MINDS MATTER
CHICAGO

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2025-2026



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Achieving their **Dreams**

About Minds Matter Chicago

Minds Matter Chicago (MMC) connects driven students from low-income backgrounds with the people, preparation, and possibilities to succeed in college, create their future, and change the world. The Chicago chapter was founded in 2006 as part of the national Minds Matter network, and for nearly two decades, the organization has worked to make higher education accessible to talented high school students across the city.

Student enrollment in the program spans three years. This includes free standardized test preparation starting sophomore year, being paired with dedicated mentors who support them through coursework and the college application process, and attending fully funded summer programs – a wilderness leadership experience the summer after sophomore year, and a residential college immersion program of their choosing the summer after junior year.

MMC is one of 14 Minds Matter chapters nationwide, with a presence in the Bay Area, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, Portland, Seattle, the Twin Cities, and Washington, D.C.

Since the Chicago chapter's founding, 100% of graduating seniors have been accepted into four-year colleges and universities.

A Message from Our **Executive Director**

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

The most powerful thing we can do for a young person is help them believe that their future is filled with possibility and then stand beside them as they work to achieve it.

That is what this community does every day.

This year, students pursued their goals amid real uncertainty. National conversations about belonging, opportunity, and access to resources felt personal for many of the young people we serve. They navigated challenges that went well beyond academics — and they showed up anyway.

They showed up anyway.

For the nineteenth consecutive year, every graduating senior earned admission to a four-year college or university. Eighty-two percent committed to colleges and universities ranked among the top 250 in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. Their achievements also translated into $1.5 million in scholarships, grants, and work-study funding, reducing financial barriers and expanding access to college opportunities.

These achievements are worth celebrating. But they tell only part of the story.

Behind every acceptance letter is a student who chose courage over doubt — who kept going when it would have been easier not to. Behind every milestone is a mentor, volunteer, donor, or partner who showed up and believed.

As you read this report, you will see what this community has built together. And you will see what is possible when young people have people in their corner who believe in them. When we invest in young people and open doors that should have been open all along, we help build futures that are better for everyone — students, families, and communities.

Thank you for being part of this.

Yours in service,





Jason Carter
Executive Director

MMC at a **Glance**

Since our founding in 2006, nearly two decades of students, volunteers, and donors have made MMC what it is today.

329 Total students served since 2006

263 Alumni since 2006	**$34K*** Avg. household income of student families *family of four	**42%** Students enrolled in Chicago Public Schools
45% First student in their family to attend college (lifetime)	**3.0** Average student GPA	**$6K** Average cost per student per year
3,000 Total estimated volunteer hours per school year	**100** Total estimated student hours in-session and test prep	**20** Management Team member count

2025–2026 highlights

This year, MMC served students across three classes, welcomed its largest incoming cohort ever, and celebrated a graduating class with a 100% college enrollment rate. A few highlights from the year:

- **66** Total students served across all three classes (2026, 2027, 2028)
- **Class of '28** Biggest cohort in MMC history
- **100%** Four-year college acceptance rate
- **139** Total college acceptances for Class of 2026
- **$1.5M** Total scholarship dollars awarded to Class of 2026
- **$370K** Total money raised in 2025–2026
- **99** Total volunteers
- **3** Grants won / awarded in 2025–2026
- **107** Students accepted and committed to a U.S. News Top 250 college (lifetime)
- **10** Students accepted and committed to a U.S. News Top 25 college (lifetime)
- **73%** Six-year college graduation rate



STUDENTS

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Test Preparation

Students across all three classes are making measurable gains on the SAT.

Our students are making real gains on the SAT, and three years of data show what consistent investment in test preparation can do.

During the 2025–2026 school year, MMC shifted our primary testing focus from the ACT to the SAT. That put the senior cohort above the College Board's college readiness benchmark of 1,010 and into score ranges that are matched with more selective schools.

The Class of 2027 is tracking toward a similar trajectory. After two years in the program, juniors have raised their average score from 904 to 1,094, a 190-point gain on the March 2026 SAT.

And the Class of 2028 is just getting started. After one year and roughly 33 hours of test preparation programming, sophomores improved from an average diagnostic of 967 to 1,024, nearly 60 points of growth in year one.

All three cohorts are now scoring above the overall SAT college readiness benchmark. In the year ahead, we will focus on supporting more students to reach the individual subject benchmarks in Reading & Writing and Math.

Program **Overview**

Every MMC student participates in a structured three-year program that combines mentorship, academic preparation, and immersive summer experiences.

YEAR ONE
Class of '28

Sophomore

- Test preparation for SAT
- Writing development
- Outward Bound summer program
- Mentor pairings and mentorship pods established

YEAR TWO
Class of '27

Junior

- Continued SAT preparation
- Writing development
- College immersion summer program
- College and major exploration

YEAR THREE
Class of '26

Senior

- College application process
- Mentor-led essay support
- Financial aid navigation
- College decision support



Mentorship

Every student has two dedicated mentors throughout their three-year journey.

Research shows that one in three young people grows up without a mentor outside their family, and nearly half of those who want a mentor can't find one. For first-generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds, access to that kind of guidance changes outcomes.

For many students, a mentor is the first person outside their family who tells them their goals are within reach. At MMC, every student has two dedicated mentors who consistently show up and dedicate Saturdays to their mentees.



Our Mentorship Pod Model

Every MMC student is paired with two dedicated volunteer mentors, creating a 2:1 mentor-to-student ratio that provides personalized guidance and support throughout high school.

Students and mentors learn alongside other mentor-student pairs in our mentorship pod model, creating a collaborative community where relationships, ideas, and experiences are shared. By combining individualized mentorship with peer learning and collective support, pods help students build confidence, expand their networks, and prepare for success in college and beyond.



Summer Programs

Experiences that build confidence, independence, and a vision for what's possible.

Outward Bound

Sophomores continue their Minds Matter journey with an Outward Bound wilderness expedition following their first year in the program. A week away from Chicago, off their phones, and fully immersed in something new. It's designed to build confidence, resilience, and connection.

College Immersion

Every MMC junior can attend a fully funded academic summer program at a college of their choice, at no cost to the student or their family. Through residential programs at selective colleges and universities, students get their first real taste of college life: attending classes, living on campus, and meeting peers from across the country who share their drive and curiosity.

They explore a subject that genuinely interests them, build independence, and start to picture themselves succeeding in a college environment. For some students, it's also a chance to visit a school on their college list and decide whether they want to apply senior year.

Outward **Bound**

Building confidence through challenge, teamwork, and shared experience.

What Students Gain

The summer after sophomore year, Minds Matter students swap screens for an Outward Bound expedition, many spending an extended time away from home for the first time. Disconnected from technology, they learn to lead, make decisions together, and push through challenges alongside their cohort.

Students return with greater confidence, resilience, and independence, plus stronger bonds with their peers and the assurance that they can handle hard things. It's a powerful foundation for the three-year journey ahead.

2025–2026 Outward Bound

18 Class of 2027 who attended Outward Bound (Summer 2025)

23 Class of 2028 registered for Outward Bound (Summer 2026)

100% Of program costs are covered by MMC



College Immersion

Students explore campuses, academic interests, and new possibilities.

Each summer, MMC juniors head to a college campus for a residential academic program of their choosing, fully funded by MMC at no cost to families.

Away from home, students attend classes, live on campus, and meet peers from across the country who share their curiosity and drive. The 2026 destinations range from UCLA and the University of Washington on the West Coast to Yale and Johns Hopkins in the East.

Along the way, they dig into a subject they love, practice independence, and picture themselves thriving on campus. For many, it's also a chance to tour a school on their list and decide whether to apply senior year.

Summer 2025 & Summer 2026 College Immersion Programs

24 Class of 2026 who attended summer programs in 2025

16 Class of 2027 registered for summer programs in 2026

$56K Total cost covered by MMC

2026 Summer Program Destinations



- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of Miami
- University of Michigan
- Boston University
- Harvard University
- Illinois Institute of Technology
- Syracuse University
- University of Notre Dame
- Yale University
- University of Washington
- Lehigh University
- Johns Hopkins University

Every college immersion experience is fully funded by MMC.



Class of 2028

The first year is about building confidence, relationships, and a foundation for what's ahead.

Sophomore year is where the MMC journey begins. Students enter the program and are paired with a primary mentor who will support them throughout high school — a relationship that anchors everything else that follows.

Mentoring at MMC is structured intentionally. Each student-mentor pair is linked with others in the class to form mentoring pods, creating a broader community of support within the cohort. Mentors help students set and track goals, review academic progress, explore colleges and careers, and think through what they want their futures to look like.

The sophomore curriculum also asks students to look inward. Through community-building activities and guided reflection, students explore their identities and begin connecting who they are with where they want to go.

At a Glance

26 students enrolled

76% first-generation college prospects

Student Spotlight: Juliette

UIC College Prep · Little Village, Chicago
First-generation college prospect

Why She Applied

Her school counselor told her about Minds Matter. Juliette was drawn to something new, challenging, and stimulating — and the program delivered. Her mentor transferred into Northwestern, her dream school, which showed her firsthand that paths to a goal are never just one straight line.

“Now I understand there’s less pressure,” she says.

What's Next

Juliette has her sights set on Northwestern and a future studying psychology toward a PhD. She's nervous but excited for her Outward Bound expedition.

“Having no bathrooms is scary, but I’m ready for the experience.”

> **MMC means showing a new side of myself — exploring new goals and finding ways to access them.**



Class of 2027

Junior year helps students connect their interests with future opportunities.

Junior year at MMC is about figuring out who you are and where you want to go. Through mentoring sessions, students explore their academic strengths and interests, their core values, and what kind of work feels meaningful to them.

That self-reflection drives everything else: which summer program to apply for, which colleges to visit, which careers to dig into. Alongside that inner work, juniors spend the year building the credentials and confidence to put together strong college applications — and to hold their own once they get there.

Career Day

The Career Day Q&A Panel brought the junior class's self-reflection work to life. After spending the year thinking through their values, strengths, and interests, students came to Career Day with real questions—and panelists answered honestly.

Professionals from across industries shared how they got where they are, including the detours and pivots along the way. Students left with a clearer picture of what different paths actually look like, and a reminder that there's no single route to a meaningful career.

8 panelists **7** spotlight speakers

Industries Represented

Medical, computer science, psychology, business, research/statistics, management, and engineering



Student Spotlight: Luca

Von Steuben MSC · Irving Park
Summer Program: Harvard University

What He's Looking Forward To

Luca's college immersion summer program at Harvard will allow him to focus on coursework in computer science and AI ethics. His mentor, Will, is also connecting him with contacts in the field to help him prepare. Come senior year, Luca is most excited to see where his Minds Matter peers land.

"I'm excited to see everyone thrive."

How Outward Bound Shaped Him

The physical challenge - cold weather, rain, demanding labor - pushed Luca to his limits, but the reward was the closeness it created among his cohort.

"I loved how much closer I became with my Minds Matter peers. That wouldn't have happened without a shared experience like Outward Bound."

> **Shared struggles are what brought us closer — I learned that it's about how you look at the experience and take advantage of the moment.**





Class of 2026

Senior year is about turning preparation into opportunity.

$1.5M in total scholarships awarded

At a Glance

22	students graduated from MMC
100%	committed to attending a four-year college in Fall 2026
82%	will be the first in their family to attend college*
139	total college acceptances
6	average college acceptances per student
82%	accepted to a U.S. News & World Report Top 250 college or university

Colleges Attending

- Washington University in St. Louis (WashU)
- Santa Clara University
- Illinois Institute of Technology
- Loyola University Chicago
- Northern Illinois University
- University of Wisconsin–Madison
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- University of Michigan
- Augustana College
- Pomona College
- Columbia College Chicago
- University of Illinois Chicago
- North Park University
- Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- DePaul University
- Chicago State University

**Note: For our reporting purposes, "first in family" refers to students whose family members have not completed a bachelor's degree in the U.S.*

Student Spotlight: **Adriana**

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School · Cicero, IL · Committed: Pomona College '30

Why MMC?

Adriana first heard about Minds Matter during her freshman year at Cristo Rey, when program directors visited campus. The promise of SAT preparation, college essay coaching, and meaningful mentorship drew her in. She knew the colleges on her list expected strong scores and well-crafted applications, and she was determined to show up ready.

Turning Point

The Outward Bound wilderness expedition changed everything. Adriana had never gone camping, never canoed, and never been away from home for more than two nights. Facing all of those firsts—and pushing through them—revealed a resilience she hadn't known she had. She went on to write her Common App essay about the experience.

What Made It Possible

Drive, ambition, and commitment. Early Saturday mornings after cheer practice, four hours of college prep, year after year—Adriana showed up anyway. "The program really reflected the idea that you get what you put in," she says.

What MMC Means to Her

More than the resources, it was the relationships. Adriana walked out of the program with two mentors who supported her through summer program applications, college readiness, and the application process itself.

"It is nice to know that I have many people who are rooting for me."



"It's everything. Watching her grow over the years, attend Pomona's fall overnight, realize that it was her dream school, and then get accepted to her top choice is exactly what you hope for as a mentor.

— Jordan, Mentor · Class of 2026

The doors that have opened for her because of Minds Matter have aided in her growth, and I couldn't be prouder of all the things she has been able to accomplish.

— Patricia, Parent



VOLUNTEERS

The mentors, tutors, and volunteer leaders who make every student's journey possible.

Community at a **Glance**

Nearly 100 volunteers contribute their time, expertise, and leadership to support MMC students.

99
Active volunteers

56
Mentors

12
Test Preparation Tutors

14
Associate Board Members

3,000
estimated volunteer hours during the 2025–2026 school year

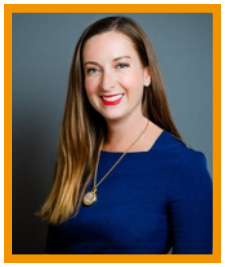


Board **Leadership**

Volunteer leaders providing strategic direction, governance, and long-term stewardship for MMC.

MMC is guided by a dedicated Board of Directors whose leadership, expertise, and commitment help advance our mission and strengthen our impact. Board members provide strategic oversight, serve as ambassadors for the organization, and help ensure our long-term sustainability. The board also plays a vital role in fueling the organization's financial engine through philanthropy, fundraising, donor engagement, and resource development. Through their investment of time, talent, and resources, board members help create opportunities for students and ensure MMC can continue expanding access to higher education and opportunity. We are grateful for their leadership and commitment to our mission.

Board Leadership



Diana Hyde
Board Chair



Rupa Ramadurai
Board Vice Chair & Governance Committee Lead



Andy Jacobi
Board Treasurer



Melissa Loeb
Board Secretary



Zach Ozog
Development & Partnerships Committee Lead



Lexi Zarecky
Strategic Planning Committee Lead

Board Members



Jahkedda Akbar



Dominic Cador



Ashley Findlay



Timothy Martinez



Chris Swiecicki

Associate Board

Supporting MMC through fundraising, events, and community engagement.

We extend our gratitude to the members of the MMC Associate Board for their continued enthusiasm, generosity, and commitment to our mission. Their time, creativity, and support throughout the year have played an important role in building community, advancing our programs, and creating meaningful opportunities for our students.

Leadership

- Sandie Xu — President
- George Lyman — Vice President
- Ishaan Diwan — Vice President
- Jamie Rood — Vice President

Members

- Amber Mixon
- Andrew He
- Jon Brooks
- Kahlel Martin
- Michael Murakami
- Ryan O'Halloran
- Tess Casey
- Trey Gibson
- Wayllon Lu
- William Hogan

2 fundraising events

1 virtual fundraising campaign

2 social events

Associate Board in Action

The MMC Associate Board supports the organization through fundraising, event planning, corporate sponsorship outreach, and volunteer engagement. This year, Associate Board members helped organize the second annual Homecoming 5K, supported the Season of Giving campaign, planned and hosted the volunteer holiday party, and coordinated the Spring for the Students Gala, which drew nearly 180 guests. They also organized the End of Year Picnic in Humboldt Park to close out the program year, welcoming current students, prospective students, and their families.

This work helps expand MMC's reach, strengthen community partnerships, and drive support for students and programs.

> It's a great group of people meeting and working together toward accomplishing a goal.

Wayllon, Associate Board
Mentor, Class of 2027
SVP, Private Equity · Chicago

Executive Director & **Management Team**

Volunteer leaders who provide the strategy, leadership, and operational support behind the student experience.

The Executive Director and Management Team provide the leadership, strategy, and operational support that power MMC's mission. This year, 20 volunteer leaders worked together to ensure students, mentors, and volunteers had the resources and support needed to succeed.

The Management Team is organized into four functional areas:

- Programming oversees the student and mentor experience.
- Summer Programs manages transformative summer opportunities for students.
- Marketing & Communications (MarCom) drives storytelling, engagement, and outreach efforts.
- Data supports impact measurement, reporting, and informed decision-making.

Together, these leaders contribute their time and expertise to strengthen the organization, support student success, and help ensure MMC continues to expand opportunities for the students we serve.

At a Glance

20 Management Team members

10 committees

Leadership

Jason Carter, Executive Director



Management Team & Program Leadership

Dedicated volunteers who lead programming, operations, and student success.

Class Programs

- Steve Gillman — Senior Program Director
- Xavier Milling — Senior Program Director
- Elizabeth Bohl — Junior Program Director
- Daniel Cervantes — Junior Program Director
- Ryan Kluck — Sophomore Program Director
- Chris Moy — Sophomore Program Director
- Garrett Barnes — Test Preparation Director
- Bennett Braun — Summer Programs Director
- Erin Madigan — Summer Programs Director
- Jordan Taha — Summer Programs Director

Volunteer Management

- Cole Campbell
- Meg Peterson

Finance

- Mia Gardner

Metrics

- Mike Rogy
- Daniel Rowe
- Lance Campbell

Marketing & Communications

- Brooke Braun
- Sydney Heile
- Mason Brown
- Maureen Masters
- Joe Salemme

Become a **Volunteer**

Help talented students prepare for college, expand their horizons, and achieve their goals.

Behind every student is a team of volunteers, and there's a place for you on it.

Who Makes a Great Volunteer?

We seek volunteers who are committed, dependable, and passionate about expanding educational opportunity. Expertise is valuable, but the most successful volunteers listen well, build meaningful relationships, and encourage students to reach their full potential.

Some volunteers work directly with students as mentors, tutors, or SAT instructors, helping them explore new paths and build the skills for college success. Others support our work behind the scenes in Marketing & Communications, Data & Systems, Volunteer Management, Student Recruitment, Alumni Management, or our Associate Board.

What Does the Volunteer Commitment Look Like?

Volunteers who work directly with students join us for Saturday programming from September through May. Mentors are paired with a student for a long-term relationship throughout high school, while tutors and SAT instructors provide subject-specific academic support. Behind-the-scenes roles (e.g., volunteer management) vary by team.

We welcome individuals from a wide range of industries, backgrounds, and experiences who are eager to invest in the next generation of leaders.

How to Apply

Interested in becoming a volunteer?

mindsmatterchicago.org/volunteers

By volunteering, you can help ensure talented students have the support, guidance, and opportunities they need to thrive in college and beyond.



SUPPORTERS

The individuals, families, foundations, and corporate partners who make every opportunity possible.

2025–2026 Donors

Every gift helps connect driven students with the people, preparation, and possibilities to succeed in college and beyond.

The Saturday sessions, summer programs, and college application support that define the MMC experience are made possible by the people who give. Donors—individuals, families, corporations, and foundations—fund the work that connects driven students from low-income backgrounds with the people, preparation, and possibilities to succeed in college and beyond. We are grateful for every gift, and for everyone who stands behind this mission.

Michael Adashek
Jahkedda Akbar
Amy Allman
Will Atkins
Kathy Brock & Douglas P. Regan
Cristina Buendia
Peter Bulandr
John Butler and Lisa Masucci
Dominic Cador
Sanjay Chakrabarty
Marcus Chamernik
Christ Church
David DeBruin
Ishaan Diwan
Timothy Drehkoff
Mya Ervin
Sam Feliciano
Ashley Findlay
Jen Gariepy
Dan Gidycz
Steven Gillman
William Gitterman
Tradd Hacker
Samantha Hogan
Robert Hori
Roxanne Hori
Diana Hyde
Percent Impact Foundation
Andy Jacobi
Gretchen Jacobi
Michael Jaharis
Steven Jaharis
Ronny Kamal
Chris Kenney
David Krivoshik
McKenna Kulish Desantis
Anh Lee
Nada Litwin
Melissa Loeb
George Lyman
Timothy Martinez
Brandan Matthews
Steve McGillivray
Michael Murakami
Tom Murphy
David Nick
Jamie Noble
Katie O'Malley
Cami Oh
Zach Ozog
Stephen Pasdiora
Collin Peterson
Stricker Philanthropic
Siddharth Prabhakar
Joel Rabinowitz
Rupa Ramadurai
Abhishek Rengarajan
Andre Rice
Trisha Rich
Eleanor Ricketts
Kenneth Roberts
Carter Robinson
Randall Rollinson
Andrew Schmit
Ryan Schusler
David Severance
Gillian Siegel
Katie Stulpinas
Chris Swiecicki
Michael T. Hyde
Matthew Uthupan
Marisa Vavruska
Lily Villa & Connor Armstrong
Robert Webster
Mark Weigram
Kip Weissman
Richard Wong
Sandie Xu
Lexi Zarecky

2025–2026 Corporate & Foundation **Partners**

Organizations investing in educational opportunity and student success across Chicago.

MMC's corporate and foundation partners share a commitment to closing the college attainment gap in Chicago. Their support sustains the program year-round and helps us reach more students.

DNS CAPITAL

LATHAM

LATHAM & WATKINS

OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST
Community Foundation

go farther.



FINANCIALS

Investing in students.
Strengthening futures.

Financial **Snapshot**

Every dollar invested helps expand opportunity for students across Chicago.



In 2025–2026, 39 cents of every dollar raised went directly to student programming.

$6K Cost Per Student, Per Year

For $6,000 per year, MMC provides a student with free standardized test preparation, dedicated mentors, and access to fully funded summer programs. Over three years, the total investment per student is $25,000.

The return on that investment is concrete: 100% of MMC graduating seniors are accepted to a four-year college. Notably, the Class of 2026 received $1,500,000 in total scholarship awards. For 82% of those students, they will be the first in their family to attend college - an investment that changes the trajectory of a life.

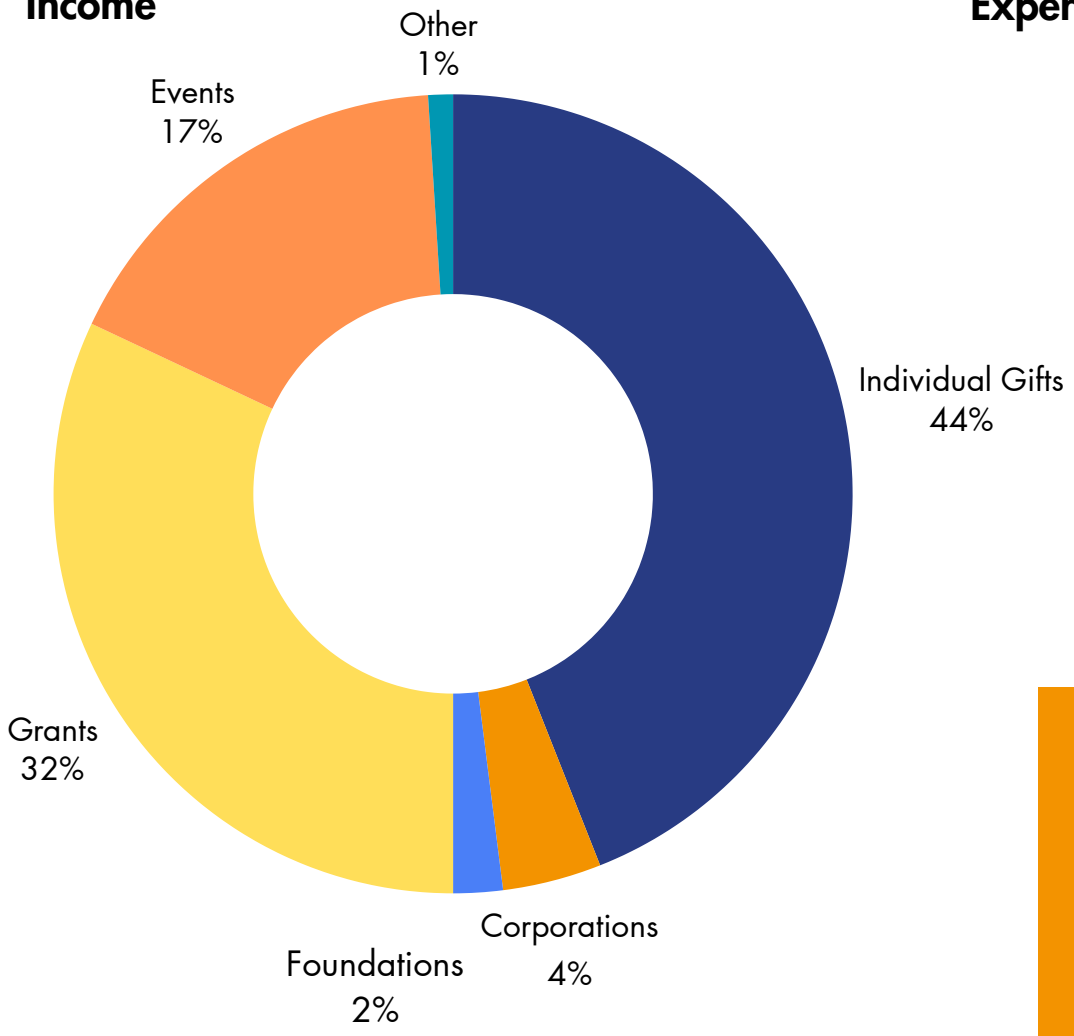
At a Glance

$14,510	Total revenue
$356K	Total expenses
39%	Allocated to student programming
$18K	Average cost per student over the full three-year program

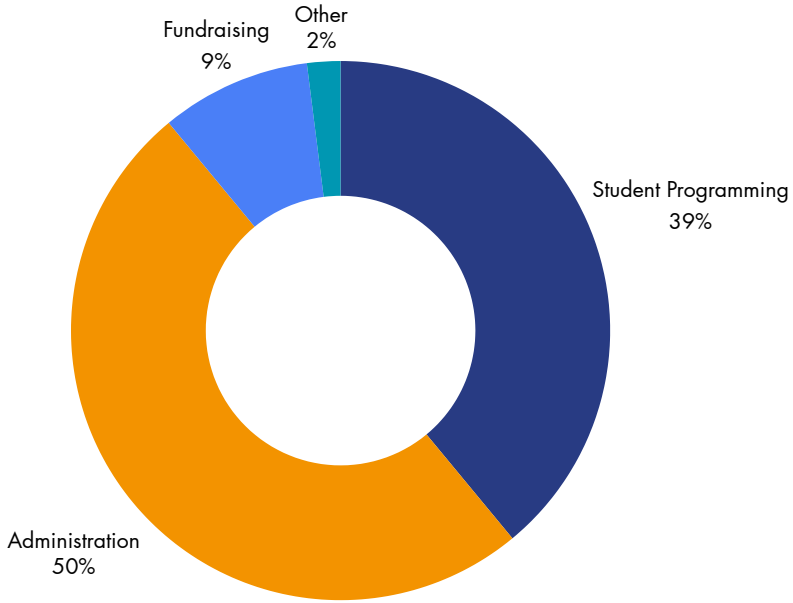
Revenue **Highlights**

Community investment continues to expand opportunities for students.

Income



Expenses



Total Money Raised

$370,550

Grants

Grant funding expands access to mentorship, college readiness, and transformative student experiences.

Grants play a critical role in expanding opportunities for MMC students. Grants do more than fund the work. They signal that funders believe in what we're building—and in the students at the center of it.

This year, MMC was proud to secure support from a diverse group of funders committed to educational access, college success, mentoring, and youth development. Notably, MMC was awarded a $72,000 grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) through its Individual Youth Mentoring Program. As a highly competitive public investment, this award recognizes the value of our mentoring model and our commitment to helping Chicago students access educational opportunities and achieve long-term success.

Together, grant funding supports student programming, mentorship initiatives, summer enrichment experiences, college readiness services, and organizational capacity-building efforts that strengthen our impact across the city.

Awarded Grants

$100K	Cook County Starting Block Grant
$72K	City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Individual Youth Mentoring Program
$1K	Church of Winnetka Benevolence Grant

These investments help ensure MMC can continue providing high-quality, transformative programming while expanding access to the resources, relationships, and opportunities that help students thrive in college and beyond.



EVENTS

Bringing together students, volunteers, donors, and the community throughout the year.

2025–2026 Events in **Review**

Throughout the year, our community came together to celebrate, connect, and invest in students.

The 2025–2026 school year brought our community together again and again: at the starting line, online, at a volunteer holiday party, at a gala, and finally, for a student celebration in the park. Each event drew in volunteers, donors, students, and families who believe in this mission and show up for it. Together, they raised funds, celebrated milestones, and reminded us why this work matters.

Homecoming 5K — October 2025

Closing the college attainment gap since 2006, one mile at a time.

During the fall, MMC laced up for the Homecoming 5K, an open-to-the-public celebration of community, movement, and mission. In 2025, runners and supporters of all abilities gathered at Montrose Harbor for a morning that felt as much like a reunion as a race.

The event carried all the warmth and pride of its namesake. Longtime MMC supporters ran alongside first-timers who were just discovering the organization. The finish line felt earned. This community raised $22,000 to connect driven students from low-income backgrounds with the people, preparation, and possibilities to succeed in college and beyond.



Event Snapshot

143	Attendees
$22K	Funds Raised

2025–2026 Events in **Review**

Season of Giving & Volunteer Appreciation

Two traditions that celebrate generosity and the people who make this work possible.

Season of Giving Campaign

November – December 2025

Every gift moves a student closer to college.
This winter, donors near and far came together for our annual Season of Giving campaign - held entirely online and open to anyone who believes in what these students can do. The message was simple: driven students from low-income backgrounds deserve the support to thrive in college and beyond. And donors answered the call. The Season of Giving raised $40,000, funding the tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment experiences at the core of the MMC program.

Campaign Snapshot

170 Unique Donors

$40K Funds Raised

Volunteer Holiday Party

December 2025

Celebrating the people who make it all possible.
Our volunteers give their Saturday mornings, their expertise, and their wholehearted belief in the students they mentor and the programming they enable. The Volunteer Holiday Party was a chance to give something back to them: an evening with no agenda, no program updates, just good company. Mentors, tutors, and supporters gathered to catch up, reflect on the year, and enjoy being part of something bigger than themselves. It was a simple evening - and exactly what it needed to be.

Community isn't something we build only for our students. It's something we foster and grow for everyone who shows up for this work.

Event Snapshot

50 Attendees

Community Connections & Signature **Events**

Expanding awareness, building relationships, and celebrating student success.

Private Equity Association of Chicago (PEAC)

April 3, 2026

Connecting with Chicago's civic community.

Each year, the Private Equity Association of Chicago brings together members of the private equity community and nonprofits from across the city to explore opportunities for board service, advisory roles, and volunteer engagement. This year, MMC was proud to take part.

Associate Board Member George Lyman and MMC alum Caitlin Clemmons represented MMC at the forum, sharing the organization's story and speaking to the impact of the program firsthand.



Pictured to the right: Associate Board Member George Lyman represented MMC at the PEAC Nonprofit Forum.

Community Connections & Signature **Events**



Spring for the Students Gala

May 14, 2026

Our biggest night of the year.

The Spring for the Students Gala is MMC's signature fundraising event, and this year, guests gathered at Galleria Marchetti for an evening in honor of the students at the center of everything we do.

Our Board Chair and Executive Director both took the stage—reflecting on a year of record-setting enrollment, 100% senior college acceptances, and what's ahead as MMC approaches its 20th anniversary.

The Gala raised $186K, supporting the tutoring, mentoring, and summer programs that prepare MMC students to stand out as college applicants and, more importantly, as people ready for what comes next.

Event Snapshot

175	Attendees
$186K	Funds Raised

End of Year **Picnic**

Celebrating another successful year—and welcoming the next generation of students.

On a warm May afternoon in Humboldt Park, MMC students, families, and volunteers gathered for the End of Year Picnic. It's a tradition that marks the close of the program year, and this time around it also served as an introduction for prospective students and mentors to the organization.

There's no better way to get a feel for MMC than to spend an afternoon with the people in it.

Event Snapshot

50 Attendees

Pictured to the right: Students, families, volunteers, and prospective participants gathered to celebrate the close of another successful program year at Humboldt Park.





WHAT'S AHEAD

Looking toward another year of growth, opportunity and impact.

Looking Ahead to **2026-2027**

Building on this year's momentum to expand opportunity for even more students.

MMC heads into 2026–2027 with a record-setting incoming cohort, a growing volunteer base, and a milestone anniversary on the horizon.

The Upcoming Year

The 2026–2027 school year marks a milestone for Minds Matter Chicago: our 20th Anniversary. Twenty years of empowering driven, motivated students with the people, preparation, and resources to get into college and build the future they deserve — and we're celebrating all year long, starting with our Season of Giving campaign and capping off with our Annual Spring Gala. Dates, venues, and registration details will be announced as the year gets underway.

This anniversary is a moment to look back at nearly two decades of students who realized their potential — and to look ahead. We're expanding our impact, walking alongside our students not just through high school, but all the way to college success. And we're growing the community that makes it possible: we're recruiting 50 new volunteers this year, while continuing to expand our volunteer network's reach across the city.

Growth Goals

- Enroll 20–25 Class of 2029 students
- Recruit 50 new volunteers
- Expand the geographic reach of MMC's volunteer network across the Chicago region

Organizational Milestones on the Horizon

Expanding corporate partnerships

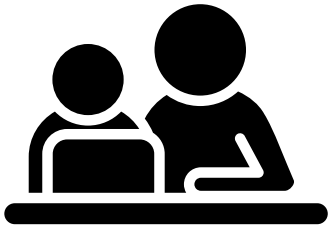
Celebrating our 20th Anniversary

Growing our impact
by supporting students through college success, not just high school programming

Get **Involved**

Together, we can help more students discover what's possible.

Every MMC student is supported by volunteers who show up on Saturday mornings from September through May to help them prepare for college and plan what comes next. Mentors, tutors, Board and the management team all work together to make this possible, and we're actively recruiting for 2026-2027. No prior teaching or mentoring experience is needed. What matters is consistency and a genuine interest in students' success.



Become a Volunteer

Weekly Saturday sessions, September through May.

mindsmatterchicago.org/volunteers



Give a Gift

Donations fund the tutoring, mentoring, and summer programs at the core of the MMC program.

mindsmatterchicago.org/support



Spread the Word

Know driven high school students from a low-income background? MMC is happy to visit schools and host information sessions for students and parents.

info@mindsmatterchicago.org



MINDS MATTER
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