

# ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



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# ABOUT US



# MINDS MATTER CHICAGO

Since 1991, Minds Matter has transformed the lives of ambitious students across America, from a single spark of inspiration in New York City to becoming a beacon of educational opportunity.

Today, our mission burns bright in 14 major cities - including Chicago.

Through our intensive, comprehensive mentoring program, we don't just prepare students for college - we ignite their potential. Our approach combines rigorous academic preparation with dedicated mentorship, creating an environment where students dare to dream bigger and reach higher. Every student graduates equipped with the knowledge, confidence, skills, and mindset to excel in college and beyond.

A Minds Matter graduate stands out to colleges and employers as someone who has demonstrated extraordinary dedication, perseverance, and leadership potential. Here in Chicago, we're proud to open doors to higher education for talented high school students from low-income families, proving that with the proper support, remarkable achievements are within reach.

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Minds Matter Chicago's three-year program empowers students with the support they need to succeed in higher education, create their future, and make a positive impact on the world. Students achieve this through a combination of tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment experiences that are part of the 3-year program.

## TUTORING & TEST PREPARATION

The Minds Matter program includes free standardized test preparation starting during students' sophomore year. Students take practice tests to identify areas for improvement and proceed with their personalized preparation curriculum. MMC students begin test preparation in September of their Sophomore year.

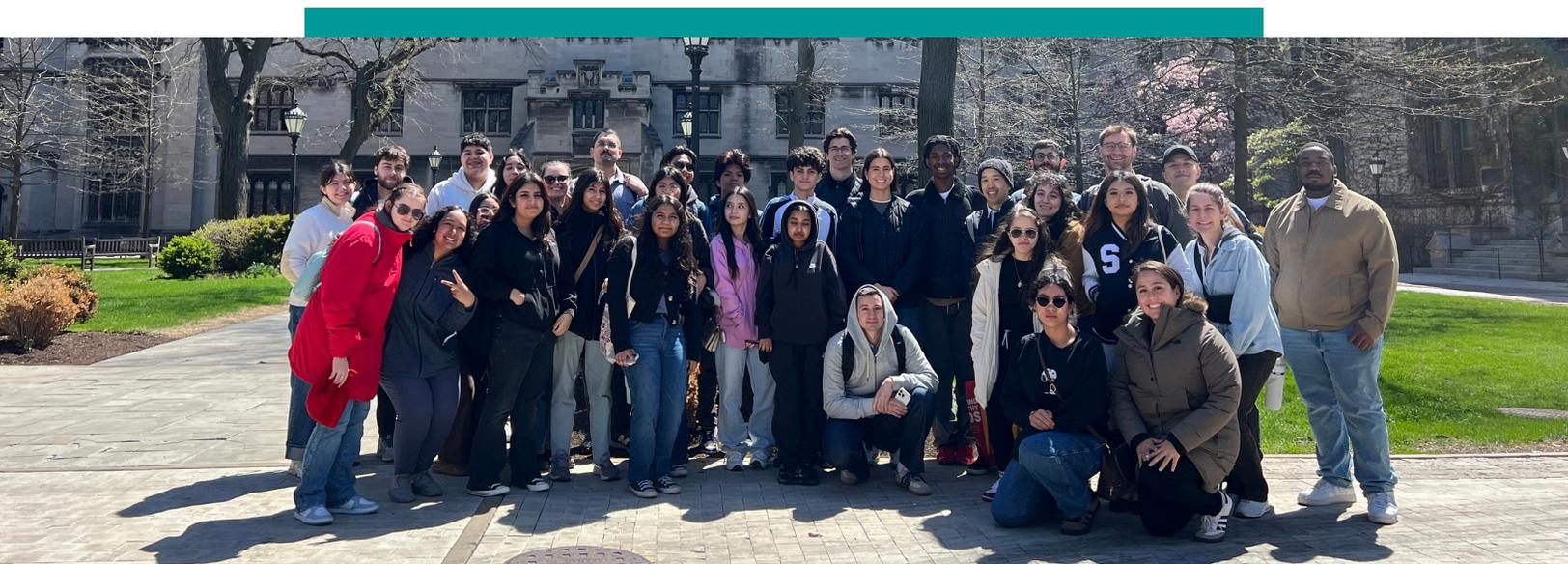
## MENTORING

We pair students with mentors who assist them with coursework and other academic assignments during our weekly sessions. Our mentors also play a crucial role in the college application process during the student's senior year. This relationship begins during a student's Sophomore year and can continue for life.

## SUMMER PROGRAM

We send our students to academic summer programs in their sophomore and junior years at no cost to the student, their family, or their school. As with the rest of our program, these summer programs are fully funded by our organization through the generosity of our donors and corporate sponsors.

- Sophomores spend just over a week in the wilderness, camping, team-building, canoeing, and gaining leadership experience.
- Juniors spend the summer before their Senior year attending an immersion program on campuses of their choice.



# MEET OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

It is with gratitude and pride that I share the 2025 Impact Report as the first Executive Director of Minds Matter Chicago. This moment represents the bold vision and unwavering commitment of our board and community.

Over the past year, our board made a transformative investment in our students by taking a critical next step in the growth of our organization. Their decision to hire our first Executive Director was a

clear statement of confidence in our mission and a belief in the long-term impact we can make when we strengthen our foundation and expand our reach. I am honored to step into this role and even more honored to help lead our community forward.

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago in a family of limited means, I understand firsthand the courage it takes to hold big dreams with limited resources. It can be powerful to have mentors and supportive adults show up, listen, and believe in your potential. That kind of encouragement may lead a student to college and into a future of purpose, stability, and generational impact.

Minds Matter Chicago has been doing this work for the past 19 years. This year, we are proud to share that once again, 100% of our graduating scholars enrolled in a four-year college. That statistic represents the resilience of our students, the dedication of our volunteers, and the continued support of people like you who believe in what is possible for young people.

This Impact Report offers a closer look at how we serve our students, what we have accomplished together, and what lies ahead. We recognize that complex and evolving challenges mark the current landscape of education and college access. We also acknowledge that we must continue to meet these challenges with urgency, innovation, and a genuine commitment to excellence.

As we reflect on this year, we are celebrating our legacy. We are preparing to build on it. We will raise expectations for what our students can achieve and ensure that our staff, volunteers, and mentors rise to meet those expectations with excellence and care. Our students deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your belief in this mission. Thank you for your continued partnership. And thank you for standing with us as we support students in building futures filled with purpose and possibility.

Yours in Service,

Jason Carter | Executive Director

# GET TO KNOW OUR BOARD CHAIR



## **Tell us about your history with Minds Matter?**

I joined Minds Matter as a mentor in the aftermath of 9/11 in New York City. I had the opportunity to meet and mentor Sammy Felciano, a young man from Washington Heights. When he graduated to attend Boston College, I decided to continue my involvement in a leadership capacity, becoming a team leader to a new team of 7 students and 14 mentors. Over the past almost 25 years of my involvement with Minds Matter, I've served in a multitude of roles. Everything from team leader, to Senior Program Leader, to Volunteer Management Director,

as well as being a repeat mentor to Rafi and Candace, respectively. I had the pleasure of serving as the interim Executive Director of Minds Matter of New York City. When I moved to Chicago, I became involved with the Board of Directors and assumed the role of Chair of the Chicago Board of Directors in January 2024.

## **How would you describe Minds Matter's "secret sauce"?**

At Minds Matter Chicago, we go beyond traditional access programs by investing in our students year-round. One key difference is our commitment to fully funding summer enrichment experiences at top colleges nationwide. These opportunities, combined with ongoing academic and mentoring support, enable our students to thrive in and beyond the classroom. We provide resources to young people who may not have access to the same level of resources as those available to individuals with a certain income level, such as standardized test prep resources, mentorship, and guidance to help our students reach their full potential.

## **What accomplishment in the past year are you most proud of?**

I am thrilled that we were able to hire our first-ever Executive Director, Jason Carter. I am excited to have him join the team and see what we can accomplish together.

## **What are you most excited about for the chapter in the coming year?**

I am excited about the team of people we have leading this organization. From our new Executive Director to the Board, to the Association Board, to the Management team, and all of our incredible tutors and mentors, we have the opportunity to serve more students and have an even more profound impact on their lives.



# SCHOOL YEAR IN REVIEW



# 2024 - 2025 AT A GLANCE

## Why We Matter

A four-year college degree is vital to social and economic mobility. However, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic factors significantly impact college outcomes.

**\$36K**

average income of students' families

**67%**

first-generation college prospects

**3.66**

average student GPA in SY25

**100**

volunteers

in

**46**

zip codes

# 2006 - 2025 LIFETIME IMPACT

## Our Impact

We have mentored over 300 students, most of whom will be first-generation college students, toward college admission and enrollment:

**305**

students served

**100%**

4-year program acceptances

**347**

volunteers

**597**

unique donors

**First Executive Director** hired in 2025

# A LIFETIME OF ACHIEVEMENT

**100%** TOTAL 4YR PROGRAM ACCEPTANCES SINCE 2006

**28%** STUDENTS ATTENDED A TOP COLLEGE\*

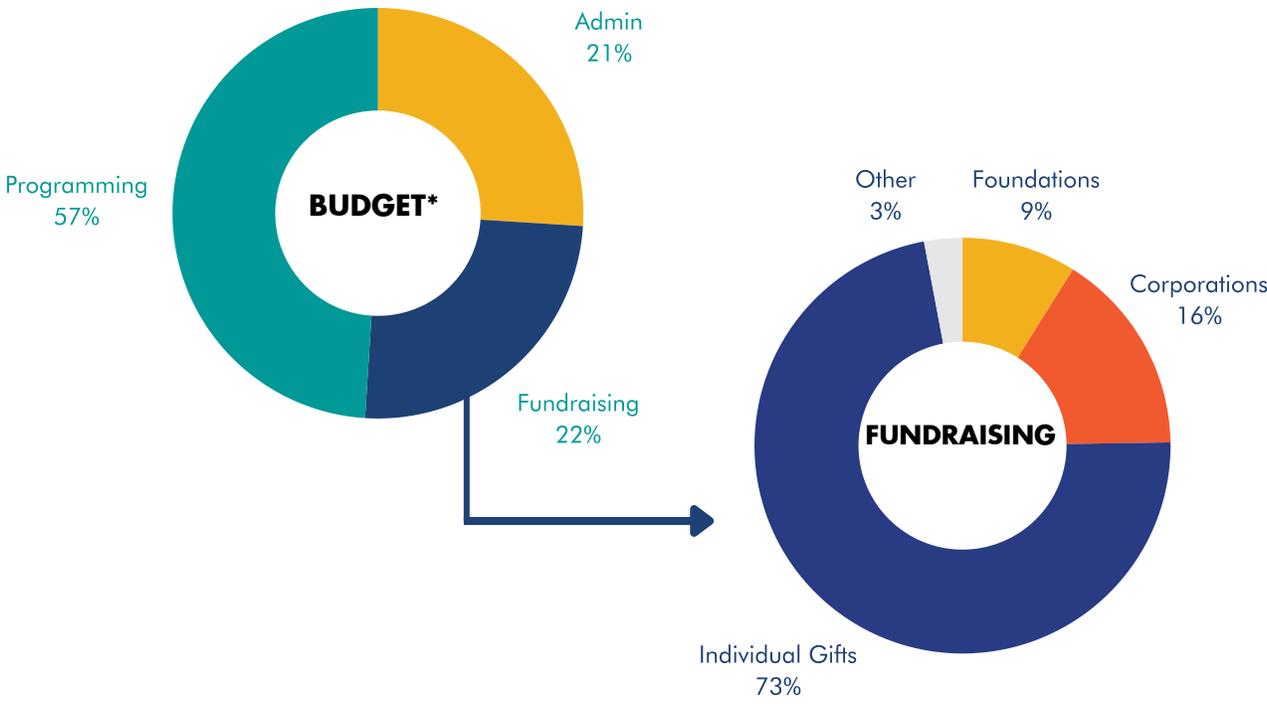
**88** TOP COLLEGES\* ACCEPTED MMC STUDENTS

*\*top colleges are defined by U.S. News & World Report's top 100 colleges & universities*



# FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Minds Matter Chicago maximizes impact by harnessing the power of volunteers and in-kind services, allocating almost 50% of our resources to programming. With a committed staff and dedicated volunteer network, we prioritize strategic growth and exceptional service, ensuring that every student receives the support they deserve to succeed.



\* Source: SY 2024 Annual Report

# PAST EVENTS

## HOMECOMING 5K

OCTOBER 26, 2024

## SEASON OF GIVING

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2024

## HOLIDAY PARTY

DECEMBER 13, 2024

## FUNDRAISING GALA

MAY 16, 2025

## END OF YEAR PICNIC

JUNE 7, 2025





# OUR PEOPLE



# OUR BOARDS

## Board Officers



Diana Hyde  
Chair



Rupa Ramadurai  
Vice Chair



Andy Jacobi  
Treasurer



Melissa Loeb  
Fundraising

## Board of Directors



Chad Marek  
Partnership



Anthony Chukumba  
Partnership



Zach Ozog  
Partnership



Jahkedda Akbar  
Partnership



Lexi Zarecky  
Partnership



Ashley Findlay  
Marketing

## Associate Board



Sandie Xu  
Co-Dir. Assoc. Board



George Lyman  
Co-Dir. Assoc. Board



George Lyman



Jamie Rood



John Arias



Jon Brooks



Tess Casey



Trey Gibson



Kahlel Martin



Amber Mixon



Will Hogan



# OUR DIRECTORS

## Management Team Directors



Cami Oh  
Mgr. Directors



Matt Talarico  
Finance



Musa Killins  
IT



Cole Campbell  
Volunteer Mgt.



Garrett Barnes  
Test Prep



Lauren Patterson  
Operations/Student  
Recruitment



Gillian Siegel  
Operations/Student  
Recruitment



Martina Davis  
Sophomore Summer  
Programs



Erin Madigan  
Junior Summer  
Programs



Hannah Sims  
Junior Summer  
Programs



Brooke Braun  
Marketing &  
Communications



Sydney Heile  
Marketing &  
Communications



Frank Fernandez  
Data Analytics



Dan Rowe  
Data Analytics

## Academic Program Directors



Ryan Kluck



Chris Moy



Matt Unger



Elizabeth Bohl



Mimi Li



Xavier Miling

# 2024 - 2025 LEADER SPOTLIGHT

## SANDIE XU

### Associate Board Director



"I've had the privilege of serving as a volunteer at Minds Matter Chicago since 2017. After graduating from college, I sought ways to give back to the community. Minds Matter inspired me with its focus on academic enrichment, experiential learning, and mentorship. I started as a mentor and met with my mentee, Branden, every Saturday during the school year to help with college readiness. I distinctly remember him telling me how he wanted to work in government or public policy, and now Branden works as a research analyst at the Illinois House of Representatives. Now, I serve as the President of the Associate Board, an all-volunteer board of young professionals who leverage their fundraising, event planning, and strategic thinking skills to help scale the impact of Minds Matter Chicago!"



## OUR MENTORS

### Class of 2027 Mentors

Luka Badurina  
Abdul Cokley  
Jessica Egertson  
Samuel Ferguson

Sydney Heile  
Jason Inumerable  
Travis Liang  
Ashley Mandel

Owen Pearlman  
Victoria Porras  
Georgianna Port  
Meg Will

Peter Schaefer  
Kunal Rajani

### Class of 2026 Mentors

Molly Bearman  
Deziree Cook  
Adina Gegpriffti  
Leo Holland  
Susan Kixmoeller

Sarah Kurpius  
Myriam Mercado  
Christopher Musoke  
Joseph Pardo  
Lauren Patterson

Kerry Rogy  
Daniel Rowe  
Gillian Siegel  
Leigha Sommer  
Jordan Taha

Marisa Vavruska  
Kathryn Zhao

### Class of 2025 Mentors

Sahal Ansari  
Katie Boardman  
Bennett Braun  
Stephen Canzona  
Daniel Cervantes

Natalie Dolan  
Steven Gillman  
Zoe Grossinger  
Lauren Hapach  
Syed Jagirdar

Wen Kang Wei  
Eric Koepsel  
Mia Palmejar-takaki  
Shravan Ravishankar  
Hannah Sim

Andrea Slimani  
Meghan Tao

### Test Preparation Tutors

Garrett Barnes  
Brendan Casey  
Ishaan Diwan

John Heldman  
George Lyman  
Karandeep Singh Mann

Tony Muscat  
Thomas Tonnesen  
Allen Yang

# 2024 - 2025 MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

## JASON INUMERABLE

Class of 2027 Mentor



"Every Saturday at Roosevelt University, I'm reminded of how driven and capable the Minds Matter students are. Engaging in conversations about their goals and witnessing their confidence take root and flourish throughout the year showcases their commitment to learning and self-improvement. What makes this experience even more meaningful is the chance to connect with them on a personal level - to talk about what made their week great, ways it could have been better, and everything in between. Being a small part of their journey as they prepare for college and beyond is a powerful reminder of what's possible when talent meets opportunity."



# OUR STUDENTS



# 2024 - 2025 STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## VIVIANA ARIOLA

Class of 2025 Graduate



"To me, Minds Matter was way more than just a Saturday commitment program - it was like a little family. We all came together on Saturdays to help and listen to one another. My mentors have supported me in numerous ways over the past three years, and I'm very grateful to them. As a first-generation student, it can be overwhelming to find the right resources, but with my mentors by my side, the process was much less intimidating. Minds Matter has shown me the importance of mentorship and how impactful it is to be surrounded by so many people who care about your future. I'm so thankful I was a part of such an amazing experience."

# 2024 - 2025 ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## MARK SINCHI

MMC CLASS 2021 | UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CLASS OF 2024



"Minds Matter offered a lifetime opportunity to excel and expand my high school career with a variety of resources. Attending academic summer programs and weekly sessions with my mentors has shaped my skills and character for college. The most memorable moment I will miss is spending time with my cohort class and celebrating each other's achievements."

# STUDENT ACTIVITIES

## OUTWARD BOUND

JUNE 2024

## ACADEMIC SUMMER PROGRAM

SUMMER 2024

## NACAC COLLEGE FAIR

OCTOBER 2024

## HOLIDAY PARTY

SUMMER 2024

## CAREER DAY

JANUARY 2025

## SENIOR CELEBRATION

MAY 2025





**UP NEXT**

# UPCOMING EVENTS



## HOMECOMING 5K 2025

Your steps will support Minds Matter Chicago, helping us provide programs, test prep and resources for students.

**19 OCTOBER 2025 AT 9 AM**

STARTING POINT:

Montrose Harbor Grove 16

REGISTRATION INFORMATION  
COMING SOON!

**PRIZES FOR THE FIRST THREE MEN,  
WOMEN, AND STUDENTS**



# BECOME A VOLUNTEER

## SY26 ENROLLMENT APRIL - AUGUST

**SUBMIT AN APPLICATION** to start your mentorship journey with MMC. Your application is the first step towards making a meaningful impact.



**INTERVIEW SESSIONS** are conducted to gain a deeper understanding of your motivations and how you align with our values.

**DECISION ANNOUNCED** within two weeks of your interview. We are excited about the possibility of having new faces join our dedicated team of mentors.



**SESSIONS BEGIN** in early September. Take your chance to make a profound difference in students' lives. Prepare to inspire and support our students.

**ATTEND AN INFO SESSION**

**SUBMIT AN APPLICATION**



**FOX 32**  
CHICAGO

**Minds Matter Chicago**  
**seeking volunteers to**  
**help young students**



# CONTACT US



MEET THE  
TEAM



VOLUNTEER  
NOW



DONATE  
TODAY



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