Every STEP of the WAY

i know i can

HELPING STUDENTS NAVIGATE THEIR PATHS TO SUCCESS



2026 IMPACT REPORT

A NOTE FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Dear Friends,

Every student's journey beyond high school is unique. Some will attend college, while others will pursue career training, enlist in military service, or enter the workforce. No matter the path they choose, every student deserves the opportunity, guidance, and support to confidently build a future filled with possibility. At I Know I Can, we are honored to walk alongside students as they explore their interests, discover their strengths, and prepare for what comes next.

This year, we continued to expand our programs. Through the Careers in STEM Summer Experience, students connected classroom learning to real-world career pathways and gained insight into careers they may not have considered. We also helped over 2,700 students complete the FAFSA, giving them access to financial aid and opening doors to postsecondary education, training, and careers after high school.

Behind every statistic in this report is a student—one who discovered a new career interest, developed a plan for life after high school, or took a meaningful step toward achieving their goals. This work would not be possible without the dedication of our staff, the commitment of our school and community partners, and the generosity of supporters like you.

When students succeed, our entire community benefits. The young people featured throughout this report will become our workforce, leaders, and innovators. By investing in students today, we are helping build a stronger future for Columbus and Central Ohio.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your partnership, your belief in our students, and your investment in their success.

With gratitude,

Susan Dixon

I Know I Can Board President



THE PEOPLE GUIDING OUR way

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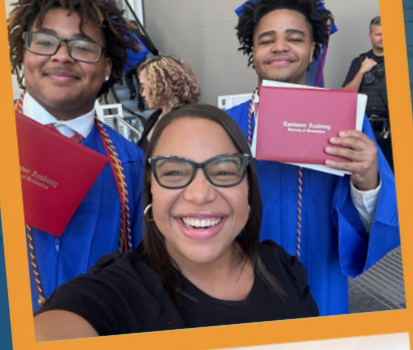
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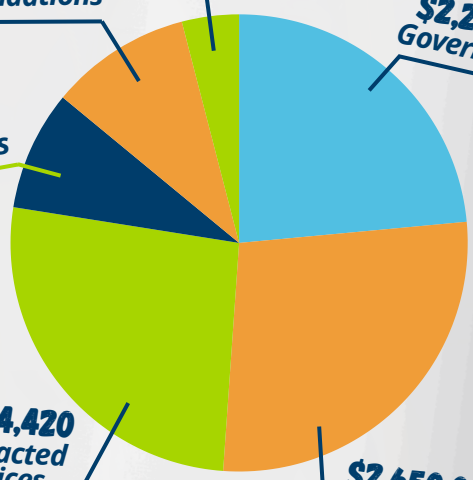


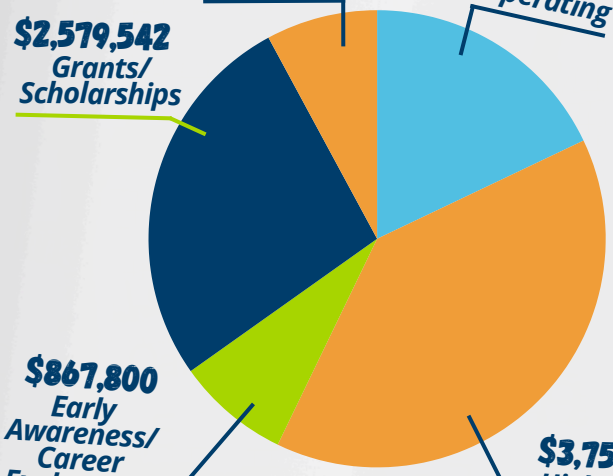
FUELING THE *journey*

Supporting students on their journey requires both meaningful investments and responsible stewardship.

Fiscal Year 2026

TOTAL REVENUE $9,604,037





TOTAL EXPENSES $9,574,965

*Budgeted Expenses



PARTNERS ALONG FOR *the ride*

Student success is powered by strong partnerships.

I Know I Can's work is made possible through strong partnerships with the school districts we serve. By working alongside educators and school leaders, we bring college and career exploration, advising, financial aid support, and postsecondary resources directly into students' schools.

Together, these partnerships help us support students at every step of their journey—from middle school through high school graduation and beyond.

4
School Districts

48
Middle and High Schools

20,000+
Students and Families Served



STOP 1

EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

Every journey begins with a first step.

For middle school students, that first step can be discovering a career they never knew existed, recognizing a strength they hadn't considered, or beginning to imagine what life after high school could look like. I Know I Can brings career exploration into the classroom through interactive lessons, employer visits, and hands-on experiences that introduce students to a wide range of careers and the postsecondary pathways that lead to them.

At this stage, students don't need to have it all figured out. They need opportunities to ask questions, learn about different careers, and see them in action—setting the stage for the decisions and direction that come next.



Program HIGHLIGHTS

- ***2,629 students*** *explored careers through virtual reality simulations.*
- ***1,536 eighth graders*** *visited community and workplace locations to experience careers firsthand.*
- ***22,100 service hours*** *contributed by AmeriCorps College & Career Guides supporting middle school students*



VIRTUAL REALITY

Careers Come to Life

It can be difficult to imagine yourself in a career you've never seen.

Virtual reality gives middle schoolers a chance to step into different careers. Through interactive, day-in-the-life simulations, students can discover roles in healthcare, technology, engineering, and skilled trades—getting a closer look at the work, environments, and skills involved.

For an eighth grader, this kind of exposure can spark curiosity, broaden their understanding of what's possible, and give them new ideas to explore as they move into high school.



"Virtual reality transforms career exploration from something students hear about to something they can experience."

CORR'EANA DOMINGUEZ

AmeriCorps College & Career Guide, 2025-2026

DISCOVERING PATHWAYS

STOP 2

Connecting interests to possibilities.

As students enter high school, career exploration becomes more personal. I Know I Can Career Navigators help ninth- and tenth-grade students connect their interests and aptitudes to careers and postsecondary options through assessments, interactive curricula, and opportunities to learn from colleges, employers, and professionals.

Students gain a clearer understanding of what different careers look like and begin discovering what might be a good fit for them. At this stage, the focus is still exploration—giving students more information and experiences to consider as they continue through high school.

PROGRAM highlights

- ***478 ninth graders*** *participated in a Future You Day, meeting professionals from a range of career fields and exploring careers through virtual reality simulations.*
- ***84% of freshmen*** *enrolled in The Academies of Columbus City Schools completed the YouScience aptitude and interest assessment.*
- ***175 rising sophomores*** *participated in the Careers in STEM Summer Experience, a weeklong program connecting students with college campuses, STEM fields, and career professionals.*



WES HALL

Senior Vice President for Philanthropy and Education, Battelle

"At Battelle, we know that early exposure to careers can make a lasting impact. We're proud to partner with I Know I Can to help students connect what they're learning in the classroom to real-world careers and see what's possible for their futures."

CAREERS IN STEM
SUMMER EXPERIENCE

STEM In Action

The Careers in STEM Summer Experience gave rising sophomores a weeklong opportunity to engage with STEM beyond the classroom. Through problem-solving activities, students strengthened their teamwork skills and applied what they learned in robotics, engineering, manufacturing, and technology.

At Columbus State Community College and The Ohio State University, students worked in labs, took on design-and-build challenges, and connected with college students and faculty. They built, tested, programmed, and designed—putting STEM concepts into practice and seeing how different fields come to life in college and workplace settings.





"I explored different healthcare careers at STEM Camp. Before then, I had never even heard of a sonographer. Now, I think that's what I want to do!"

BRIANNA RATLIFF

West High School, Class of 2029

STOP 3

PROGRAM highlights

- ***86% of I Know I Can seniors*** *with a college success plan submitted at least one college application.*
- ***2,559 high school students*** *explored postsecondary options through college and university visits.*
- ***14,968 individual and group advising*** *sessions were provided to juniors and seniors.*

PLANNING FUTURES

As graduation draws near, possibilities become plans.

By eleventh and twelfth grade, students are ready to turn what they've learned about themselves and their options into a plan for what comes next. I Know I Can College Advising Managers work alongside students as they consider postsecondary options, navigate college applications and financial aid, and take the steps needed to move forward.

From campus visits to scholarships and one-on-one advising, students receive individualized support throughout the process. The destination may be different for each student, but the goal is the same: a clear, informed plan for life after high school—and the knowledge and resources to pursue it.



FAFSA

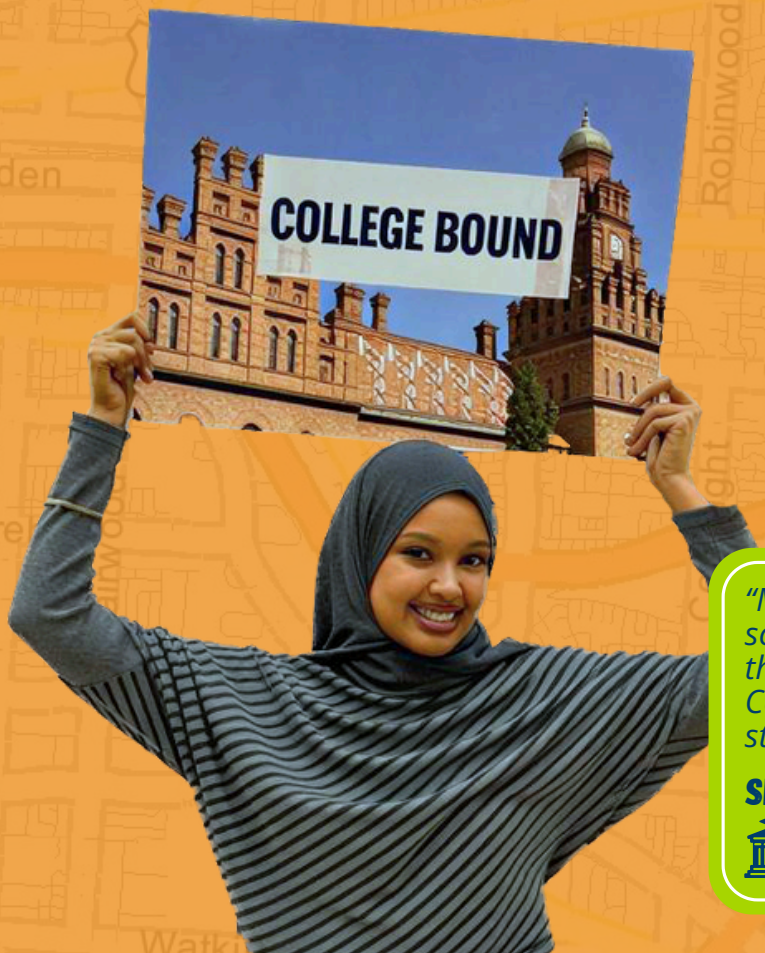
Accessing Financial Aid

Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is an important step toward making postsecondary education more affordable. I Know I Can College Advising Managers work directly with students and families to review the application, answer questions, and troubleshoot challenges along the way.

In 2025–26, 2,768 FAFSA applications were completed by I Know I Can students, supported by 14 FAFSA workshops and more than 4,300 FAFSA and financial aid advising interactions.

Since 2021, FAFSA completions have increased 42%, reflecting a significant rebound from the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. That increase represents more than completed applications. It means more students have the information they need to understand their financial aid options as they make decisions about what comes next.





"My advisors helped me figure out scholarships, FAFSA, everything. I was in their office all the time. I'm going to Columbus State and then Ohio State to study psychology!"

SHUKRI IBRAHIM

Central Crossing High School, Class of 2026

LAUNCHING SUCCESS

STOP 4

The journey continues after graduation.

Graduation opens the door to new opportunities, but the transition after high school can bring new financial and practical challenges. I Know I Can stays connected with graduates as they move into college, career training, military service, or the workforce, helping them navigate their next steps.

Building a future takes more than funding. Through office hours and events, personalized text outreach, grants, and scholarships, I Know I Can helps graduates stay on track, adjust when plans change, and continue pursuing their goals after high school.







PROGRAM highlights

$2.573M in grants and scholarships awarded to I Know I Can students.

1,536 summer advising hours provided at 28 locations across the community to ensure graduates were prepared for college or career this fall.

1,083 Columbus Promise Scholars are ready to begin their postsecondary journey at Columbus State Community College.

FOUNDERS SCHOLARSHIP

An Investment That Lasts

For 16 years, the I Know I Can Founders Scholarship has helped Columbus City Schools graduates close financial gaps as they pursue postsecondary education. In 2026, 28 students received the Founders Scholarship, one of the largest classes in the program's history. Each Scholar can receive up to $40,000 over four years toward the cost of their education.

The Class of 2026 is heading to colleges and universities across the country, including Howard University, Johns Hopkins University, The Ohio State University, and the University of Virginia, to pursue fields ranging from cinematography and forensic psychology to molecular biology and construction systems management.



BY THE NUMBERS

310 *students have received the scholarship since 2010.*

$10M+ *awarded since the program began.*

96% *return for their second year of college.*

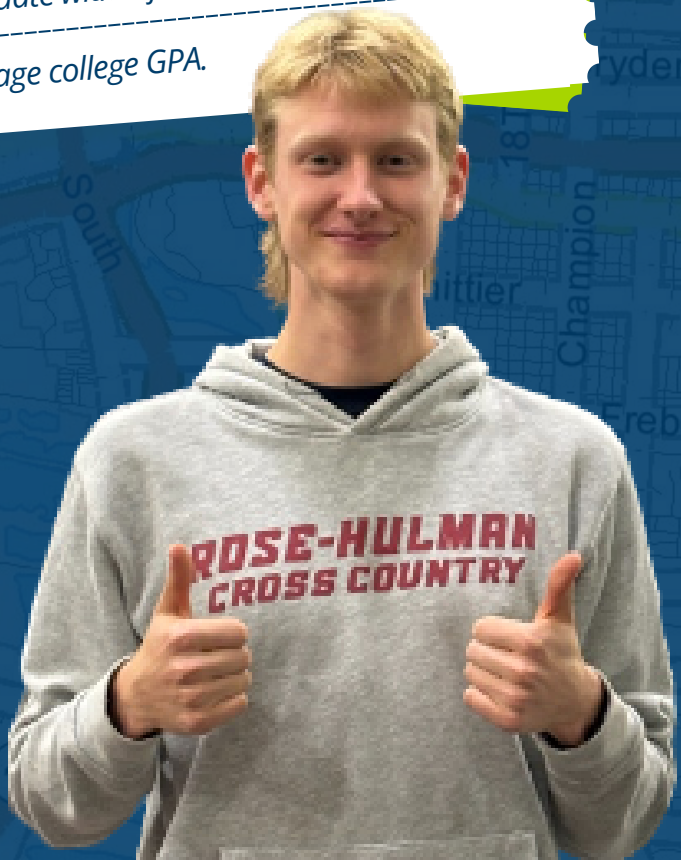
87% *graduate within four years.*

3.41 *average college GPA.*

"Now that I've graduated, I want to focus on grid-scale electrical engineering. Without the Founders Scholarship, I would not be in the position I am today to pursue that goal. I am sincerely grateful for your investment in my education and future!"

WYATT STARKIE *Founders Scholar*

Columbus Alternative High School, Class of 2022
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
B.S. in Electrical Engineering, Class of 2026



STOP 5

GIVING BACK

The journey doesn't end after graduation.

I Know I Can's relationship with students continues long after they leave high school. Alumni bring new experiences, perspectives, and connections to the I Know I Can community—and can help create opportunities for the students who follow in their footsteps.

As alumni reconnect, volunteer, and share what they have learned along the way, the journey comes full circle: students who once benefited from the support of others can now help create opportunities for the next generation.



"I am forever grateful to the I Know I Can staff that helped me along in my journey. From early conversations in elementary school to filing my FAFSA in high school and finding summer employment during college, I Know I Can was there every step of the way! Now, I have the chance to give back and help younger students grow and succeed."

WILL WILDER *Legacy Connections Member*

Walnut Ridge High School, Class of 2019
The Ohio State University, Class of 2023

Community Planning Analyst,
City of Columbus Department of Neighborhoods



LEGACY Connections

Stay connected. Give back.

I Know I Can's alumni network brings together former students who received college and career advising or an I Know I Can grant or scholarship.

Members have opportunities to connect, build relationships, volunteer, and support current students on their journey.

IF YOU ARE *looking* FOR A *sign,*

THIS IS IT

Join LEGACY Connections

iknowican.org/legacy-connections

Make a DONATION

iknowican.org/donate


Follow Us on Social Media
I Know I Can
@iknowican88
I Know I Can
The journey doesn't end here...
THIS IS JUST
THE BEGINNING
Thank you for helping students reach new destinations.
i know i can