



**2023**  
ANNUAL REPORT

EMPOWERMENT  
INTEGRITY  
INCLUSION  
COLLABORATION  
PASSION  
TEAMWORK

**BE A LEADER.ORG**

# LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



We are delighted to present our 2023 annual report, showcasing the remarkable progress and impact of the Be A Leader Foundation. This year, we adapted our programs to meet the evolving needs of our students and school partners, ensuring educational equity and amplifying student voices.

Throughout 2023, we enhanced our programs to align with changing student expectations and the shifting postsecondary landscape. As we navigated our transition to re-norming, we proactively augmented our programs to better align with student expectations and meet them “where they are.” Our goal is to ensure that every improvement curates an environment where students can thrive and feel a sense of belonging. Through our innovative approaches and partnerships, we provided leadership development for 8th graders at Kuban and Sullivan Elementary through our partnership with the Murphy Elementary school district. As leaders of the AZ META Network, we continue to focus on improving FAFSA completion and college enrollment for nearly one in five of Arizona’s high school seniors. We continue our tireless support of the Class of 2024 as they navigate the additional hurdle of the slow roll-out of the Better FAFSA application process well into 2024. We also supported first-generation community college students in their transition to four-year institutions.

At the core of Be A Leader’s DNA lies innovation, creativity, and a strong work ethic. Looking ahead, we aim to elevate our direct service programming through several key initiatives: increased digital engagement, re-energizing our Be A Leader network of student Leaders, and broadening our regional presence. Additionally, we will introduce a new format for our annual event, Taking Steps Towards College Success. This event will now take place during the school day to enhance student participation and will adopt a conference-style format alongside a resource fair, ensuring more direct and student-centered content.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our supporters, school partners, volunteers, and team members for their indispensable roles. Your engagement has been crucial to our success. We look forward to continued collaboration, creating opportunities for students and families to thrive. Together, we will support our students’ pursuit of postsecondary attainment and positively impact Arizona’s future.

Soilo J. Felix  
President & Chief Executive Officer

## 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Board Chair & Co-Founder  
Be A Leader Foundation

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# MISSION

To increase the number of students who are prepared for and succeed in higher education by empowering them with tools, leadership skills and consistent support, transforming lives and creating lifelong opportunities for success.

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INTEGRITY  
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# VISION

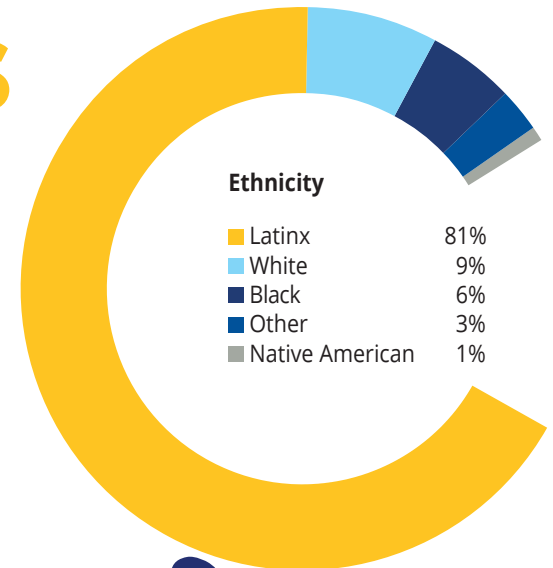
All students have the opportunity to succeed in higher education and have the skills and resources to ensure personal success.

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



**83%**

of Be A Leader students are first generation college students



In 2023, 80% of Be A Leader students pursued higher education compared to 48% in Arizona and 62% nationally\*



**81%**

of Be A Leader students are experiencing poverty

\*2023  
National Student  
Clearinghouse Data

# THE ROAD TO SUCCESS



## Early Awareness Programs

Be A Leader Institute (Elementary)  
Youth Leadership Series  
Valedictorian Club



**Postsecondary  
ACCESS Programs**  
7th Grade  
through 11th Grade



## High School Programs

Freshman Hub  
Be A Leader Institute High School  
Be A Leader Clubs

Be A Leader has committed to three strategic priorities to guide our work. Each of these programmatic priorities will enhance our capacity to increase the number of students who access, successfully persist and graduate from a postsecondary institution.

**1**

### Investing in our college access programs

Allocating resources towards the experiences for our students as they develop a college-going mindset, social capital and support to create their own pathway.



#### Postsecondary TRANSITION Programs

12th Grade & School Staff

**2**

### Expanding postsecondary success opportunities

Creating an ecosystem that enables a sense of belonging, social capital and a clear pathway to these transformative experiences.



Arizona META Network for School Improvement

**3**

### Scaling our impact through a systems approach

Supporting partner practitioners in creating more equitable educational opportunities.



#### Postsecondary SUCCESS Programs

12th Grade through College

**18%**

of Arizona's High School Seniors are enrolled in an AZ Meta Network Partner School



AZ Gear Up Senior Boot Camp (SBC)  
Be A Leader Institute College Persistence and Retention Programs

**80%**

Be A Leader Freshman Enrollment Rate for the Class of 2023

**59%**

6-Year Attainment Rate for Be A Leader students; compared to the state at 23%\*

# DELIVERING ON OUR MISSION



# 480

## Be A Leader Students

Earned a Postsecondary Degree in 2023  
(Class of 2017)



# 81%

## Initially Enrolled at One of These In-State Institutions:

Arizona State University, Maricopa Community Colleges, Grand Canyon University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona

# 400

U.S. Institutions  
Have Enrolled  
Be A Leader Students

# RELEVANCE

Access to quality higher education is a cornerstone of societal progress, fostering economic growth, social mobility, and individual prosperity. In Arizona, significant disparities exist in postsecondary enrollment and completion rates, particularly among under-resourced groups.

Research suggests that increasing the postsecondary enrollment rate in Arizona by 20% would lead to gains – including lifetime earnings, improved health, reduced crime and welfare spending, and increased workforce productivity—that exceed \$5 billion per cohort (Billions to Gain - The Economic Benefits of Investing in a More Education Arizona, Helios Education Foundation, March 2023).



# \$982,680

## Lifetime Social Gain

Arizonans with bachelor's degrees contribute \$982,680 more in social gains per individual than high school graduates. Lifetime Social Gains refers to the lifetime effects of factors impacted by postsecondary attainment: increased earnings, better health, reduced crime and welfare dependence. These are all contributors to increase economic competitiveness for Arizona.



# \$2.2K

## In State Tax Revenues

Each college graduate added to the Arizona workforce would increase state tax revenues by an approximate of \$2,200 each year.

# REACH



**14K**  
Students  
Served



**18%**  
of All Arizona  
High School Seniors\*



**10**  
District  
Partners



**63**  
Workshops  
Conducted by our  
Direct Service Teams  
(26 Middle School, 14 High  
School, and 23 College)



**38**  
Partner  
Schools



**4,822**  
Advising Hours  
(As Part of the AZ Meta Network)



**5%**  
FAFSA Completion  
Increase\*

*\*School partners in AZ Meta Network supported by  
Be A Leader's continuous improvement initiatives*

# IMPACT

**80% vs. 48%**

Class of 2023 Fall Enrollment  
Be A Leader vs. AZ State Rate\*\*



**59% vs. 23%**

6-Year Attainment  
Be A Leader vs. AZ State Rate\*\*



**\$34,450**

Be A Leader  
Scholarships  
Awarded



**\$3.5M**

Amount of  
Scholarships  
Earned by our Senior Boot Camp  
Class of 2023

*\*\*2023 National Student Clearinghouse Data*

# LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Henry is a proud first-generation graduate who is paying his impactful experiences forward with his career in Nevada.

**HENRY ROSAS IBARRA**  
Government Affairs Manager  
United Way of Southern Nevada  
Yale University, Ethnicity, Race,  
and Migration, Class of 2021

“Be A Leader afforded me the opportunity to explore careers and education pathways in public service and government. Through dedicated programs like Senior Boot Camp and monthly workshops, the organization empowered me with the belief that I could reach and attain any academic and scholarship opportunity to put me on a path toward college success. Now, more than a decade after I participated in my first Saturday workshop, I continue to return to the skills and tools they equipped me with as a first-generation professional working to expand postsecondary education funding and policy in Nevada.”

## ALUMNI





The Rainge Family has leveraged their resources and experience with Be A Leader to each be successful where they are in their academic and professional careers.

## EMILY RAINGE

Pomona College, Neuroscience, Class of 2022;  
PhD, Neuroscience, Oregon Health and  
Science University, Class of 2026

“ How the Be A Leader Foundation was most impactful for me when I was in high school and college were career panels that I attended. I got to learn from professionals about their careers and how they got to where they were in their careers. These panels showed me that people can take several different paths to reach a career goal, and they inspired me to cast my gaze far and wide for opportunities.”

## JUSTIN RAINGE

Nationwide Insurance, Software Engineer  
Arizona State University, Class of 2021  
Computer Information Systems

“ I attended Career Shadow Day events where I got to go to the company and shadow employees while seeing the type of work they do. After attending the events, I knew I wanted my career path to be in Information Technology. Even during my college years, the Be A Leader Foundation continued their support for me by providing financial aid and holding events preparing me for post-college life. I will be forever grateful for the support they provided to me throughout my high school and college journey.”



## BLANCA

Be A Leader Student Since 9<sup>th</sup> Grade  
12<sup>th</sup> Grade, South Mountain High School



Blanca is a high achieving and goal oriented student who is building on her experiences with the business community and launching her college career.

“ Be A Leader has been significant in my professional and educational development, providing invaluable connections and resources. As a Bank of American student leader this past summer, recommended by Be A Leader’s College Access Programs Manager, Edith, it paved the way for remarkable opportunities such as being the recipient of the Renee Parsons Girls Leadership Award.

Next year, I will be attending Arizona State University Barrett as a Business Management major and I am considering double majoring. I plan to join clubs such as collegiate DECA, Women in Business, and the Hispanic Honor Society. I am mostly looking forward to setting down the foundation for my college career!”

## VANESSA K

Be A Leader Student Since 9<sup>th</sup> Grade  
11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Metro High School



Vanessa is an ambitious student and an active leader in many communities including Be A Leader.

“Be A Leader helped me a lot this year in figuring out my next steps and actually helped me find my summer community service project with Dignity Health. During the school year, I'm involved in a Pharmacy tech program, as well as Student Government, Black Student Union, National Honor Society, Health Occupation Students of America, French and Modeling clubs. I volunteer at Feed My Starving Children and Saint Mary's Food Bank.

Next year I will be applying for as many scholarships I can and will apply to my top 15 colleges. My career goal is either be a pharmacist or a forensic psychologist.”

## VANESSA F

Be A Leader Student Since 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

Sophomore, Arizona State University Landscape Architecture, Class of 2026



Working hard at her jobs, volunteering and academic commitments, Vanessa has found community and support with Be A Leader.

“Be A Leader helped me to value education by inspiring me to make sure everyone has access to resources for education. I gratefully used the scholarship for class materials and also to take opportunities I otherwise couldn't afford to take. The American Society of Landscape Architects held their annual conference in Minneapolis and the scholarship helped me fly out to the conference. As a first-generation student, I appreciated the independence and newfound understanding of my major.

In the future, I plan to become a designer that works within the realm of sustainability to help people either through nonprofit work or public landscape architecture.”

## DAVID C

Be A Leader Student Since 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
12<sup>th</sup> Grade, Bioscience High School



David is a high school senior with a clear plan for achieving his future goals.

“ Be A Leader has consistently helped me in navigating through my high school experience.

They have given me many opportunities in meeting people that work in a variety of fields of work. They even to this day continue to impact my life positively, through the connections they have given me with others, helping me figure out how to manage my time, how to work on FAFSA, community building, and leadership skills. Enabling me to continue to grow into a better person with each passing day.

I plan on focusing on my studies majoring in Mechanical Engineering at ASU. My career goal is to go into engineering and work my way up to Management in this field with the end goal of reaching a Mechanical Engineering Director position.”

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## DAVID R

Be A Leader Student Since 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
10<sup>th</sup> Grade, Camelback High School



David is in the early stages of following his siblings as he navigates a path to college with support from Be A Leader.

“ During my free time, I enjoy learning coding. I don't know what I want my major to be in college or what I want to do as my career yet, but Be A Leader has been useful in helping me to start figuring that out. The career shadow week allowed me to learn about different careers, which will be very useful for me and I really enjoy attending the Saturday workshops, getting to meet new people and learn about how to prepare for college.”

## XIMENA

Be A Leader Student Since 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Southwest Elementary School



On her way to high school, Ximena is a creative and passionate student focused on developing herself for a successful future ahead.

“ Be A Leader has helped me learn about high school and college, career opportunities, and how to manage/save money. Be A Leader has also helped me by giving me multiple chances to socialize and participate with other students. Be A Leader’s Toolkit for Success workshop in particular helped me learn about the different skills needed to start and be successful in my freshman year of high school.

Since next year I officially enter my first year of high school, I hope to do well and achieve my goals like joining clubs or programs that can help me learn new stuff and have fun. I want to explore my different career options and the job I want to do. I want a job I actually enjoy and have a passion for. I want to find a career that isn’t boring and that can support me for a living so I can support myself and my family.”

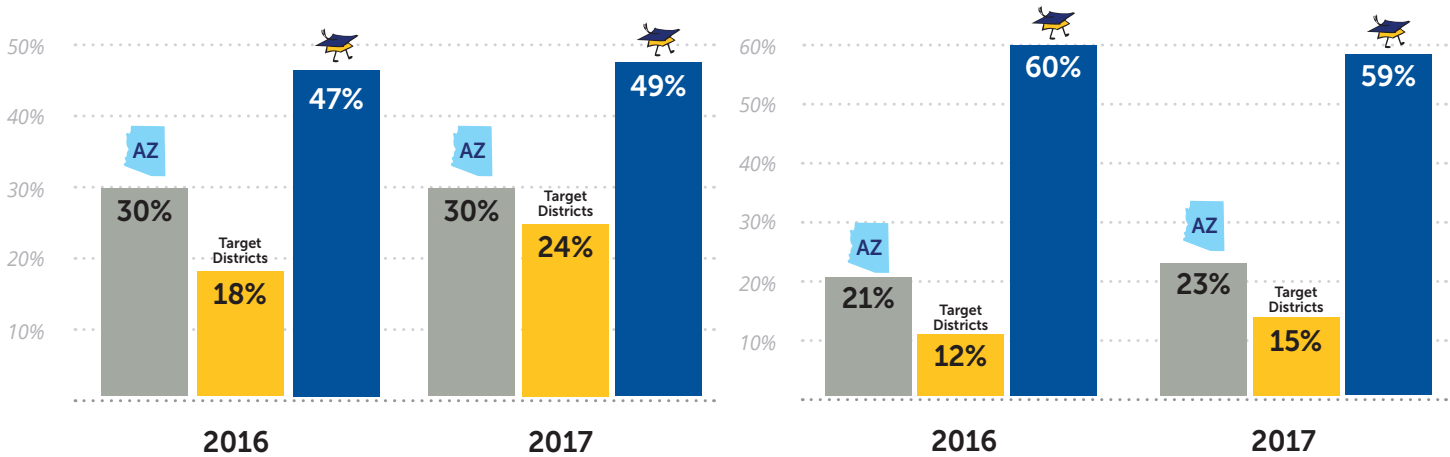
POSTSECONDARY 6-YEAR

# ATTAINMENT RATES



## % WHO HAVE EARNED 2-YEAR OR 4-YEAR DEGREE

## % WHO ENROLLED AT 4-YEAR WHO EARNED A DEGREE



NSC reports are estimated to have anywhere from a 10% to 20%+ margin of error



# PARTNERS

## FOR ALL KIDS IN THE SYSTEM.

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**COLLABORATION**  
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Be A Leader is privileged to collaborate with numerous organizations and individuals within the education system. We are dedicated to supporting Black, Latino, and low-income students in finding the best-matched post-secondary opportunities, working closely with school counselors and families.

Our Direct Student Service teams are deeply involved, from being present on campuses to designing and leading Saturday workshops. They work tirelessly to support students in developing a college-going mindset, completing FAFSA, enrolling in college, and ultimately earning their degrees.

Through our leadership of the Arizona Meta Network, we partner with practitioners to enhance the college and FAFSA experience for counselors and high school seniors across various districts.

PHOENIX  
**PXU**  
UNION

**mesa**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



**Murphy**  
Passionately making the difference

Students who receive scholarships from our partners, such as the Burton Family Foundation and Empowering Diversity Scholars, benefit from targeted support at both community colleges and universities. Regular check-ins and programming ensure a successful pathway to degree attainment

**EMPOWERING**  
*Diversity*  
SCHOLARSHIP

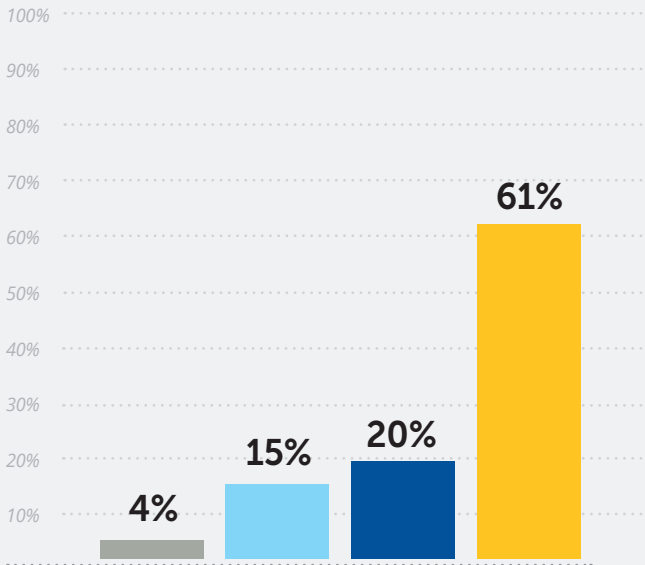
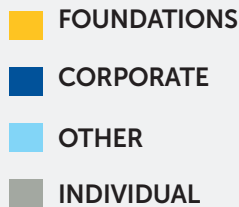
THE  
**BURTON**  
**FAMILY**  
FOUNDATION

PRESENTED BY

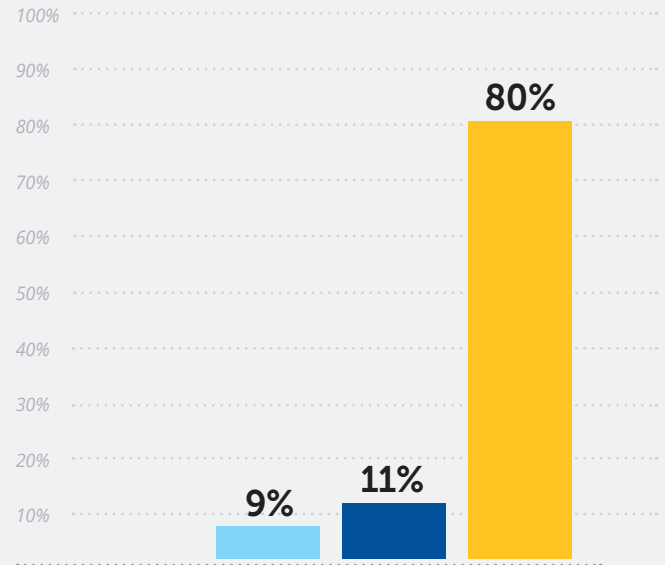
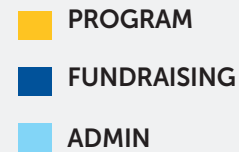
# FINANCIALS

## 2023 FISCAL YEAR\*

**REVENUE**  
**\$2.01 MILLION**



**OPERATING EXPENSES**  
**\$1.67 MILLION**



**\$0.80 OF EVERY DONOR DOLLAR**  
**GOES DIRECTLY TO THE DELIVERY**  
**OF PROGRAMS & STUDENT SERVICES.**

\*Unaudited.

*As Be A Leader looks ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to evolving our approach to meet students where they are, empowering them to reach their dreams and achieve their goals.*

# MOMENTUM

Be A Leader's role in Arizona's education ecosystem is to support our students, families, and educators as they continue to adapt to a new normal marked by uncertainty, changing student preferences and an amplified conversation on the value and viability of attaining a college degree.

Black, Latinx & Native American communities, that were already marginalized by our higher education system, are still disproportionately impacted by the latent effects of the pandemic even four years out. As we support our students in navigating these lingering effects, our approach is centered on actively rebuilding student engagement, fostering a deeper sense of community, and implementing strategies ensuring a robust, thriving and supportive context for them to operate in.

## AS WE CONTINUE TO PURSUE EXCELLENCE IN OUR PROGRAMMING AND EXPAND OUR OVERALL REACH AND IMPACT IN 2024, KEY INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

1

### Direct Student Service

Enhancements will focus on continued refinement of the Be A Leader student experience. This will be anchored on our clubs, with program design to include a focus on digital engagement and building broader awareness of how Be A Leader can be integral to a successful journey to postsecondary education.

2

### Taking Steps Towards College Success Summit

This beloved community event is being re-imagined, to become an even deeper foundational element to our programs. By being embedded in the school day with a conference format, our students can opt into customized content. This approach will directly address student preferences and ensure a directed, value added experience for all participants.

3

### Community College Persistence

Anchored on continuous improvement and learning from the last three years, our new cohort model is designed to directly address specific barriers to persistence. We anticipate a substantial measurable impact at both the individual and system level.

4

### Systems Support for Improvement Initiatives

By revamping and re-scoping learning from our collaborative Arizona Meta Network engagement over the past five years, we are restructuring for more embeddedness in the schools, with strategic, improvement based student supports. We will be continue to be focused on FAFSA completion, enrollment and attainment with data routines directed towards customized individual student support.



# TAKING STEPS TOWARDS college success

This was our 15th year hosting this flagship community event. It is a foundational element of our programs, offering valuable resources to student and families dreaming about their future.



**22**  
Career Professionals  
Sharing Their Experiences



**850**  
Students & Families



**32**  
Partners at the  
Student Resource Fair



**40**  
In-School Presentations  
to Raise Awareness



## EVENT SPONSORS

### PREMIER



### DOCTORATE



### GRADUATE



### UNDERGRADUATE



### K-12



# THANK YOU

## CORPORATE & FOUNDATION SPONSORS

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Delivering water and power®

SRP's history of commitment to the community includes support of organizations like the Be A Leader Foundation.

We want to thank SRP for providing the printing of this report.

Be A Leader Foundation is a qualifying Arizona Charitable Tax Credit Organization (QCO Code #20849) and an approved IRS 501(c)3 tax exempt organization #55-0850279

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