



**LINK  
Unlimited  
Scholars**

2019-2020

# Impact Report

## Dear LINK Unlimited Friends and Family,

With all the challenges of 2020, we're all in need of some good news. That's why we are so pleased to deliver this year's impact report. It is full of positive news and highlights from our work together!

Thanks to our generous supporters, we've had the greatest year of impact for our Scholars to date. We are grateful for and inspired by the partnership growth that makes it possible to support even more Scholars as they move to, through, and beyond college. Our growth reaches into all four of our key program elements:

Scholars have managed to complete over 60 hours of tutoring, increasing the overall Scholar GPA to 3.2 through Academic Enrichment. In Leadership Development, 30 Schmitt Scholars are researching communities for their spring impact projects. We hosted over 25 industry professionals as panelists and workshop volunteers to boost Career Exposure. Our College Access path successfully placed all of our 2020 graduating Scholars into competitive four-year colleges and universities, receiving a collective \$4.1 million in scholarships and grants.

And this is just the start! You'll find even more good news in the following pages.

LINK Unlimited Scholars is truly the solution for ensuring Black students in Chicago have the support and resources needed to move to, through, and beyond college. Thank you for investing in our Scholars so they can access the path to success and be part of the bright future we are working toward together.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JTS'.

**Jonathan T. Swain, '92**  
President & CEO



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen C. Hackney'.

**Stephen Hackney**  
Chairman of the Board

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*Committed to Action:*

# A Response to the Global Pandemic and Racial Unrest

This year will forever be marked by COVID-19 and our nation's racial unrest. LINK Unlimited Scholars was founded during a similar period in the 1960s, in response to the death of Dr. King and subsequent racial tensions. We continue to serve and remain steadfast, eradicating barriers to economic opportunity through education for our Scholars and families.

Because 2020 led to many of us learning, working, and social distancing at home for months, the inequities present in Black communities created additional challenges for students already lacking access to resources and tools. Here's how our Scholars were equipped for the new normal through LINK Unlimited:



**NEW Augmented SEL Curriculum**



**100% Virtual Programming**



**NEW Laptops + Internet Access  
FOR ALL HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARS**

# Anicia is now a confident university freshman.

Before Anicia became a LINK Scholar, just the thought of raising her hand in class was terrifying. She preferred to keep quiet rather than draw attention to herself. But through the programming made possible by our donors, Anicia is no longer too shy to set herself apart. She shares, “Through programs such as Summer Learning, Schmitt Scholars, Personal Development Workshops, and Saturday Academy, LINK Unlimited has allowed me to find my voice and stand out in the crowd.”

Anicia’s confidence grew each year along with her academic accolades. At St. Ignatius College Prep, a 4.13 GPA earned her Honors with Distinction every semester and a place in the National Honor Society. “LINK Unlimited has instilled in me the value of strong leadership,” Anicia explains, which is why she was chosen to participate in the exclusive Girls’ Leadership Worldwide, a 10-day leadership program held at the Eleanor Roosevelt Center in Val-Kill, New York. Anicia’s achievements are so impressive that she was accepted to an astounding 14 top universities, including Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Emory, and Cornell. Harvard was Anicia’s pick.

Throughout her four-year fellowship as a LINK Scholar, Anicia had the support of her Mentor, Duffy Lorenz. Anicia shares that “being paired with my Mentor, Mrs. Duffy Lorenz, has given me the opportunity to be exposed to a world of success, and I am able to envision myself as a future Mentor, giving back to my community.”

We are so proud of all that Anicia has accomplished. And we cannot wait to see how she will use her voice and leadership skills in the future to make a difference in the world. Thank you for investing in Anicia through LINK Unlimited!



*Anicia Miller*

LINK Unlimited Scholars Class of 2020 Graduate  
Harvard University Class of 2024

# For Black students in Chicago, the educational playing field is anything but *equal.*

**One of Chicago's biggest challenges is an educational system that magnifies debilitating, lifelong gaps for Black students.**

Children caught in these gaps are like all kids their age: full of energy and curiosity, full of dreams and potential. But the path to future success is not available without access to the resources and tools needed to navigate our merit-based school system.

When Black students are denied equal access to educational opportunities, our city is being denied future community leaders, business experts, out-of-the-box thinking entrepreneurs, and problem solvers. The devastating impact can be seen in low high school graduation rates and college acceptance and graduation rates. And if Black students somehow defy the odds by graduating from high school, getting accepted to college, and graduating from college? Their debt is crippling.

Black students are disproportionately impacted by systemic and structural forces that have impeded their ability to access opportunities, gain economic mobility, and become the community leaders our city needs.

# The Problem

Black students are not accessing college or achieving in college at the rate of their peers.

## High School Graduation Rate



- 78% Black Students
- 83% Latinx Students
- 87% White Students
- 89% Asian Students

## College Enrollment Rate



- 36% Black Students
- 36% Latinx Students
- 42% White Students
- 65% Asian Students

## Four-Year Graduation Rate



- 21% Black Students
- 32% Latinx Students
- 45% White Students
- 50% Asian Students


**85%**  
of Black college students carry debt

### YEARS TO PAY OFF COLLEGE DEBT

10 YEARS FOR WHITE STUDENTS

25 YEARS FOR BLACK STUDENTS

On average, it takes **25 years** for Black college graduates to pay back their college debt, as compared to just **10 years** for White college graduates.



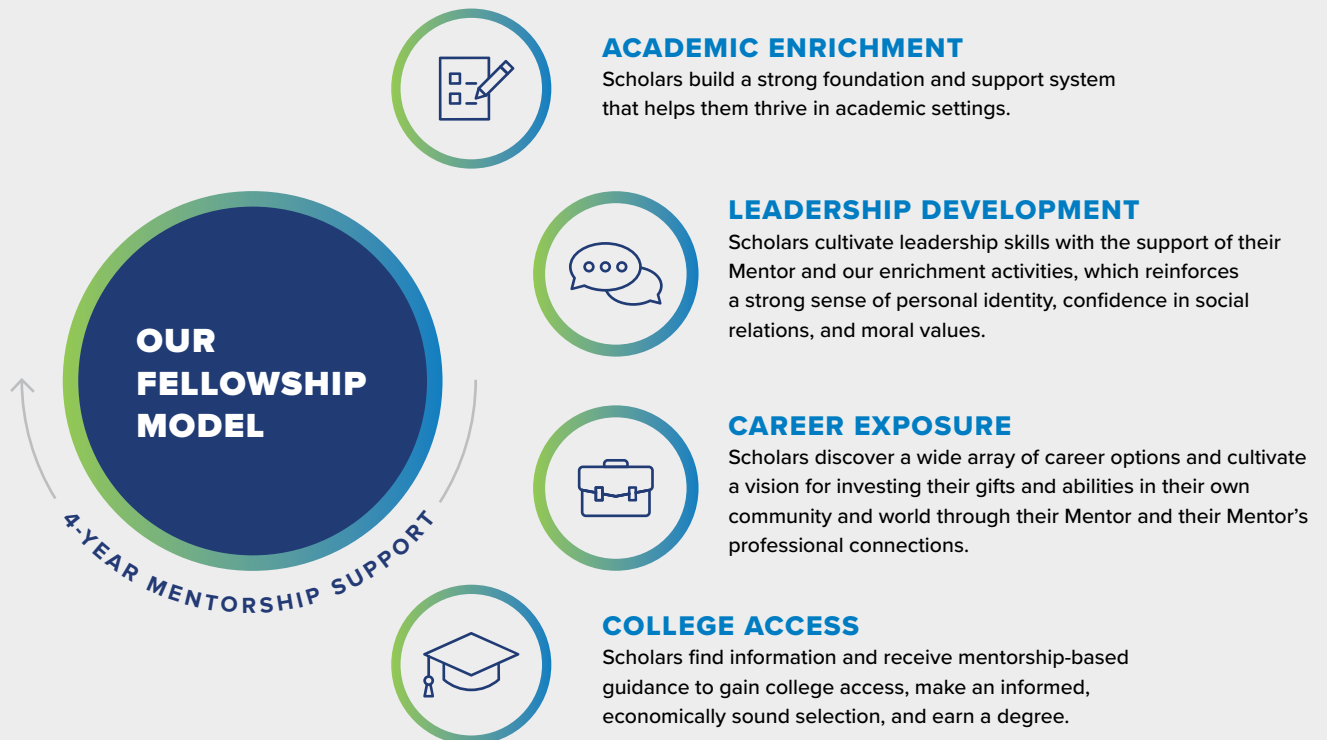
**We link *high-potential*  
Black students in  
Chicago to the path  
to, through, and  
*beyond* college.**



# Our Model

Our proven model identifies high-potential Black students for a **four-year high school fellowship** that gives them the resources and tools needed to access the path to success. Access to this path hinges on quality education, from middle school to high school to college. Our four-year fellowship model is highly effective and is **advanced through mentoring**. Each Scholar is paired with a Mentor who commits to four years of financial and developmental support. In addition, we offer a **two-year fellowship for middle school students** called Jr. LINK, designed to prepare them for the high school selection process.

**Together with our donors, we provide programming that moves these outstanding Scholars to, through, and beyond college.**



# Your investment is linking our Scholars to the path of *success.*

What difference does your investment in LINK Scholars make? It's actually incalculable, because your support forever changes their life trajectory. It creates a ripple effect throughout families, neighborhoods, the city of Chicago, and even our entire nation.

The ripples of your impact can be seen here today, but this is just the start. When you invest in our LINK Scholars, everything changes for them, their families, and our entire city. And we can't wait to see what's next for these outstanding young people.

## Class of 2020 Scholars at a Glance

100%

GRADUATED FROM  
HIGH SCHOOL

3.6

AVERAGE GPA

100%

ACCEPTED INTO COMPETITIVE  
4-YEAR COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

27%

ATTENDING A TOP-50  
U.S. UNIVERSITY

4.1m

IN SCHOLARSHIPS  
& GRANTS

66%

AWARDED \$100K+ IN  
SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

63%

RECEIVED FULL  
TUITION FUNDING

2

QUEST BRIDGE  
SCHOLARS

2

JORDAN WINGS SCHOLARS  
SUPPORTED BY UNCF

3

POSSE FOUNDATION  
SCHOLARS

# LINK Unlimited Scholars by the Numbers

## SCHOLARS SERVED

**133**

HIGH SCHOOL  
SCHOLARS ENROLLED

**60**

COMMUNITIES  
REPRESENTED

## CORPORATE & FOUNDATION SUPPORT

**95**

CORPORATIONS

**29**

FOUNDATIONS

## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

**39**

VOLUNTEERS

## EDUCATION PARTNERS

**126**

EDUCATION  
PARTNERS

**60**

ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOLS

**+**

**40**

HIGH SCHOOLS

**+**

**26**

COLLEGE PANEL  
REPRESENTATIVES

## MENTOR SUPPORT

**176**

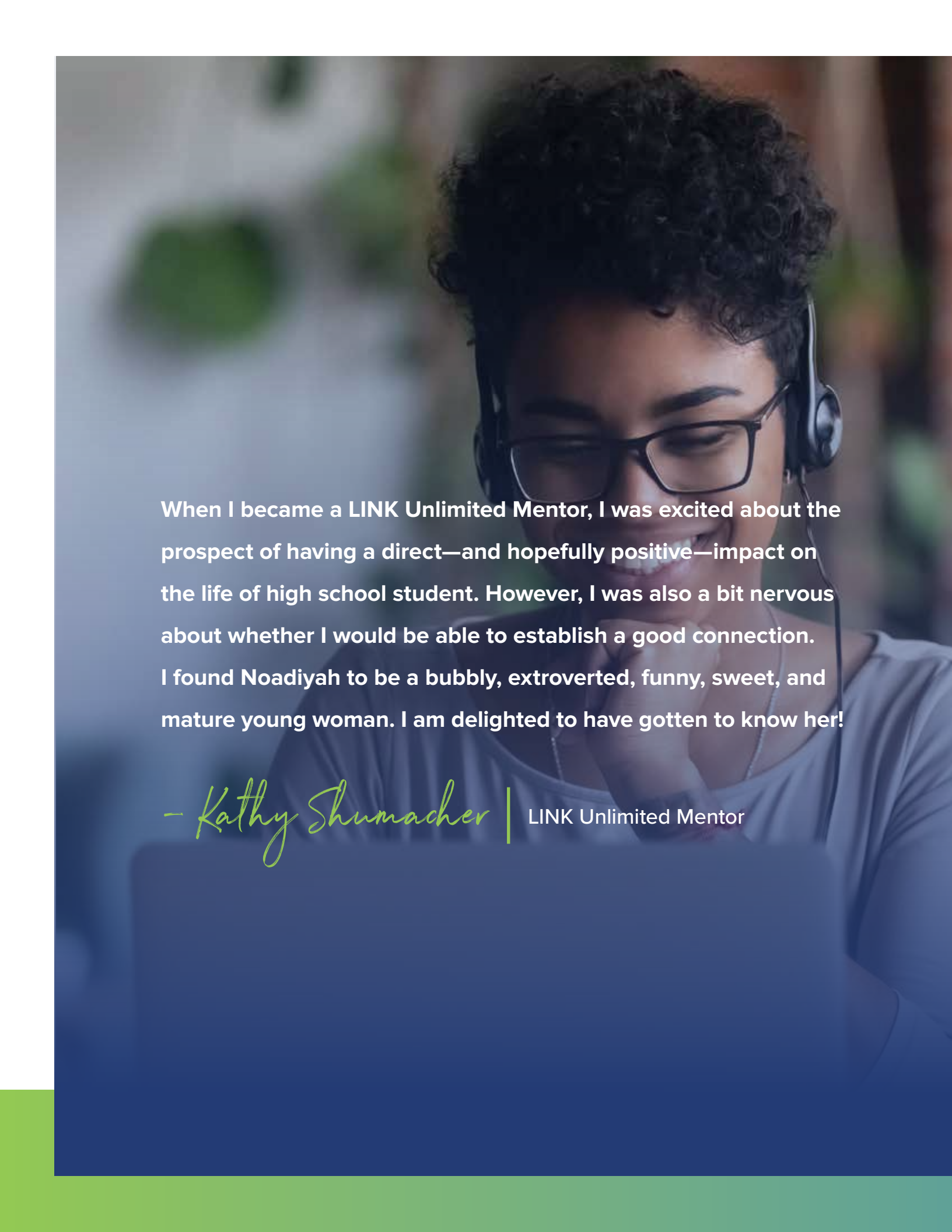
MENTORS INVESTING  
IN SCHOLARS

**6,336**

VIRTUAL MENTOR HOURS  
WITH SCHOLARS

**1,760**

FACE-TO-FACE MENTOR HOURS  
WITH SCHOLARS



When I became a LINK Unlimited Mentor, I was excited about the prospect of having a direct—and hopefully positive—impact on the life of high school student. However, I was also a bit nervous about whether I would be able to establish a good connection. I found Noadiyah to be a bubbly, extroverted, funny, sweet, and mature young woman. I am delighted to have gotten to know her!

*- Kathy Shumacher* | LINK Unlimited Mentor

# *Kathy* mentored a LINK Scholar to pay it forward.

Our proven model is highly effective for changing the life trajectory of our Scholars and is advanced through mentoring. Each of our Scholars is paired with a Mentor who commits to four years of financial and developmental support. Mentors come from around the city of Chicago, representing a wide array of professional backgrounds and fields. Kathy Schumacher, who is a partner at McDermott Will & Emery LLP, has mentored LINK Scholar Noadiyah since 2016. She remembers what prompted her to commit to the four-year fellowship:

***“Because of my father’s death when I was six years old, I was brought up by my mother in a household of very limited means—so I know only too well the vital impact that my mentors had on my life. This was my chance to pay it forward.”***

Over the years, Kathy and Noadiyah have spent time together around the city, at school functions, and with each other’s family. Kathy says, “I showed her my office where I work and described my path from college on scholarships and student aid, to law school and to being a partner in a nationally recognized law firm. I hope that seeing my journey and listening to my advice has been beneficial. I know that this experience has been rewarding from my perspective.” This year, they’ve also had deeper discussions about the troubles in our nation and around the world.

Kathy’s intent in becoming a Mentor was to pay it forward, but she is grateful the experience has been so personally rewarding was well:

***“I am delighted to have gotten to know my mentee and plan to watch her as she embarks on the next chapter after high school graduation.”***

This is the powerful impact of LINK Unlimited Scholars: seeing and celebrating our Scholars as they successfully move to, through, and beyond college. Our Mentors support our Scholars on each step along the path toward success, helping them become everything they are capable of.



# Our Five-Year Strategic Priorities

Our solution is focused on three strategic priorities that direct our programmatic impact where it is needed most:

## 1 CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD DEEP DIVE

LINK Unlimited Scholars is aligning with 10 South and West Side Chicago neighborhoods. *(See Below)*

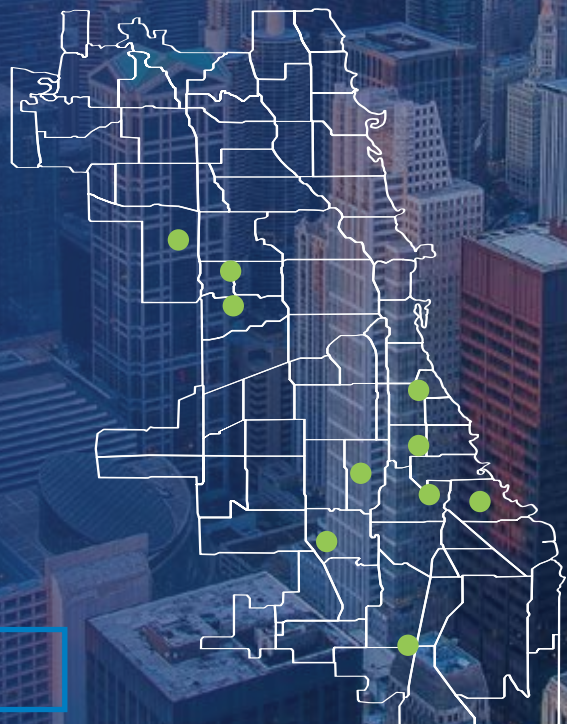
## 2 BROADEN HIGH SCHOOL HORIZONS

LINK Unlimited Scholars launched a robust middle-school program for CPS students called Junior LINK in summer 2020.

## 3 EXPAND SCHOLAR IMPACT

In the next 5 years, LINK Unlimited Scholars will increase our high school Scholar population to 600 students, increasing by cohorts of 50 students.

- + AUBURN GRESHAM
- + AUSTIN
- + BRONZEVILLE
- + ENGLEWOOD
- + GARFIELD PARK
- + GREATER GRAND CROSSING
- + NORTH LAWDALE
- + ROSELAND
- + SOUTH SHORE
- + WASHINGTON PARK

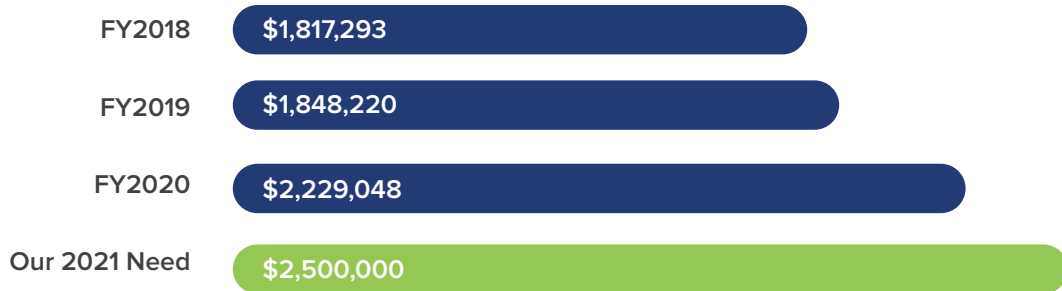


Target Goal: 600 High School Scholars by 2025

# Our Financials

## Annual Revenue by Year

\* Based on audited financial reports



## Total Funding

Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Financial Recap



■ Foundations	48%	\$1,074,871
■ Individuals	34%	\$768,943
■ Corporations	18%	\$385,233



■ Program Services	73%	\$1,527,668
■ Administration	20%	\$422,767
■ Development	7%	\$150,108



312-225-5465  
2221 South State Street  
Chicago, IL 60616

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[www.linkunlimited.org](http://www.linkunlimited.org)