



100% College and Career-Bound: DREAM's Class of 2024 Postsecondary Commitments

In 2024, 100% of DREAM Charter High School's graduating class have committed to a college or are pursuing a professional pathway. The Class of 2024—a cohort of 89 graduating seniors, 97% of whom are Black and/or Hispanic and 20% of whom have identified special needs—exemplify what's possible when we believe and invest in every child and their dreams.

- The Class of 2024 includes **DCHS's first two Ivy League commitments**: Columbia University and University of Pennsylvania.
- **\$2 million in grants and scholarships** were awarded to DREAM seniors for their first year of college.
- One DREAM student was awarded the highly competitive **QuestBridge Match Scholarship** to attend Columbia University on a full academic scholarship.
- 82% will attend a **four-year college or university**, 2% have chosen a **two-year college**, and 16% are expected to enroll in a **career pathway program**. Of those who will attend a four-year college or university:
 - **33%** are headed to private, out-of-state public, or HBCUs;
 - **38%** to SUNY 4-year institutions including the high-ranking Binghamton and Albany campuses;
 - and **29%** to CUNY 4-year institutions, including Hunter and Baruch.
- **16 students have committed to Opportunity Programs (HEOP & EOP)**, accounting for **22%** of all committed students.
- **Students entering professional pathways** will earn credentials in fields as wide-ranging as construction, culinary, pharmacy tech, electrical installation, and medical assistant programs.

Close the Gap: Meeting 100% of Student Need

In DREAM's Class of 2024, 89% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. DREAM's Close the Gap grants provide critical funding for students whose first-choice college was unable to meet their full financial need, giving them the opportunity to choose a college based on best fit rather than solely on affordability. This year, DREAM offered **\$28,000—an average of \$4,000/year**—to cover the financial aid gap for **seven** graduating seniors. This will allow them to attend schools with an average institutional graduation rate that is **5.5 times the national average** for low-income students.

The DREAM Difference in an Unprecedented Year: 94% FAFSA Completion

DREAM's 2024 results were possible despite this year's significant FAFSA delays, which resulted in late offers of student financial aid packages and left families with less time to make informed decisions before enrollment deadlines. Nationally, across schools with similar student populations, FAFSA completion rates decreased by 15% from 2023; in the Bronx, the 2024 FAFSA completion rate was 64%. **DREAM's 2024 FAFSA completion rate of 94% is on par with prior years.** DREAM credits our college and career access model—which includes DREAM's college counseling team's strong support and close collaboration with students and parents—for maintaining the high standard set in previous cohorts and unlocking critical public and private financial aid for our graduates.

Believing - and Investing - in Our Young People

DREAM's investment in our students is a lifelong commitment. It looks like everything from helping families access financial aid, to connecting students with best-fit, supportive college communities, to providing them postsecondary support to and through college and careers. The result is increased college persistence and stronger career outcomes, transforming life trajectories for students, families, and communities. After all, our young people already have everything they need to succeed within them - if only we believe and invest in them.



Eric Cepeda, Lehigh University

ERIC CEPEDA knows that DREAM is family. His father, also named Eric, was a longtime Harlem RBI coach, while his cousin, Jaylen Amaker, is the inaugural co-chair of DREAM's Alumni Council. "Being at DREAM was meant to be for me," he says. "It's generational." Grateful that his family steered him to DREAM Charter High School, Eric looks back on the experiences he was able to take part in—like trips to Ghana and Italy—with appreciation. "Ghana was eye-opening for me," he says. "We did community service, we helped kids, and shared a lot of emotions." On track to study biology at Lehigh University, Eric was also mentored by a veterinarian through a DREAM partnership. "She taught me to always believe in myself," he says. **"And DREAM taught me I can do whatever I put my mind to."**



Fatoumata Kone, University of Pennsylvania

FATOUMATA KONE is the daughter of West African immigrants who came to New York 20 years ago in search of a better life - and a great education. As a child, she watched her mother pursue a degree in the medical field, finish college, and become a respiratory therapist. "I would see her going to clinicals, never giving up," Fatoumata recalls. Now embarking on her own college journey, Fatoumata is eager to also study medicine, and with the help of DREAM's Office of College Access and Postsecondary Success (OCAPSS), she secured \$65,000 in scholarships and grants to attend the University of Pennsylvania. Named salutatorian of the Class of 2024, Fatoumata will also be one of DREAM Charter High School's first graduates to attend an Ivy League school when she steps on campus this fall. "Receiving all of my financial aid took time," she says. **"But DREAM is always going to do everything they can to help you."**



Melanie Toledo, Columbia University

MELANIE TOLEDO was chosen as a DREAM Charter High School candidate for the prestigious Questbridge Match Scholarship early in her senior year. Her first task was to write a personal essay, something she hoped would attract her chosen schools, and would also be true to her personal experience. Melanie, the 2024 DCHS valedictorian, decided to write about her abuelo—who came to New York from Puerto Rico—and how he helped shape who she is today. "I make sure to do things for myself," Melanie says, "but I also want to make him proud." When the Questbridge matches were announced, Melanie became the fifth DCHS student to earn this full scholarship, and will be attending her dream destination, Columbia University. Now preparing for her long-awaited transition to college, Melanie has already met with her Legends counselor, and is excited to take this big next step. **"At DREAM I know I'm never alone,"** she says.



J.C. Williams, University of Rochester

J.C. WILLIAMS leaned on the supports and resources DREAM provides its students when applying to college last fall, just as he has since he started at DREAM as a first grader. Working with DREAM's OCAPSS team, he received mentorship throughout the entire process. "I was in their office almost every day," J.C. says. "I was ahead of everyone else, and it took a lot of stress off my shoulders." Specifically, his counselors helped him navigate the new FAFSA form, and as acceptances came in, they explained the long-term benefits of attending a college that was not only the right fit academically, but also financially. Ultimately choosing to attend the University of Rochester—with \$68,000 in aid—J.C. and his family will pay a fraction of the cost for school. "It can set you back in life if you take out thousands in loans," he says. **"My counselors at DREAM told me what to do step-by-step."**

The Future is Bright:

Where the Class of 2024 Is Headed

Alfred University - 1
Boston University - 1
Bowie State University - 1
Clark Atlanta University - 1
Columbia University - 1
CUNY Baruch College - 3
CUNY City College - 1
CUNY City Tech - 1
CUNY Guttman - 2
CUNY Hunter - 2
CUNY John Jay - 5
CUNY Lehman - 9

Haverford College - 1
Lehigh University - 1
Louisiana State University - 1
McDaniel College - 1
New York Institute of Technology - 1
New York University - 2*
Siena College - 1*
SUNY Albany - 9*
SUNY Alfred - 2
SUNY Binghamton - 5*
SUNY Buffalo State - 5*
SUNY University at Buffalo - 1

SUNY New Paltz - 2*
SUNY Oswego - 2*
SUNY Purchase - 1
Union College - 1
University of Mount Saint Vincent - 1
University of Pennsylvania - 1
University of Rochester - 4
University of Southern California - 1
Utica University - 2
Vassar College - 1

*Indicates at least one student accepted to Opportunity Program

