



Dear Friends,

It's been quite a year. Amid the chaos of 2020, Degrees of Change joined people and communities across the country in grieving the continued killings of unarmed Black people. For our students and graduates, of whom 25% identify as Black and 90% as people of color, and for the majority of our staff and board who identify as people of color, each new public tragedy takes a personal toll, another reminder that most of America's systems were not built with their well-being in mind. People of color are hurting, angry and exhausted from the unrelenting weight of racial injustice.

That injustice has been further magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which in the U.S. has claimed over half a million lives, shut down vast swaths of the economy, existentially threatened the fundamental business models of higher education, and amplified the already staggering racial and economic disparities in our country. COVID-19 exacerbates and shines a bright spotlight on systemic racism, racial inequality and unequal access to health care, employment, housing, childcare, voting and—most relevant to our work—education.

Combatting systemic racism has always been the heart of our work at DoC. As our mission states, "We prepare diverse, homegrown leaders to succeed in college and career in order to build more vibrant and equitable communities." We invest in our students because we know that their voices, perspectives, talent, and leadership must be at the center of the transformation our institutions and communities so desperately need. And while that transformation is still underway, we support students to thrive and lead within the current systems.

In fall 2020 our board approved a new strategic plan that reaffirms our fundamental commitment to developing diverse, college-educated leaders who are well-prepared to advance in their careers and amplify their impact in the community. In the year ahead, you'll see us enhancing our leadership-infused career development programming for students and graduates, contributing to systems change work in college success to address underlying root causes of inequality, and investing in our organizational infrastructure to ensure DoC will be here to keep fighting for racial justice long into the future.

priority 1

Enhance leadership
+ career
development
programming
for students and
graduates

priority 2

Ensure
programmatic
and operational
excellence

priority 3

Respond
adaptively to
system change
opportunities

priority 4

Increase
organizational
durability

If there were ever a time when diverse leaders are needed, that time is now. And if there were ever a time when DoC needed your continued support, it's now as well. Thank you for partnering with us as we work for a brighter and more just future in 2021 and beyond.

TIM & MICHELLE
CEO & Board Chair
Degrees of Change



Ricki Ruiz's Story

Ever since he can remember, Ricki Ruiz has loved soccer. Growing up in Gresham, Oregon, Ricki and his friends didn't have access to public soccer fields, but that didn't stop them from playing where ever they could. Sometimes even playing in parking lots or sneaking into private fields. Flash forward to today, and Ricki has connected this passion for sports to his love and commitment to his community, co-founding an organization that provides public access soccer resources to the youth of Gresham.

One day while attending Reynolds High School in Troutdale, OR, Ricki was called to his guidance counselor's office to learn about Act Six. With only three weeks left before the deadline, Ricki's guidance counselor encouraged him to apply. Ricki was skeptical, but his mentor through the TRIO program, Christina Gonzalez, inspired him to pursue the opportunity.

Ricki was selected to participate in Act Six beginning in the Fall of 2012 and attended two years at a community college before finishing Act Six with two years at Warner Pacific University. He names relationships and connections with his Act Six advisors as transformative, giving scholars the tools to navigate higher education, understand and challenge systemic racism within these structures, and lead on their campuses.

During his third year of college, Ricki got a picture of what community change would look like for him through his love of sports, partnering with another Act Six scholar, Yesenia Delgado, to build a set of public soccer fields called futsal courts in Gresham, Oregon in 2015. Futsal is a fast-paced, smaller scale soccer game played across the world, and these courts would be the first built in the Pacific Northwest. Ricki and Yesenia's project, now called the Rockwood Initiative, raised \$120,000 through community support to fund this public space. Growing up without these amenities, without a space to come together around their passion for soccer, motivated the pair to create this positive space for young people in

Rockwood. "That was the beginning of what I view has been my mission of continuing to create community change," Ricki says.

A fierce advocate for his community, Ricki has pursued local politics, becoming the youngest elected school board official in 2016 at 22 years old. As a school board member, he creates equitable policy for the school district that almost failed him, remembering how he and his friends weren't invited into the College Center because of assumptions that they weren't "college ready". He wants to ensure that all students know about all of their options and receive the support they deserve from a school board level.

"As a person of color, and as a first-generation college student, the amount of support I recieved from the Act Six program, the staff, the training tools, really prepared me not only to experience and to complete college but just to be able to accomplish community projects I didn't even know I had in mind until I was part of the program"

Ricki has also recently won his election for State Representative, making him the youngest and first Latinx representative in his district. "As a person of color, and as a first-generation college student, the amount of support I received from the Act Six program, the staff, the training tools, really prepared me not only to experience and to complete college but just to be able to accomplish community projects I didn't even know I had in mind until I was part of the program," Ricki reflects. Today, we can see the ripple effect that Act Six scholars like Ricki have created in their community, inspiring other young people to get involved in their communities and fostering a culture of community leadership.



Brandon Williams Story

Brandon Williams took a chance on Act Six. As a senior at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Minneapolis, Brandon was the first student from his school to be accepted to Howard University, and was also considering accepting an admissions offer from his dream school, Loyola University in Chicago. However, when a high school mentor asked him what he thought about staying in Minneapolis and “[growing] the community based on values of faith while challenging discriminatory economic structures,” it was Brandon’s belief and deep investment in his community that drew him to Augsburg University as an Act Six scholar. Now a year out from college graduation, his desire to be a voice for the community drew him to his current role as the Criminal Justice and Safe Communities Fellow at The Minneapolis Foundation, where he helps to determine where to invest over \$2.5 million in the community. As he continues to build a career in community service and justice, Brandon offers this advice to the Act Six scholars coming after him:

“As a leader, don’t let your position in life or the way others define you end with a period rather than a comma. Leadership is about diversifying your experiences and expanding your knowledge. Be vulnerable, be willing to grow, be willing to take yourself outside your comfort zone, but make sure to find those pockets of support, of healing, of love and of encouragement along the way.”



68
New
Graduates



296
New
Scholars



746
Scholars
Supported
on Campus



81%
Graduation
Rate



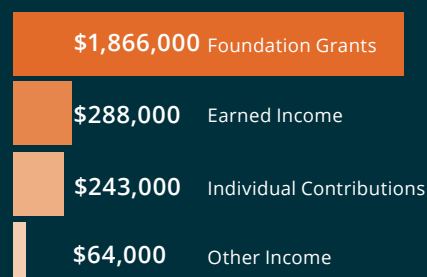
24
Partner
Colleges

Financial Summary

2019-2020

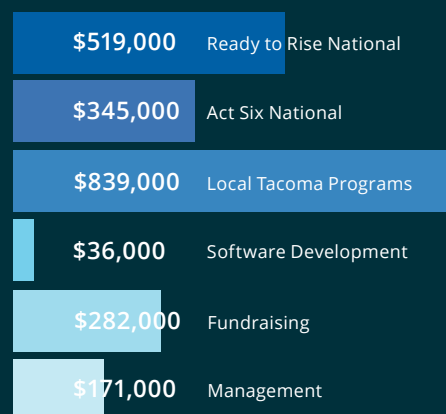
Revenue

\$2,436,000



Expenses

\$2,192,000



Assets

\$2,951,000 Current Assets

\$300,000 Other Assets

Liabilities and Net Assets

\$365,000 Liabilities

\$452,000 Unrestricted Net Assets

\$2,434,000 Temp Restricted Net Assets

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Together we grow impact!

Thank you to 503 individuals, foundations and organizations who made financial contributions to support our work in 2019-20

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