



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 25, 2020**

**Breakthrough Central Texas Employs Virtual Programming  
to Serve 2,000 Students on the Path to College During COVID-19**  
*Austin nonprofit offers diverse summer programming, internships and emergency aid*

**AUSTIN, TEXAS** – Breakthrough Central Texas, Austin’s nonprofit organization that helps students become the first in their family to earn a college degree, is proud to announce multiple virtual program offerings to support students this summer. The Middle School Summer Academy, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Leadership Institute, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Professional Experience Workshops, Senior Seminars and Thrive Summit and one-on-one virtual advising for all 2,000 students enrolled in the program will help students and families stay on track toward their goal of college completion. This announcement comes as districts in the organization’s primary service areas, Austin, Manor and Del Valle, launch re-entry strategies to open campuses in the fall.

To mitigate risk and protect students, staff and families, Breakthrough Central Texas has suspended all in-person activities through August 2020. In March 2020, Breakthrough Central Texas established virtual programming to support its middle, high school and college students this summer. Each program prioritizes the health and well-being of students, summer learning, and opportunities to build community with other students and advisors.

Since the transition to virtual advising and programming, the organization has tracked advising hours offered to students. From March through May 2020, advising hours were on par with the first quarter of 2020 when Breakthrough advisors spent nearly 450 hours per month with students. The organization employs virtual technologies to bridge the gap between students and advisors, utilizing Zoom, FaceTime and text messages to engage students. Although advising hours are typically suspended during the summer, Breakthrough will continue to offer individual advising in addition to the following programs:

**Breakthrough Central Texas Summer Academy**

- From June 12 – July 24, the 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Professional Institute, will host a variety of workshops focused around leadership skills, presentation skills, resume writing and networking, all while providing an introduction to diverse career fields.
- From June 15 – June 26, the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Virtual Leadership Institute will provide students with virtual activities aimed at improving college knowledge, building leadership and engaging with peers.
- From July 6 – 31, the Middle School Summer Academy will host more than 300 students in grades six through nine online. Students will engage with AmeriCorps Teaching Fellows for

virtual instruction three times per week and participate in independent projects that explore the effects of COVID-19 on their community and the world with a lens to social justice.

- From June 22 – July 30, the Senior Institute will engage rising high school seniors in preparation for college application season. High school seniors will receive priority attention this summer as they complete critical steps in the college application process. During this session, students complete essays, identify schools of choice and begin Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) forms.
- Throughout the summer, Breakthrough high school graduates entering college in the fall will engage in Breakthrough’s virtual Thrive Summit to discuss the transition of going to college and living away from home, and speak to college representatives at their selected schools to learn more about the resources on campus. Additionally, advisors will work with college students to identify internships through their Future Focus internship placement program, many of which Breakthrough will help facilitate virtually during the pandemic. College students will receive additional support from Breakthrough’s advisement team to encourage their course enrollment and completion.

To ensure students stay on track toward college graduation, Breakthrough Central Texas launched a campaign to raise emergency funds for students and families in April. To date, the organization has raised more than \$200,000 for the Student & Family Support Fund, with the help of large benefactors such as Luci Baines Johnson and an anonymous foundation. Nearly 230 families served by the organization have received funds, including more than \$13,000 in groceries, as well as cash grants to assist with utilities and rent. More than 80 families have received technology support from the organization, including laptops, tablets, and hotspot support to assist with online education.

“We are grateful for the outpouring of support from the Central Texas community,” says Breakthrough Central Texas Executive Director Michael Griffith. “As we continue to bolster students on their brave journey to be the first in their family to complete college, the tools of additional advisement, summer learning and technology are vital to their success.”

Visit [breakthroughctx.org](http://breakthroughctx.org) for more information on Breakthrough Central Texas, its students and services.

#### **ABOUT BREAKTHROUGH CENTRAL TEXAS**

Breakthrough Central Texas is a nonprofit that creates a path to and through college for students from under-resourced communities. From sixth grade through to college, the organization offers out-of-school learning experiences, leadership skills, and comprehensive advising to students. The organization makes a 12-year commitment to students and their families to guide them through the process of preparing for, enrolling in and completing college. The long-term model ensures the success of students and families from middle school to high school graduation to college diploma and beyond. Join the conversation on Twitter [@BreakthroughCTX](https://twitter.com/BreakthroughCTX), Instagram [@BreakthroughCTX](https://www.instagram.com/BreakthroughCTX) and at [Facebook.com/BreakthroughCTX](https://www.facebook.com/BreakthroughCTX). To learn more, visit [www.breakthroughctx.org](http://www.breakthroughctx.org).

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