IMPACT REPORT





MOMENT BY MOMENT



Dear Community,

What is a year, if not a collection of moments?

Some are life-changing, like stepping foot on a college campus for the first time or receiving a long-awaited job offer. Others are smaller, but no less important: getting advice from a trusted mentor, feeling a boost of confidence after a practice interview, or realizing for the first time that college might actually be possible.

At Access Opportunity, we believe in the power of each and every one of these moments. In a time with fewer resources and more barriers, students need our support now more than ever. The landscape may be shifting, but our commitment never wavers. We continue to show up for every student, every family, and every future, because we've seen what's possible when young people have the support and resources they need to pursue their dreams.

This year's report reflects that commitment. It's filled with moments, big and small, that show what happens when we invest in students. These moments open doors, inspire change, and strengthen communities. Thank you for standing with us in this moment, and in every moment that has brought us here.

With gratitude,

Natalee Benzing

Executive Director

Natalee Benzing

ACHIEVE INSPIRE CONNECT

Our mission is to create opportunities for high-potential students from low-income households to define their individual paths through high school, college, and career, ultimately benefiting the lives of others.

Our vision is equity in opportunity for all students.

Access Opportunity was founded in 2014 to expand access to the academic, social, and professional opportunities that higher-income students often take for granted.

Our six-year program begins the summer before 11th grade and follows students through college graduation, offering personalized support every step of the way. We believe that first-generation students and students from low-income households have earned more than a path to college – they've earned the tools, relationships, and support to thrive through college and into a meaningful career.









11th Grade - 1st Year of College

- · Personalized college counseling and cohort support
- · Community-building and self-discovery
- Academic skills development
- Support with transitioning to college



2nd - 4th Year of College

- \$10,000 for educational expenses
- Career assessment, education, and development
- Personalized career counseling and cohort support
- · Support with preparing for life after graduation

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING • FAMILY ENGAGEMENT • WORKSHOPS • STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Through Access College, students receive one-on-one college advising, academic support, career exploration, and social-emotional development as they navigate the application process and prepare for the transition to college.

Once in college, Access Career provides continued counseling, internship and job search support, leadership development, and networking opportunities to help students explore their interests and launch successful careers.

Social-emotional learning is embedded throughout the program, and we partner closely with families to ensure they feel confident supporting their students. We also work to amplify student voice by inviting students to shape workshops, lead events, and share their stories as they define success on their own terms.

Our students are trailblazers. They're not only changing the trajectory of their own lives, but also creating new possibilities for their families and communities.

We're proud to walk alongside them through every moment that matters.







THIS YEAR by the NUMBERS

596

students and family members served

100%

of students increased their SAT scores through AO tutoring

\$65,941

average AO alumni salary compared to their families' \$30,048

average net cost of college for first-year students

60+

new career contacts for students through volunteers and guest speakers

97%

of AO alumni have graduated from college in four years

\$166,225

distributed in scholarships, stipends, and emergency grants

100%

of 2025 graduates held at least one leadership role during college



MOMENTS of PRIDE



We were so excited to welcome our Class of 2031 this year after another competitive application cycle.

- 14 different high schools
- 100% first-generation
- 3.86 average unweighted GPA

 Median income of \$37,054 for a family of 5

MOMENT OF PRIDE

Meet Michelle

AO Class of 2031 Junior at Adams City High School

Raised by her grandfather in Commerce City, Michelle has faced more than her share of challenges. Her parents' struggles with substance abuse, her grandparents' health issues, and the uncertainty of what the future might bring have shaped her into a determined, community-focused leader.

"Many around me have expressed doubts, but I've come to understand that I have control over my future and can pursue my dreams despite my parents' choices."

That determination shows in her accomplishments, maintaining a 4.2 GPA while taking on leadership roles in marching band, student council, and a long list of service clubs. Now, as part of AO's newest class, Michelle looks forward to building connections with a group of like-minded peers and accessing resources that will help her achieve her dream of combining careers in medicine and music education.

"I want to make a meaningful impact in the world, demonstrating that despite where someone starts, their potential is limitless. I'm determined to pave my own path and achieve my dreams."



MOMENTS of TRIUMPH

AO students are making their way to the following campuses this fall:

- Barnard College
- Boston College
- Boston University
- Bowdoin College
- Case Western Reserve University
- Chapman University
- Colorado Mesa University
- Colorado School of Mines
- Colorado State University
- Colorado State University Pueblo
- Duke University
- Emory University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Metropolitan State University
- Northeastern University
- North Park University
- Pitzer College
- Pomona College

- Princeton University
- Regis University
- Stanford University
- Union College
- University of Chicago
- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Colorado Denver
- University of Denver
- University of Florida
- University of Northern Colorado
- University of Southern California
- Wesleyan University





MOMENT OF TRIUMPH

Meet Ramon

AO Class of 2029 Incoming First-Year at CU Boulder

Senior year was a whirlwind of classes, work, and scholarship applications, but underneath the deadlines and essays was a deeper motivation. His mother, who passed away before he finished high school, had left school herself after elementary school to help raise her siblings.

"It would be kind of a waste of her sacrifices if I didn't try my best to do the one thing she asked: go to school."

Taking on adult responsibilities early, like managing household tasks, caring for his younger brother, and making sure bills were paid, taught him to plan ahead and persevere, even when the path wasn't easy.

That persistence paid off. With support from AO, Ramon secured multiple scholarships, including the funding that will allow him to attend CU Boulder without worrying about tuition. As he prepares to move into his dorm, the milestone hasn't fully sunk in, but he's ready for what's ahead.

"I didn't realize how amazing the program would be and how much it would help me, until now I'm going into college. Going to college, trying your hardest, living your best life, that's what it's all about. I have a future in my hands."





MOMENTS of EXPLORATION

College is a time of growth and change, and we're so happy when our students take advantage of everything at their fingertips. CCESS OPPORTUNIT **IMPACT REPORT 2024-25**

Meet Batt

AO Class of 2028 Incoming Sophomore at Wesleyan University

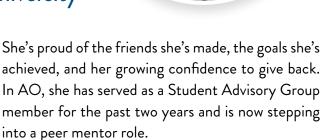
When Batt arrived at Wesleyan, she was ready to build a home for herself far from the one she grew up in.

"I was nervous about leaving home to go so far away and not knowing anyone... but I was mostly excited to be making a home for myself, learning new subjects, joining new clubs, and meeting new people."

Her first year was full of exploration: she discovered a love for psychology, thrived in the vibrant music and student band scene, and built a close community starting with her roommate, who became her closest friend. Wesleyan's First Things First program for first-generation students helped her navigate campus culture early, and she now gives back as a counselor for the same program.

Balancing sleep, studying, social life, and clubs wasn't easy, but Batt leaned on careful planning, upperclassman advice, and the support of AO.

"Applying to Access Opportunity and receiving their support helped me realize these dreams. My counselor's support, affections, and advice have helped me navigate all the confusion and challenges of my first year."



Her advice to other students: "Although change is scary, it will allow you to grow. Research the programs your school has to support you, and don't be afraid to ask for advice from those who've been there."



MOMENTS of POSSIBILITY

After six years with us, our Class of 2025 finished up their college careers this year and are looking toward what comes next, from applying to medical and law school to beginning careers.



INSPIRE

MOMENT OF POSSIBILITY

Meet Eli

AO Class of 2025 Graduated from Colorado School of Mines

For Eli, one of the most pivotal moments in his AO journey came during his final Summer Workshop, at our annual Cal-Wood retreat.

"Watching my classmates – people I had known for six years – stand before me as the confident, capable leaders they had become genuinely brought me to tears. It was beautiful, not only to witness their growth, but also to reflect on my own transformation over the years."

It was a moment to celebrate their growth, and his own, while passing on lessons and advice to younger AO students. That carried into his time at Colorado School of Mines, where he built leadership skills, deepened his sense of identity, and pursued opportunities that would bring him closer to his dream of working in aerospace engineering.

This summer, Eli worked as a Mechanical Engineering Intern for United Launch Alliance, contributing to design projects, building and launching model rockets, and watching live launches from the Operations Support Room. With plans to complete his master's in Mechanical Engineering and Space Resources, he hopes to return to the industry and "be at the forefront of shaping the future of flight."

Looking ahead, Eli's vision goes beyond his own career: he hopes to start a scholarship for children raised by parents struggling with addiction.

"Each of us has the power to create positive change within our communities, and it's important that we embrace the responsibility to do so. AO has given me so much, and I am looking forward to giving back in any way that I can."





MOMENTS of GROWTH

Our alumni community grows every year and we love seeing what they're up to.

Many alumni return each year for programs like Raise a Class and Speed Networking, giving back to our community. This year, we hosted our first-ever alumni happy hour event to help them stay connected to our work.



MOMENT OF GROWTH

Meet Yatzari

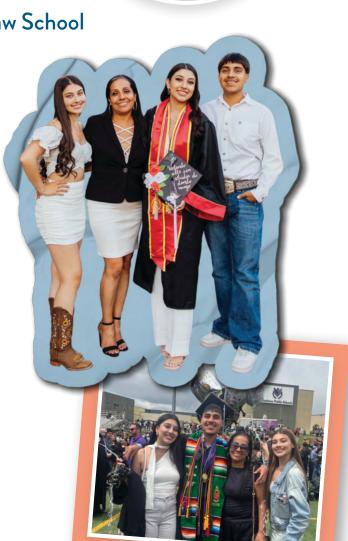
AO Class of 2023 University of Denver Entering the University of Colorado Law School

Yatzari has always been drawn to politics, social justice, and law, passions shaped by her experiences growing up in a low-income community as the daughter of immigrants. She sees the law as a tool to dismantle unjust systems, strengthen protections for the vulnerable, and repair harm. That vision, and years of perseverance, led to her acceptance at her top-choice law school with a full ride.

"I read the email on my phone and burst into tears so hard my family thought something horrible had happened. When I finally shared the news in between sobs, everyone cried with me. Even my macho uncles who I had never seen cry before."

Her journey wasn't without setbacks. After graduating college, she took two gap years to save money, prepare for the LSAT, and build the confidence she needed to make law school a reality. Along the way, AO helped her navigate the process, overcome imposter syndrome, and connect with a community of peers who inspired her.

Now the first AO alum to be accepted to law school (and the first to have two younger siblings in the program!), she's eager to mentor others considering the same path.



"AO believed in my potential before I could ever see it. They helped me see that I was capable of achieving anything I set my mind to. For this, I will be forever grateful."

MOMENTS of GRATITUDE

This spring, our annual Raise a Class event brought our community together once again.

Hosted at a beautiful new venue and featuring an interactive wine tasting experience, the evening celebrated the achievements of our incredible students. Together, we raised over \$670,000 to help us sustain our work and expand our impact.



AO Class of 2026 Raise a Class speaker

"Through AO, I found a community of other first-gen students who understood what it's like to balance homework and jobs, fear and ambition. I stopped feeling like I had to prove I belonged, because for once, I was surrounded by people who already knew I did... Without AO, I'd be trying to do all of this alone, buried in loans, lost in the system, and second-guessing every move. But because of AO, I'm not just surviving college, I'm building a future."

Watch the full speech!



We are so grateful to our Raise a Class sponsors, donors, vendors, restaurants, and volunteers, whose generosity fuels this work.

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DRINK

Breakthru Beverage

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March 5, 2026

Join us as we celebrate another year of impact and possibility.



We are deeply grateful for our community of supporters, partners, staff, and volunteers. We have so much gratitude for the rich diversity of skills, experiences, and knowledge this community brings to Access Opportunity.

Our work would not be possible without you.



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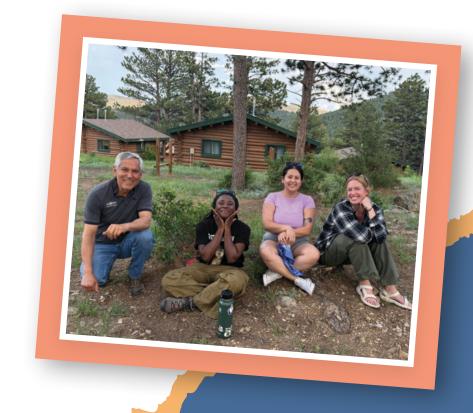
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Veronica Beard

Wild Taco

Woodhouse Day Spa



FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY

REVENUE: JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025

Individuals \$786,107 Corporate \$125,510 Foundations \$356,782 In-Kind \$5,010 Other \$79,404 **TOTAL** \$1,352,813

EXPENSES: JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025

Program \$791,179

Development \$234,988

Administration \$58,535 **TOTAL** \$1,084,702

Access Opportunity's strong financial position reflects the incredible generosity of our community.

Thanks to your continued support, we've begun building an endowment that will sustain our scholarship program long-term while we continue to invest in the success of our students today. Maintaining a healthy balance between annual expenses and long-term assets ensures that we can honor our commitments to students for years to come.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS OF JUNE 30, 2025

Total Current Assets Total Fixed Assets TOTAL ASSETS	\$3,199,901 -\$66 \$3,199,834
Total Liabilities Total Equity TOTAL LIABILITIES	-\$42,728 \$3,162,562 \$3,199,834



THANK YOU

Every story in this report – milestones accomplished, dreams realized, and barriers overcome – was made possible by the generosity of our community.

Whether you donated, volunteered, partnered with us, or simply believed in our students, your support has been crucial in helping students reach their potential and become the leaders we need in this moment.

When you invest in Access Opportunity, you're not just supporting a program. You're opening doors and helping first-generation students take bold steps toward college, career, and beyond. This work is a collective effort, and we are deeply grateful to the entire AO community for making these moments possible.

For more info or to make a donation, please visit: www.accessopportunity.org

