community
- College campus tours, career panels, and cultural activities
- Paid summer internship and scholarship opportunities
- Clinical support services

Upon entering college, students are offered continuing support and campus coaching throughout their undergraduate studies with the goal of graduating from college.

- Individualized support with academics (linkages campus tutoring, resources writing and study centers), financial aid, employment, volunteer opportunities, and resume skills.
- Leadership opportunities to return to the program as a mentor or workshop speaker.

Our Success

“THE PROGRAM TAUGHT ME how to use a credit card, how to manage my time and how to study better. By attending the workshops every month, I learned how to become a more responsible adult.”

-Higher Education Mentoring Program Graduate and College Student

“WHEN MY DAUGHTER first told me about the Higher Education Mentoring Program helping her to attend college I was surprised; as an immigrant to the United States my focus was working long hours to support the basic needs of my family and I assumed my children would do the same. Turns out a college education was the best thing for my daughter and our family. She graduated in June of 2013 with dual Bachelors in Psychology and Chicano Studies and also studied in Costa Rica. She works with special needs children and is now applying for her Master’s Degree. I eagerly share my family’s story to promote the value of youth obtaining higher education. Thanks to the support and investment the OCBF made in my daughter she now has a standard of living different and better than I had. I am truly grateful to the OCBF for helping to build a new generation of educated young people.”

-Higher Education Mentoring Program Parent

“I COME FROM A LOW-INCOME FAMILY and community. My mother is a stay-at-home mom, raising seven children. My father, an electrician, does not have a steady job. My parents never had the opportunity to study in their native Mexico beyond junior high school. The Higher Education Mentoring Program worked with my parents, explaining things about college that they had never known before. As a result, my parents fully supported my decision to pursue a college education, are enjoying this journey with me, and are now better equipped to help my younger siblings pursue a college education in the future.”

- Higher Education Mentoring Program Graduate and College Student

“I AM SO GRATEFUL FOR THE HELP and support I received from the Higher Education Mentoring Program, their staff, and my assigned mentor. The program greatly helped with my college preparation and continues to support my college efforts. My success is the Higher Education Mentoring Program’s success — they are definitely helping develop tomorrow’s leaders.”

- Higher Education Mentoring Graduate and College Student

Investing in the Future of Orange County

This valuable program is made possible through financial support from donors who believe and invest in our goals. Financial support is needed to cover the costs of the Higher Education Mentoring Program including college preparation and college support services. Support is also needed to cover college scholarships and college dorm kits and backpacks.

When you give to the OCBF, your donation helps local youth to achieve their potential, empower people of all ages to lead healthier lives, and strengthen the bonds of family and community in Orange County.

Impact

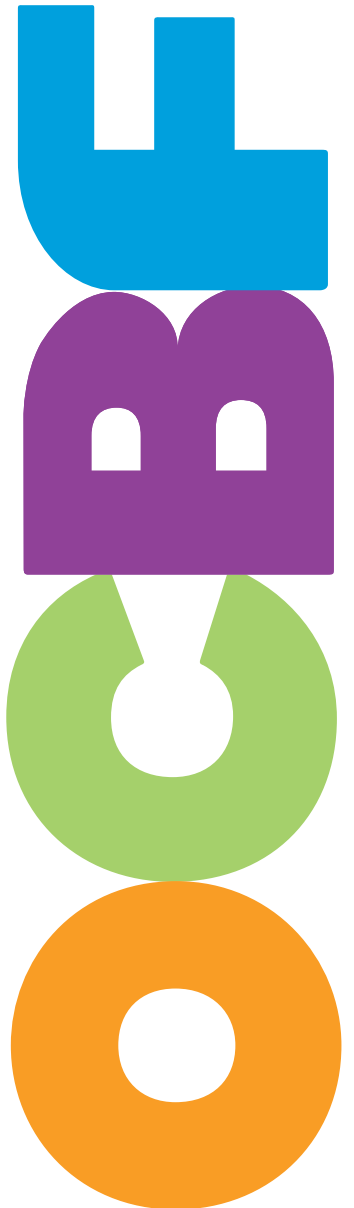
Each year, more low-income Latino students in our community are graduating from college and progressing to professional careers. Their successful pursuit of higher education has provided them, and their families, with an improved standard of living. Moreover, these graduates now contribute to the Orange County economy, are positive role models for other minorities, and hold positions of leadership within the community.



OCBF Empowering Youth to
Make Positive Choices
Orange County Bar Foundation

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Mission Statement

OCBF's mission is to keep at-risk youth in school, healthy and drug-free through education, counseling, mentoring, and family strengthening.