



2019-2020 **ANNUAL REPORT**

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## **Greatness Needs Guidance**

Impacting the Lives Behind the Data

**A nationally recognized college, career, and life-readiness provider**

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND CEO

*Dear Friends, Supporters and Partners of Education is Freedom;*

Looking back over the past year, we can say, with great confidence, that it has been a year full of progress and challenges. Some of it came from the momentum started in 2019, then it quickly became clear that the spread of the coronavirus would have far-reaching implications for the students and families we serve and the organization as a whole. We had to make some of the most important decisions that had ever been made in the 18 years of Education is Freedom's existence to keep our people safe and the organization viable. This had to be done not knowing what tomorrow or the day after would bring.

In March 2020, to stabilize the impact of the crisis situation brought on by the pandemic, we immediately

adopted an aggressive three-part strategy: 1) an assertive internal communications plan to assure our predominately millennial-aged staff that we are remaining optimistic, yet realistic 2) an unplanned and unfunded technology implementation plan supporting home officing and 3) a re-structuring of the way we advise students and families. We quickly adopted a hybrid advising model (a combination of in-person and virtual). While our previous way of working was to always implement "best" practices, we discovered we had to transition to implementing "next" practices. We knew that while we would not be radically different, we would be changed.

The leadership team stayed focused on the work and on ensuring that we clearly understood how the pandemic was affecting the students and their families so that we could better understand how to respond. The good news is that we were able to improvise from a strong foundation of relationships, cultural competency, knowledge of our field and technology skills. Our service hours expanded to not only include the school day, but also evenings and weekend support. Communications to students and families became more robust, including a strong social media push, texting, email and cell phone calls. For our workforce development and summer internship programs, we were quickly able to help companies create both onsite and virtual projects for the students to complete.

We exceeded our goals and objectives for each school district, which we always strive to do. Financially, we were able to close the gap and avoid laying people off by applying for

and receiving the COVID-19 PPP funds from the federal government. We were also able to combine some functions (by implementing technology solutions). We did not fill vacancies.

Through a thorough risk assessment, together with an analysis of our strategy and quick decision making, we are proud to say that Education is Freedom is poised to emerge stronger and more focused, with plans to achieve the highest aspirations for the organization and the students and families we serve.

Thank you for your support and partnership in this journey.



**Mark Okada**



**Marcia Page**

# Mission and History

In 2002, Education is Freedom's (EIF) founder envisioned a world where every young person could pursue a college education that would lead them into a stable career - a vision that continues to guide our work today. To accomplish this goal, EIF initially operated as a national

scholarship program that offered renewable scholarships to first generation college students; a lack of financial capital was the most observable barrier. Over the past 18 years our notable accomplishments include:

- 2002** ● 7-11 Foundation creates the Education is Freedom (EIF) National Scholarship Program.
- 2003** ● Begins working with students from 2 Dallas ISD high schools to prepare them for college and career success.
- 2008** ● EIF ends the National Scholarship Program, choosing to invest all funds in supporting Dallas / Fort Worth students.
- Architect and lead partner of the Mayor's Intern Fellows Program (MIFP) for the city of Dallas.
- 2012** ● Designed and implemented a college persistency program for students at 3 universities.

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- 2014** ● EIF mobile vehicle travels to community locations to provide students, parents, and community members access to supportive resources including access to laptops, a charging station, and a Wi-Fi hotspot.
- 2015** ● Designs the innovative workforce readiness curriculum.
- Develops of the "Find Your Future" Middle School program, a 26-week long program, that began during the 2015-16 school year to work with 8th graders and their families to help make their college and career aspirations a reality.
- 2016** ● Creates the micro-program, EIF Scholars, within EIF high schools to maximize impact on high-performing students who may not otherwise achieve their potential and overcome the challenges facing first-generation college students.
- 2018** ● Expands summer intern program with the creation and management of the Richardson Mayor's Summer Internship Program.
- 2020** ● Develops a hybrid (in-person / on-line) advising model, adopted as the DISD standard, in order to continue supporting students during school closures as a result of the COVID pandemic
- Initiates online EIF Master Classes which provided students and parents with free access to experts in a variety of subjects related to colleges, careers, and life readiness.

# Why EIF

Concern over the alarmingly low rates of post-secondary attendance among low-income and minority students has mounted in recent decades. And as the demand for not only a college-educated workforce but also individuals with certifications becomes more deeply ingrained in our global economy, the impending shortage of college and career-educated workers predicted by 2030 signals cause for increasing concern and attention.

Without post-secondary education, income inequality leads to the poverty cycle as it allocates wealth unevenly and the rich continues to prosper while the poor are trapped in the cycle that keeps a community from prospering. Young people are not able to participate as full members in the civic, cultural, and economic life of the community. The resulting impact is higher crime rates, higher unemployment and more health disparities.

A post-secondary education promotes economic growth because it provides skills that increase employment opportunities and income.

- 60 million people could escape poverty if all adults had just two more years of schooling,
- 420 million people could be lifted out of poverty if all adults completed a post-secondary education.

- Education increases earnings by roughly 10% per each additional year of schooling.

When you look at the stats, the fate of young people, in underserved communities, can look bleak. Lack of access to education is a major predictor of passing poverty from one generation to the next. Receiving an education is one of the top ways to achieve financial stability.

The bottom line: education and poverty are directly linked.

The cycle of poverty is about more than a simple lack of resources. It's a complex issue that requires digging a little deeper for sustainable solutions. That is why Education is Freedom works with students and families to empower them to dream and create their path through education and break out of the potential cycle of poverty. Not every person without an education is living in extreme poverty, but most of the extremely poor do lack a basic education.

The goal of Education is Freedom (EIF) is to reverse this trend by focusing personnel and resources on neglected urban schools that require college, career and life planning and guidance to assist students in successfully reaching their higher education goals.

# Who Does EIF Serve ?



## Middle Schools

- John Adam Middle School - Grand Prairie
- James Fannin Middle School - Grand Prairie
- Young Men's Leadership Academy at Kennedy Middle School - Grand Prairie
- Oliver W. Holmes Humanities / Communications Academy - Dallas ISD

## High Schools

- W.H. Adamson High School
- David W. Carter High School
- North Dallas High School
- O.D. Wyatt High School - Fort Worth
- City Lab High School
- Emmett Conrad High School
- Crockett High School - Austin
- Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy
- Grand Prairie Fine Arts Academy
- Grand Prairie Collegiate Institute
- Innovation, Design, Entrepreneurship Academy
- Lyndon B. Johnson High School - Austin
- Justin F. Kimball High School
- Dr. Wright L. Lassiter Jr. Early College High School
- Lincoln High School
- James Madison High School
- A. Maceo Smith New Tech High School
- R.L. Paschal High School - Fort Worth
- L.G. Pinkston High School
- Polytechnic Senior High School - Fort Worth
- Franklin D. Roosevelt High School
- W.W. Samuell High School
- Seagoville High School
- Skyline High School
- South Oak Cliff High School
- Sunset High School
- Townview: Judge Barefoot Sanders
- Townview: Talented and Gifted
- Trinidad "Trini" Garza Early College High School
- Wilmer-Hutchins High School
- W.T. White High School

# Quotes

“

*EIF is a complete package of support. All the advisors I have had the joy of working with support students, parents, teachers, and yes, the school counselor. They are such an amazing resource to school districts like Grand Prairie ISD! Thank you for your years of service supporting our students as they journey to college and beyond. ”*

**Alexia** - Lead Counselor  
- Grand Prairie Fine Arts Academy

“

*Education is Freedom has been very instrumental in working with Skyline students in ensuring that we meet our district goals for Dallas County Promise, FAFSA, and Apply Texas! ”*

**Lamecia** -Senior Class Assistant Principal for Skyline High School (Dallas)

“

*Having the MBK/EIF program at LBJ has provided our campus with great support to our LBJ students. The representatives were always willing to help every and any student that came to our College and Career Center. Their collaboration with our College and Career staff was impressive. The relationships they built with students allowed students to feel welcomed, appreciated, and supported. Thank you MBK/EIF for all your support and collaboration with our LBJ staff and students. ”*

**Nora** - College and Career Counselor - LBJ Early College High School (Austin)



# EIF Advising Model



## RELATIONSHIPS

- Meet individual students and their families where they are
- Engage in culturally relevant and appropriate discussions and activities of interest
- Provide consistent, and helpful presence in schools and community

## RESOURCES

- Identify student's interests, assets, strengths, challenges, and perceived barriers
- Partner with student to create goals and a plan to attain goals
- Guide students towards resources necessary to achieve goals

## RECOGNITION

- Provide incentives, recognition and/or rewards for accomplishing major milestones towards post-secondary goals

## RECONNECT & REFLECT

- Identify and reconnect with students that have participated in the EIF program in the past.
- Engage former EIF participants in discussions around additional resources needed during post-secondary phase and program evaluation

## REACH OTHERS

- Providing past EIF participants with knowledge and resources to connect students and community members with the EIF program
- Empowering past EIF participants with the knowledge and resources to advocate for post-secondary assistance to the next generation of students or to be able to provide it themselves.



# Next Generation Student Advising

EIF Higher Education Advisors guide 6th-12th grade students in defining their post-secondary dreams, navigating the systems inherently connected with their choices, and persisting on their chosen paths.

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS + PROACTIVE INVOLVEMENT  

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( IN- PERSON ADVISING + REMOTE ADVISOR ACCESS)

= **STUDENT  
IMPACT**



### **Growth Mindset**

- Develop student talents
- Student-centered programs
- College-educated near peer advisors
- Cultural wealth
- EIF Scholars



### **Student and Family Engagement**

- In-person/virtual meetings
- Relationship-centered approach
- Expose students to community/volunteer opportunities
- Communication in multiple languages



### **College, Career, Military Readiness (CCMR) Advising**

- Objective support for post-secondary opportunities
- Guest speakers from various industries
- Student interest and aptitude survey options
- Support for student interests first



### **Career and Financial Literacy**

- Technology-driven blended learning model
- Direct access to community resources
- Support and encouragement in building skills to succeed in entrepreneurial endeavors



### **Workforce Development**

- Paid summer intern programs
- Resume Writing / Interviewing Success Sessions
- Entrepreneurial -skill workshops
- Free access to online workforce skills building classes

# Evidence of Impact: 2019-2020

In the 2019-2020 school year, EIF Higher Education Advisors served students in 36 schools across 4 districts throughout north and central Texas.



**45,182**

Student Meetings



**5,156+**

Total Workforce Training Hours Provided (In-Person and Virtual)



**64%**

Financial Aid (FAFSA/TASFA) Applications Completed



**20,261**

College Applications Completed



**\$153 M**

Awarded in Scholarships and Financial Aid



**180**

EIF Scholars

Total outreach included 35,785 students, which included 7,033 seniors.

# Internships and Jobs Programs

Education is Freedom designs and implements Dallas Works® (DW), the annual Dallas Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program, and the Richardson Mayor's Summer Internship Program (RMSIP). DW and RMSIP are eight-week, paid summer internship programs which introduce exemplary scholars from Dallas and Richardson public and charter schools to future career and employment opportunities in the industries and companies where they have expressed interest. DW also assisted with connecting Dallas teens to additional summer job opportunities which included paid employment as well.

This summer due to COVID-19 limitations, both programs pivoted to provide virtual and in- person



options for students and employers. As a result, the eight weeks were full of powerful on-site and remote opportunities for young teens to immerse themselves in a professional work environment and gain exposure to an array of professional careers.

The 2020 interns actively participated in the many tasks needed to lead a company, grew to understand the importance of clear communication, and learned how to successfully conduct meetings remotely. They also gained an appreciation for the “essential jobs” in our city which required on-site workers. Interns and summer job participants were able to assist and deliver quality work while following proper safety protocols. For example, interns explored the worlds of commercial real estate and finance, shadowed the executive leadership team of a local architectural firm, and worked with essential organizations in the areas of government, healthcare, and education.

**454+**

Students working  
in summer job /  
internship positions

**4,236+**

On-site Training  
Hours

**920+**

Virtual Training  
Hours

**“**

*I was very impressed by both interns and the level of professionalism that they demonstrated throughout the internship. I think the level of maturity and professionalism that they showed is a testament to the work readiness curriculum and training that EIF provides through the Dallas Works program provided. ”*

**Jesus Vazque** -Alvarez-Children's Hospital

## 2020 Survey Question Results

	Richardson	Dallas
Companies will participate next year either virtually or on site	89%	90%
Companies rate their student intern above satisfactory	92%	91%
Students felt equipped for internship because of training	94%	92%
Students will refer the program to fellow students	93%	96%
Companies rate their Intern Advisor as about satisfactory	100%	90%



*The RMSIP has provided knowledge and insight that I didn't think I could receive in high-school. Being a part of a professional and adult job environment as a high-schooler is such a unique opportunity that I'm extremely grateful to have.*

*Thanks to the Richardson Summer Internship Program, I have experienced the best summer of my life and I was obsessed with my work. I loved every minute of my time at the Richardson Symphony Orchestra. I could have never got a chance to get a job like this without Richardson Mayor and the Education is Freedom organization. ”*

**Naji** - RMSIP, Class of 2020

# Student Profiles



“

*EIF has helped guide me through every step that I needed towards college. For example, important guidelines for FAFSA, scholarships, college applications, and more. EIF has also helped me by always being there to give me personal and educational advice. Before working with EIF, I feared not knowing what I wanted to study, not knowing information about college classes, FAFSA, scholarships, and deadlines for everything. Working with EIF has made me feel more secure and confident about my plan and my future. ”*

## **Stephanie**

W.H. Adamson High School '20  
Student at El Centro College





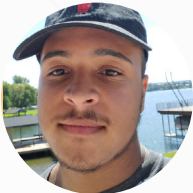
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*Being a first-generation college student, EIF helped me stay on track for college. Everything from sending transcripts, test scores, and applying for colleges and scholarships. I knew going to college would be a critical part of my life. I didn't know what steps to take and EIF helped me achieve that. ”*

**Luis**

North Dallas High School '15

Randolph College '19



“

*My EIF advisor has helped me understand the importance of school... I had planned on going into the military because I felt like I wasn't smart enough for college, and it was an easier route for me. Mr. DeGrate helped me understand that college is not just for the super smart people, but for anyone who is willing to learn and be persistent enough. ”*

**TyShaun**

Crockett High School (Austin) '20

Student at Austin Community College

# Major Successes

## EIF's COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Education is Freedom's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES AND ADAPTING TO THE NEW "NORMAL"

- 1 EIF provided the hybrid advising model for DISD CAP vendors.**  
EIF Advisors were remotely in contact with students as soon as DISD announced school closures.
- 2 Technology innovation allowed for continued on-going communication between Advisors and students.**  
Advisors utilized multiple tech solutions to remain connected with their students.
- 3 Students and families had multiple methods to contact EIF advisors**  
Virtual advisor meetings, group video conferences, text, email and phone. All accessible via the EIF website.
- 4 Extended EIF Advisor availability**  
EIF Advisors were available for students and families from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM and weekends as needed.
- 5 Adapted to each unique school community**  
EIF recognized the importance of flexibility and ability to adapt to each campus environment.
- 6 Advisors returned to schools as soon as permitted**  
Advisors worked with students on campus when schools allowed a return for on site meetings.

## Brother's Keeper - Austin



In 2019-20, EIF expanded its partnership with the Greater Austin Area's My Brother's Keeper (MBK) program to help lead and implement a strategic initiative to increase direct- to-college enrollment and post-secondary success of talented young men of color from low-income households.

The primary goals of the program as identified by MBK are:

1. Significantly increase (by at least double) the rate of priority students who enroll in a post-secondary institution after high school graduation; and

2. Create or improve upon campus and district-level systems and supports so that everyone is working together to improve post-secondary outcomes for priority students.

EIF has served an instrumental role in recruiting and supporting priority students taking part in the MBK program. Students recruited to participate in the program typically fall within a range of students who are significantly under-represented in terms of high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and career certification or college graduation. EIF's Higher Education Advisors (HEAs) bring a wealth of cultural and technical knowledge in their work with the students participating in the MBK program. By creating authentic relationships based on empathy and honesty, HEAs are able to motivate and guide students on paths leading to post-secondary opportunities and fulfilling career aspirations.

## Evening with the Stars

Evening With the Stars is a scholarship ceremony and reception held each April that honors the hard work of all of our EIF Scholars. The event features inspirational guest speakers and Scholar achievements from the past year. Each EIF Scholar who successfully completes the Evening With the Stars application and program requirements receives a scholarship at the event.

Due to COVID-19, EIF's fifth annual Evening with the Stars event was held virtually on April 29th, 2020. Scholarships totaling over \$50,000 were awarded to 144 EIF Scholars from 23 Dallas ISD high schools, as well as 7 outstanding seniors from each of EIF's Grand Prairie, Fort Worth, and Austin schools. EIF Scholars are in the top of their class academically and selected at the beginning of their senior year to



complete leadership and learning activities throughout the year to help them achieve their collegiate goals.

Students logged onto EIF's website at 7pm for the scholarship reveal, where they could view the full list of winners and watch special videos from Marcia Page, Mark Okada, and Honorary Chair Senator Royce West. Students, guests, and campus staff were able to leave messages of congratulations on the comment board and see live social media content using #eveningwiththestars.

# Partnership Highlights



JPMorgan Chase partnered with EIF through JPMC's Summer Youth Employment Program. The partnership focused on providing workforce readiness training to over 1000 youth in Dallas. Additionally, Chase partnered with EIF to facilitate the Mentor workforce readiness program to 40 EIF Scholars to help bring positive change to the Dallas / Fort Worth Area. JPMorgan Chase has invested in summer jobs programs across the country to prepare youth for skilled jobs of the 21st century. The goal for this partnership is to ensure students have 21st century skills needed to seek and compete in the Dallas / Ft. Worth workspace.



EIF worked with a team of consultants from Deloitte's StepUp DFW program to receive pro bono services focused on EIF's Workforce Readiness program. The goal of this partnership was to equip EIF with the expertise needed to advise students on sustainable, long-term career paths should they choose to forgo a four-year collegiate degree. Deloitte provided EIF with a comprehensive analysis (including the effects of COVID-19) of current workforce programs and career opportunities in DFW. This analysis also included resource materials to support advisors as they educate students on post-secondary aspirations as well as recommendations for identifying employers and organizations with interests and goals aligned to those of EIF and the students served.

# Summary Statement of Activities

## Revenues & Support

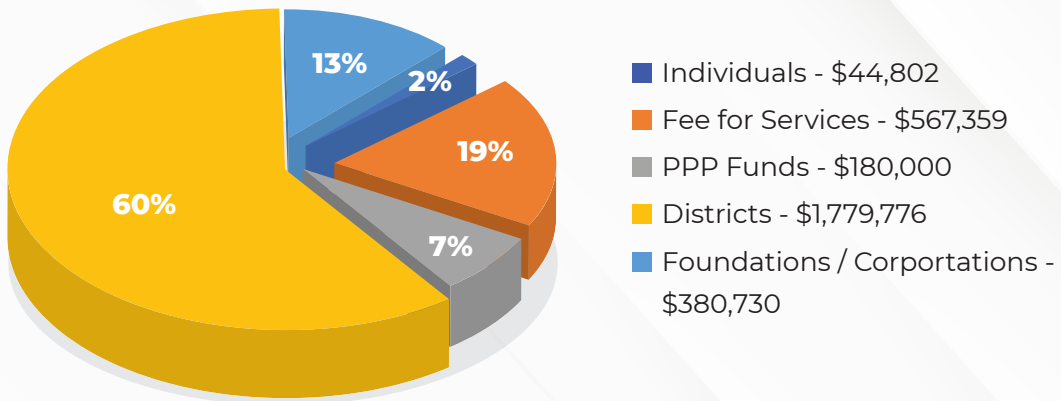
Contributions and Grants	\$	2,772,667
PPP Funds*	\$	180,000
Net In-Kind Contributions	\$	21,284
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Support</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,973,951</b>

## Expenses

Program Services	\$	2,473,901
Management & General	\$	409,483
Other	\$	13,147
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,896,531</b>

\*Approx. 50% of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds were used in 2019-20. Remaining funds to be used in 2020-21. PPP Funds are currently classified as a loan but are eligible for forgiveness. EIF is working with JPMorgan directly to complete required documentation for forgiveness approval.

# Summary Sources of Revenue



\*Approx. 50% of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds were used in 2019-20. Remaining funds to be used in 2020-21. PPP Funds are currently classified as a loan but are eligible for forgiveness. EIF is working with JPMorgan directly to complete required documentation for forgiveness approval.

# 2019-2020 Team EIF



- 80% of EIF Advisors have 3+ years experience advising high school students in the subjects of college, career, and life-readiness.
- 73% of EIF Advisors grew up in the communities they now serve and 100% are culturally competent.
- 100% of EIF Advisors have a Bachelor's degree and 29% have a Master's degree.
- 100% of EIF Advisors attend ongoing professional development sessions focused on current events of academic and cultural relevance.



# Board of Directors

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1111W. Mockingbird Lane Suite 1300B Dallas, TX 75247

214.432.8550

[info@educationisfreedom.org](mailto:info@educationisfreedom.org)

[educationisfreedom.org](http://educationisfreedom.org)

[@eifdotorg](https://www.instagram.com/eifdotorg)