



The Breakthrough

LEADER

Meet Erika.

Erika is a freshman at Our Lady of the Lake University this fall. Although classes began in September, her journey to college began much earlier. Erika is the first in her family to graduate from high school, let alone go to college, and she has had to work her whole life to get to this point.

Erika's parents have supported her in every way they can. But the complicated process of applying to and enrolling in college is new territory for the whole family. This sometimes feels very isolating; as Erika wrestled with college essays and financial aid packages this spring, "it felt like my life depended on this decision that I had to make, and I had no parent guidance on it. It made me feel kind of alone."

Fortunately, Erika had a resource that many students do not: she had Breakthrough. For the last six years, Breakthrough has worked to smooth Erika's path to college, with everything from homework help to coaching on her college applications.

This summer, Erika relied on Breakthrough more than ever. After being accepted into her dream school, Our Lady of the Lake, Erika was disappointed to learn that her financial aid package and



Photo thanks to Miguel Gutierrez, Jr.

scholarships would not cover tuition. She didn't see how she could afford to attend.

Rather than giving up, Erika turned to Breakthrough for guidance. Her college advisor, Daniel, helped Erika and her family appeal her financial aid package and negotiate for cheaper housing.

Now, Erika is attending her dream school, enjoying her classes and campus life. Living in a dorm room, far away from her family, is a big change, but Erika is already feeling at home. "I'm ready for a new journey, a new chapter in my life," she says.

FRIENDS OF FIRST-GEN

Make your gift to Breakthrough do even more by becoming a Friend of First-Gen monthly donor. A small donation each month - the cost of a pair of movie tickets or a few breakfast tacos - gives Breakthrough a reliable source of income that we can count on to provide year-round programming.

It's easy and affordable to become a Friend of First-Gen. Just fill out and return the enclosed envelope, or visit www.BreakthroughAustin.org/monthly-giving. You can choose the gift amount that is right for you, and give students in Central Texas the support they need to become first-generation college graduates.

\$5/month = A student's SAT/ACT registration

\$10/month = Bus passes for students to after school programs

\$25/month = After school tutoring for a student

A letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends of Breakthrough,

Our first newsletter contains just a snapshot of the many things happening at Breakthrough. Hundreds of stories like these are unfolding every day, as we support nearly 1,100 students on their path to college. Just like our students, Breakthrough is growing and maturing, and it is exciting to be a part of it.

We think a lot about growth at Breakthrough, as we see our students grow, literally and figuratively, from middle schoolers to well-spoken, hardworking young adults. Our organization is growing too: we are on track to nearly double our student body in the next five years. I am so proud of the work that happens at Breakthrough, and I hope you are proud to be a part of it, too. Our progress is only possible because of people like you, who believe in our students and support their dreams.

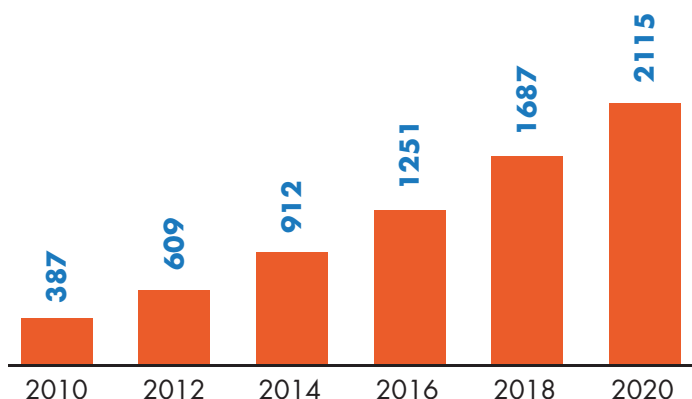
You are essential to our efforts to help students go from sixth grade all the way to college graduation, and we want to keep you informed any way we can. Please watch for two editions of this newsletter each year. And thank you, always, for all that you do for our students.

With gratitude,

Michael Griffith



Breakthrough Student Body Doubles by 2020



BRIGHT FUTURES for the high school class of 2015

In 2009, a group of 49 sixth grade students from across Austin made a commitment to their futures by joining Breakthrough. After six years of summer programs, homework help, and guidance counseling, this group of young adults has already accomplished a great deal:

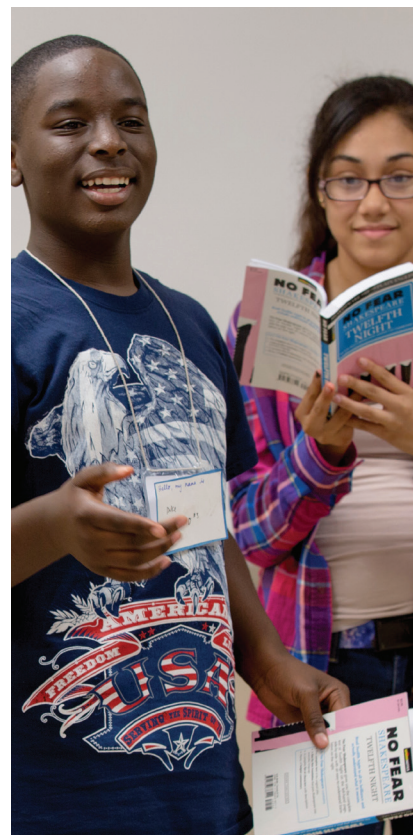
High school graduation is the first of many milestones for our students.



Enrolling in college immediately after high school greatly increases a student's likelihood of earning a degree.



The Breakthrough class of 2015 has worked hard to beat those odds. Now, they are in the middle of their first semester of college. To see our college freshmen and the schools they are attending, please visit www.BreakthroughAustin.org/college-enrollment.



Partner Spotlight: Bazaarvoice and Bazaarvoice Foundation

bazaarvoice:
FOUNDATION

Bazaarvoice has supported Breakthrough since 2011, and employees are frequent volunteers. From annual backpack and healthy snack drives that give our students the tools they need for school success, to the many hours that Bazaarvoice employees dedicate to serving as mentors and volunteers for Breakthrough, we are fortunate to have this local company as a key partner.

"We believe in supporting students to become innovative leaders, which Breakthrough does by ensuring its students succeed along their educational journeys." – Kelly Ballard, Executive Director, Bazaarvoice Foundation

Bazaarvoice is a member of Breakthrough's Corporate Council, a group of Austin businesses invested in helping low-income students in Central Texas become first-generation college graduates. To see the full list of our partners, visit www.BreakthroughAustin.org/2015-Corporate-Partners



Experience Breakthrough

We invite you to meet our students at one of these upcoming events!

College Application

Work Time

Tuesday evenings

Breakthrough staff and volunteer application coaches help our high school seniors complete their college applications. College representatives often visit during this time.

9th Grade Writing Program

Saturday, November 14

To learn about biographical writing, students will interview their parents and then write their stories.

Living Newspaper

Saturday, December 12

Students will bring current events to Austin by performing original skits based on recent headlines.

Career Fair

Saturday, December 12

Middle school students will hold a career fair, where they will present their dream jobs and the path to and through college that they will take to achieve their goals.



CONTACT

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LOCATION

Breakthrough Austin

1050 East 11th Street, Suite 350

Austin, TX 78702

All events are subject to change. For more information about these events or to RSVP, visit www.BreakthroughAustin.org/experience-breakthrough



Breakthrough is proud to be an AmeriCorps program.

Maya and Shaka Smart help Breakthrough students Beat the Odds

Breakthrough's second annual Beat the Odds Benefit was a record-breaking success! Hundreds of Central Texans filled the Headliner's Club ballroom on November 3rd to hear Honorary Chair Maya Smart give an impassioned call for action for education equity. "The difference between I want to go to college and I expect to go to college is vast, especially for aspiring first-generation college students. It is a massive, years-long gulf of preparation, role modeling, and support, not to mention paperwork. Breakthrough Austin resonates with me so much because it sets the expectation of college for every kid who wants it," said Smart, who moved to Austin five months ago with her husband, Shaka, and their daughter, Zora. The event, chaired by MariBen Ramsey and Karen Kahan, well surpassed its \$200,000 fundraising goal, in large part due to a \$25,000 matching gift from Diana and Gregg Lowe, and a surprise \$25,000 gift from Maya and Shaka Smart.

See pictures from the event at www.BreakthroughAustin.org/beat-the-odds-2015



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