



Partnership Narrative and Historical Impact Data

Partnership Narrative

In 2013, Jodi was an 11th grade student at Towers High School. As she left her Math class, she made a simple statement to her teacher: “I want to go to college.” As a high school junior, pursuing college shouldn’t have been revolutionary, but for her it was. Only 40% of students from her graduating class continued onto college and she was the first in her family to go.

Inspired by Jodi’s statement, several teachers at Towers launched College AIM. That year, they took Jodi and 22 of her classmates on a college tour to visit schools between Atlanta and Washington, DC. When the group returned, they began building out a series of supports to help the students through the college application, financial aid and enrollment processes.

Initially, this work took place during planning periods, after school, in the hallway between classes, during lunch and any other time that they could find. In the subsequent years though, word spread that College AIM was helping students through this process and demand grew large enough that a bigger solution was needed.

In 2017, College AIM incorporated as an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization to expand the organization’s capacity to serve a larger number of students at Towers. Two years later, in 2019, College AIM and DeKalb County School District signed their first Memorandum of Understanding to expand programming, as directed by District leadership, to McNair HS and Stone Mountain HS.

In the fall of 2019, College AIM first piloted the Success Program, to provide formal support to program alums from DCSD who were enrolled in postsecondary programs all the way through college completion. As COVID-19 hit, the Success Program proved to be even more critical, and through COVID, College AIM continued to serve DCSD students and alums, working virtually with cohorts of students and graduates at each partner high school.

In February 2022, College AIM re-entered school buildings to resume in-person programming, and launched a scholarship program (the CAPS Scholarship) for select College AIM/DCSD students.

For the 22-23 school year, College AIM expanded into a full-school program, providing postsecondary prep services for every student in each partner school building—including workshops for 9th-11th grade students (now provided by AmeriCorps members serving with College AIM) and individual postsecondary advising for 12th grade students.

After two years of thoughtful discussion and consideration, two additional high schools (Cross Keys and Lithonia) were identified to receive College AIM’s full-school support. For the 24-25

School Year, College AIM and DCSD's partnership expanded once more to serve 2,500+ additional students across the two new partner schools. College AIM and DCSD saw the immediate impact of the partnership's expansion, which was most evident in FAFSA completion data. At Lithonia, the number of completed FAFSAs more than doubled, rising from 90 in 23–24 to 186 in 24–25. At Cross Keys, completions grew from 82 to 143 during the same year. These results represent two of the top five largest single-year FAFSA gains across the entire state.

At the same time, College AIM faced significant challenges due to lost federal and corporate funding. In the face of these challenges, the organization tightened its belt, reduced staffing and streamlined programming. Additionally, College AIM dipped significantly into their reserves to cover the shortfall. DCSD also doubled-down on the partnership, expanding funding and collaboration to ensure student success.

During the 25-26 school year, College AIM and DCSD tightened their efforts and continued to see impressive results. To date, DCSD students at College AIM partner high schools have secured and documented more than \$55 million in scholarships. Nearly 60% of graduating seniors at these schools have completed FAFSA, significantly outpacing both state (48%) and national (53%) averages.

More than ten years later, College AIM's first student, Jodi, has earned degrees from Spelman and Emory and works as a pediatric nurse. We exist so students like her in DCSD, who may have otherwise been excluded from higher education because of income, race and family background, have the opportunities they deserve.

In the years ahead, after stabilizing through this difficult moment, we hope to continue to expand the partnership to additional sites and continue conversation about ways to effectively serve more students, schools and communities across DeKalb.

Historical Impact Data

Class of 2025

- 576 students
- Confirmed direct enrollment - 357/576 - 62% **[Goal 65% within 16 months]**
- Scholarship and grant offers - \$86 million
- FAFSA Completion - 81% **[Goal 65%]**
- College list created - 94% **[Goal 90%]**

Class of 2024

- 426 students (334 pursuing postsecondary education)
 - McNair - 111 (89 pursuing postsecondary education)
 - Towers - 121 (91 pursuing postsecondary education)
 - Stone Mountain - 194 (154 pursuing postsecondary education)
- Confirmed direct enrollment - 281/426 - 66% **[Goal 65%]**
- Scholarship and grant offers - \$31.6 million

- FAFSA Completion - 315/426 - 74% **[Goal 70%]**
- College list created - 421/426 - 99% **[Goal 95%]**
- Applied to college - 413/426 - 97% **[Goal 90%]**
- Completed postsecondary financial analysis - 286/426 - 67% **[Goal 70%]**

Class of 2023

- 311 students
 - McNair - 83
 - Towers - 84
 - Stone Mountain - 144
- Enrolled within 12 months - 197/311 - 60% **[Goal is 65% within 16 months]**
- Scholarship and grant offers - \$28.3 million
- FAFSA Completion - 212/311 - 68% **[Goal 70%]**
- Applied to college - 298/311 - 96% **[Goal 90%]**

Class of 2022

- 148 students
- Enrolled within 16 months - 103/148 - 70% **[Goal 70%]**
- Scholarship and grant offers - \$12.7 million
- FAFSA Completion - 117/148 - 79% **[Goal 75%]**
- Applied to college - 132/148 - 89% **[Goal 90%]**

Class of 2021

- 104 students
- Enrolled within 16 months - 81/104 - 78% **[Goal 70%]**
 - Military - 1/104 - 1%
 - Workforce - 22/104 - 21%
- Scholarship and grant offers - \$7.3 million
- FAFSA Completion - 85/104 - 82% **[Goal 75%]**
- College list - 88/104 - 85% **[Goal 90%]**
- Applied to college - 92/104 - 88% **[Goal 85%]**

Class of 2020

- 137 students
 - McNair - 80
 - Towers - 34
 - Stone Mountain - 23
- Enrolled within 16 months - 100/137 - 73% **[Goal 70%]**
- Scholarship and grant offers - \$12.4 million
- FAFSA Completion - 113/137 - 82% **[Goal 75%]**
- College list - 134/137 - 98% **[Goal 90%]**
- Applied to college - 134/137 - 98% **[Goal 85%]**