

IMPACTING THE LIVES BEHIND THE DATA



EDUCATION
IS FREEDOM

ANNUAL
IMPACT
REPORT
2024-25





EDUCATION IS FREEDOM

MISSION

Education is Freedom transforms lives through education.

VISION

We envision a world where every young person achieves their academic and professional goals and thrives in a career that pays a family-sustaining wage.

CORE COMPETENCIES

EIF's leadership and staff strive to integrate seven core competencies into every aspect of our work. We hire for them, coach to them, and cultivate them throughout our organization.

STRATEGIC VISION

We design and execute bold, future-forward strategies.

EXECUTION EXCELLENCE

We are detail-oriented and outcomes-driven, with a bias for action.

SOLUTIONS FOCUS

We maintain a mindset of identifying and removing obstacles to success and foster that attitude in others.

COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT

We thrive in a team-based environment and build strong partnerships.

MISSION-DRIVEN

We are passionate about creating living-wage career pathways for the students we serve.

OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK

We believe economic mobility is attainable by all and that EIF has the talent and capacity to bring that belief to life.

JOYFUL LEADERSHIP

We exhibit and cultivate joy in the workplace, in schools, and in the communities we serve, inspiring optimism and engagement among stakeholders.

THE 2024–25 SCHOOL YEAR WAS ONE OF REMARKABLE ACCELERATION AND TRANSFORMATION FOR EDUCATION IS FREEDOM. We entered the year with a bold vision—to expand opportunity, deepen impact, and strengthen our ability to measure what matters most: student outcomes.

Over the past year, we refined every part of our model to serve students and families more effectively. Advisors worked year-round under our new 12-month structure, ensuring continuity of support through college and career milestones. Our performance-based bonus system tied incentives directly to student success—rewarding measurable progress in enrollment, credential attainment, and persistence.

We also sharpened our capacity to track and analyze outcomes across schools and districts, giving us richer insight into how EIF’s advising directly impacts postsecondary achievement. With new dashboards, real-time data tools, and strengthened district partnerships, we closed the gap between advising and results.

Growth defined the year. We expanded our footprint across Dallas County, solidified our presence in Garland, Grand Prairie, and Dallas ISDs, and added new partnerships with Mesquite and DeSoto ISDs—bringing EIF advising to more students and families. With the acquisition and full implementation of the Education Opens Doors college and career exploration curriculum in Dallas ISD middle schools, EIF established an earlier entry point for student engagement—ensuring that conversations about future pathways begin long before high school.

And we’re not slowing down. In 2025–26, EIF will extend its reach into Carrollton-Farmers Branch, Cedar Hill, Duncanville, and Lancaster ISDs, bringing our near-peer advising and career pathway model to even more students across the region. Garland ISD will add our college and career exploration curriculum to their middle school Career and Technical Education course options. We are also excited to implement a Kaplan test preparation pilot, giving students access to premier college readiness and scholarship preparation tools designed to help them achieve at the highest standards, persist, and succeed. With these additions, EIF’s work will span nearly every corner of Dallas County—creating a truly regional network of access and opportunity.

Our future is bright. Together, with our district partners, philanthropic supporters, and the incredible EIF team, we are redefining what it means for every student to have a personalized pathway to a family-sustaining career and a life of purpose.

The best is yet to come.



Susanna

SUSANNA RUSSELL, EdD
President and CEO
Education is Freedom Foundation

WHO WE ARE

Education is Freedom (EIF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2002 by a visionary board of corporate leaders who imagined a world where every young person could pursue a college education. As business leaders, government officials, and entrepreneurs, they committed to building an educated workforce—empowered to create strong companies and thriving communities in today’s knowledge-based economy.

To achieve this vision, EIF began by offering renewable scholarships to first-time, first-generation college students. However, this early focus quickly revealed that financial support alone was not enough to ensure college success, especially for students facing significant social or economic barriers.

In 2003, EIF launched a comprehensive, school-based program in the Dallas Independent School District to strengthen the college-going culture. Since then, EIF has helped more than 100,000 students and their families in multiple school districts complete the college process.

Today, our focus is clear: to help every student we serve access a pathway to postsecondary success and economic mobility. As a trusted partner to school districts, community leaders, and mission-aligned supporters, EIF transforms student outcomes in Dallas County by providing personalized, student-centered college and career advising—beginning in middle school with our **Community Connections** and **Career Exploration** programs, continuing with intensive support through our **College and Career Advising Centers** on high school campuses, and enhanced by our **EIF Scholars** program. EIF walks alongside students as they launch into their postsecondary journeys.





\$960

Median weekly earnings of full-time workers age 25+ with only a high school diploma (\$49,930 annually)

\$1,732

Median weekly earnings of full-time workers age 25+ with a bachelor's degree (an 80% increase over having a high school diploma alone)

\$75,000

Annual living wage needed for a single parent with one child in Dallas County

70%

Young adults in Dallas County earning below a living wage (Dallas has the 7th highest rate in the nation)

75%

Children living in poverty in Dallas County (Dallas has the 6th highest rate in the nation)

Why Education is Freedom?

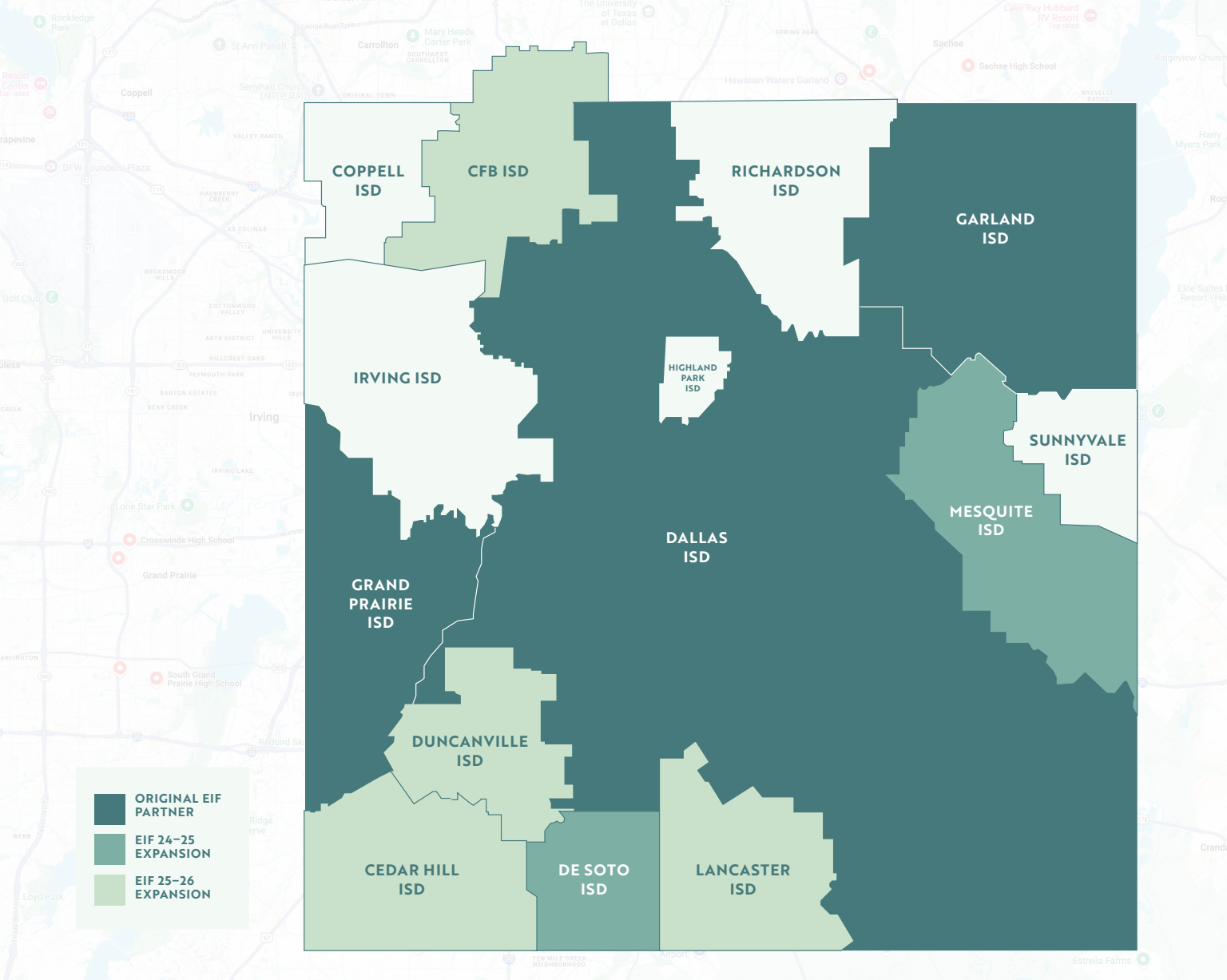
Today, just 17% of Dallas County's beginning 8th graders earn a postsecondary credential by age 24. That number drops to 12% among the 71% of Dallas County public school students who are economically disadvantaged. This crisis of attainment is not just an educational challenge—it is an economic and social one. Because educational attainment is tightly linked to earnings, these low completion rates perpetuate poverty and limit social mobility across generations.

Education is Freedom's Role

EIF is meeting this challenge at scale. EIF advisors are on campus full-time with more than 60% of all high school seniors in Dallas County, ensuring the majority of students in the region have access to individualized career and college advising. Furthermore, our career exploration curriculum is used in all Dallas ISD middle schools, and our Community Connections program reaches hundreds of students through partnering organizations each month.

Our work is a cornerstone of Opportunity 2040, Dallas's community-wide effort led by the Commit Partnership and the Child Poverty Action Lab to enable 150,000 more students to access economic mobility pathways and cut child poverty in half by 2040. We all succeed when more Dallas County students can access, persist, and complete postsecondary pathways, breaking cycles of poverty and securing generational prosperity.

Data from [Commit Partnership's Dashboard](#) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (July 2025)



Serving the independent school districts of

- DALLAS**
- DESOTO**
- GARLAND**
- GRAND PRAIRIE**
- MESQUITE**

Expanding Our Impact

EIF had significant growth since February 2024, expanding our programmatic footprint from three to five Dallas County school districts during the 2024–25 academic year. We are also growing within the districts we serve—reaching more schools and students in grades 9 through 11, in addition to our longstanding intensive support of seniors.

During this period of growth, EIF’s staff has nearly doubled, with 84% serving as full-time advisors on school campuses. Combined with our middle school career exploration curriculum—implemented in all Dallas ISD middle schools in the 2024–25 academic year—EIF is building a sustainable, scalable advising ecosystem that helps students not only get to college, but persist *through* college and *into* meaningful careers that pay family-sustaining wages.

Serving Students throughout Dallas County

In the 2024–25 academic year, Education Is Freedom served more than 25,000 students in 43 high schools throughout five Dallas County school districts—Dallas ISD (22), DeSoto ISD (1), Garland ISD (10), Grand Prairie ISD (4), and Mesquite ISD (6). Below are the EIF partner high schools in each district.

DALLAS ISD

- Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy at A. Maceo Smith
- David W. Carter High School
- Emmett J. Conrad High School
- Franklin D. Roosevelt High School of Innovation
- Dr. Frederick D. Haynes III Global Prep Academy at Paul Quinn College
- H. Grady Spruce High School
- Irma Lerma Rangel Young Women’s Leadership School
- James Madison High School
- Judge Barefoot Sanders Law Magnet
- Justin F. Kimball High School
- Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy
- Dr. L. G. Pinkston High School
- Lincoln High School and Humanities/Communication Magnet
- New Tech High School at B. F. Darrell
- Rosie M. Collins Sorrells School of Education and Social Services at Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center
- School for the Talented and Gifted at Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center
- South Oak Cliff High School
- Trinidad “Trini” Garza Early College High School
- W. W. Samuell High School
- Wilmer-Hutchins High School
- Dr. Wright L. Lassiter Jr. Early College High School at El Centro College
- Young Women’s STEAM Academy at Balch Springs

DESOTO ISD

- DeSoto High School

GARLAND ISD

- Garland High School
- Gilbreath-Reed Career and Technical Center
- GISD Alternative Education Center
- Lakeview Centennial High School
- Memorial Pathway Academy
- Naaman Forest High School
- North Garland High School
- Rowlett High School
- Sachse High School
- South Garland High School

GRAND PRAIRIE ISD

- Grand Prairie Early College High School
- Grand Prairie High School
- South Grand Prairie Early College High School
- South Grand Prairie High School

MESQUITE ISD

- John Horn High School
- Mesquite High School
- North Mesquite High School
- Poteet High School
- Vroonland Vanguard High School
- West Mesquite High School



“ Thank you so much for your partnership and support of our students and families during our FAFSA workshops. Your presence makes a huge difference, especially when resolving difficult cases. Students have let me know how much your support means to them and their plans to continue their education. We are grateful for this partnership and value the work we are doing together. ”

—SOFÍA NÚÑEZ

Founder and CEO
Empower the Voice



Engaging Parents and Families in the Community

EIF recognizes that parents are critical partners in postsecondary success. Our Community Connections program engages families through evening and weekend workshops, outreach campaigns, and partnerships with community centers, churches, and civic groups. This model builds networks of supportive adults around each student and ensures family voices inform program design. By educating and empowering parents on financial aid, workforce pathways, and career readiness, EIF strengthens the long-term conditions for student success.

Providing Early Career Exposure to Inform Academic Choices

EIF introduces students to career exploration, financial literacy, and future planning beginning in middle school. This program aligns with House Bill 5 (HB5), which requires Texas students to choose a high school endorsement in STEM, Business & Industry, Public Services, Arts & Humanities, or Multidisciplinary Studies. By involving parents, counselors, and teachers, EIF ensures endorsement choices are intentional, connected to career aspirations, and informed by both student interests and family input. District teachers deliver the Education is Freedom Career Exploration Curriculum in a daily course, offered in either a semester-long or year-long format. In the 2024–25 academic year, all Dallas ISD seventh grade students participated in this course.

Personalized Year-Round Advising

At the high school level, EIF places trained advisors full-time on every partner campus. Advisors maintain a 200:1 caseload for juniors and seniors, and in Dallas ISD, a 400:1 caseload for freshmen and sophomores. Working from offices on campus, EIF advisors build trusted relationships with students and provide expert guidance on:

- College, workforce, and military pathways
- Financial aid completion (FAFSA/TASFA)
- Scholarship applications
- TSIA readiness and dual-credit enrollment
- Career credential opportunities

Using the Economic Mobility Center's case management tools, advisors track milestones and intervene when students fall behind. Throughout the year, EIF hosts family workshops, career fairs, and financial aid nights to empower parents to support their student's journey. Advisors also celebrate success through annual College Decision Day events.

“You all have been doing a fantastic job working with ALL of our students. I am very thankful and grateful for the work you all do and to have you all as a dedicated team.”

—MARESA RAMOS

Principal
North Mesquite
High School





A Celebration of Scholars





Recognizing Leadership and Persistence

EIF Scholars is a selective program for high-achieving seniors (3.0+ GPA) who demonstrate leadership and drive. Students receive monthly mentorship, goal tracking, mental health awareness training, and exposure to college student role models. Graduating EIF Scholars earn scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$5,000, flexible for unmet needs such as textbooks, moving expenses, or supplies.

In 2025, EIF awarded over \$100,000 in scholarships to 165 seniors across 38 high schools, with support from community donors and corporate partners.

EIF Scholars will be attending colleges including:



“ EIF didn’t just prepare me for college—EIF reminded me that I was worthy of opportunity, capable of excellence, and deserving of a seat at the table. Their dedication changed the way I viewed my future. ”

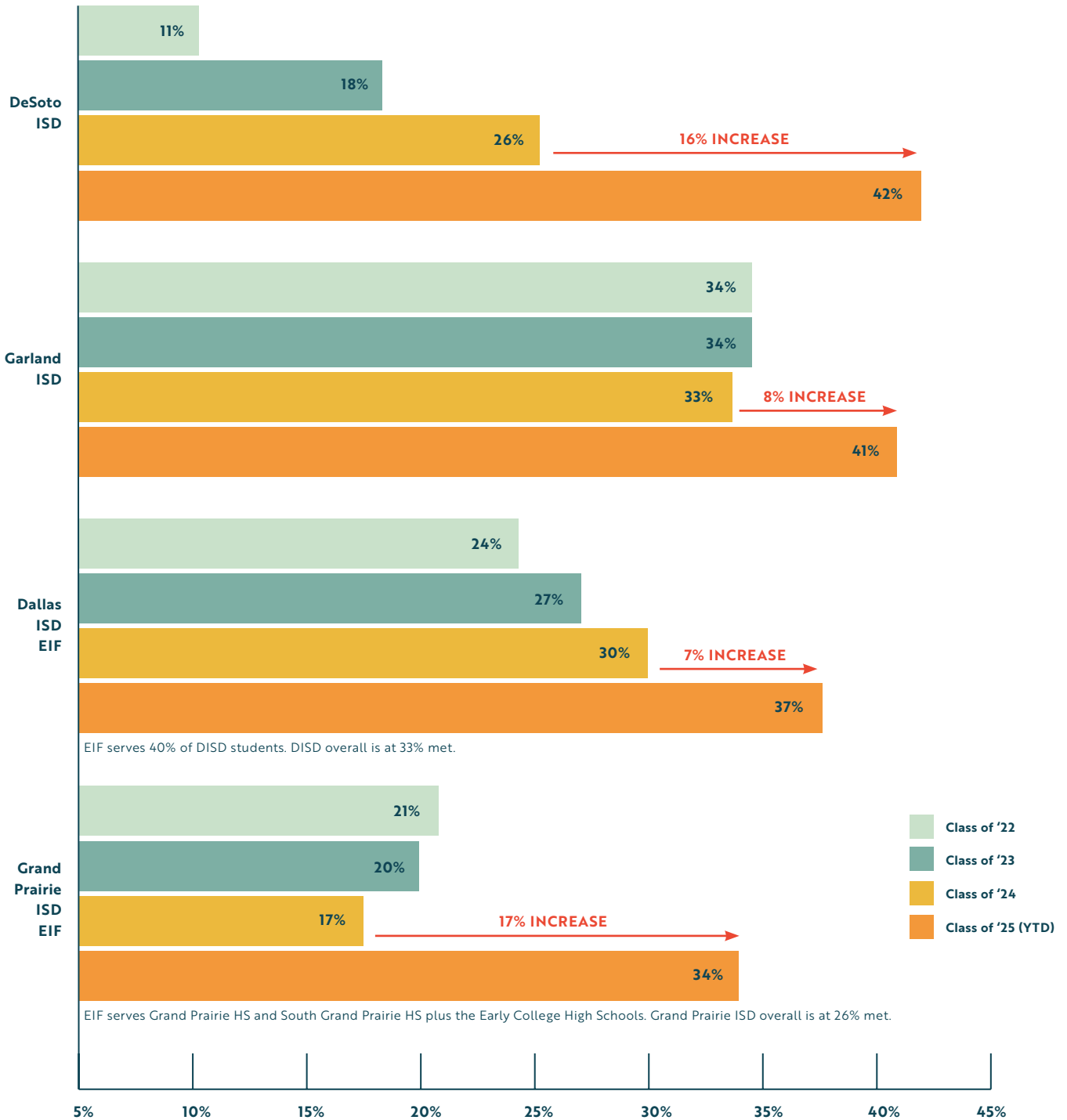
—MADISON B.

Gilliam HS Graduate and Prairie View A&M University Student



Percent College Ready by Assessment by Graduating Class

EIF leverages a highly trained, credentialed, full-time advising staff, 200:1 advisor ratios, ongoing professional development, and year-round (226 day) employees to maximize student outcomes. Our results are real.



Students Served

36,162
Total students assisted

12,091
High school seniors served



8,947
Middle school students served

165
EIF Scholars

Outcomes

10,294
Financial aid applications submitted

6,719
College acceptances (2 or 4 year)



9,068
Financial aid applications completed

8,322
Final Class of 2024
College Enrollment

\$285,504,910.93
Scholarships & Institutional Grants

6,544
Preliminary Class of 2025
College Enrollment

61,514
College applications completed

Advising in Action



96,816
One-on-one meetings
with students

50,926
Summer melt messages/calls
from advisors

17,179
Group meetings
with students

113,995
Total number of advising
interactions with students

Spotlight on Alumni

Our alumni embody the heart of Education is Freedom’s mission. From recent graduates beginning their postsecondary journeys to former EIF students who now serve as advisors, and those who have carried the spirit of education and economic opportunity for decades, their stories showcase the lasting impact of purposeful college and career advising. In this section, a few of our alumni share how EIF shaped their lives.



“As a high school student that had EIF, I saw how my advisor inspired and changed different students’ lives for the better. Either if it was with college, jobs, or even military, our advisor always had great advice and always celebrated our accomplishments with us. When I got the opportunity to work with EIF, I promised myself to have the same mindset and dedication as my high school EIF advisor had to inspire the next generation of high school students to be the best they can be.”

—CITLALY BARRERA

UNT Dallas Graduate and EIF Advisor
at Pinkston High School

“Education is a tool that no one can take from you.”

—ALEXANDRIA COX

CEO of Poka Speaks
North Dallas HS and
East Texas A&M University Graduate



“Coming full circle—from student to advisor—feels like I am fulfilling a legacy. As a first gen student, EIF helped me during my high school years and ensured that I had a path to follow. Like me, many students EIF advises are first-generation and don’t have a blueprint to follow at home. They will become the stepping stones and trendsetters, and that can be scary.”

—LEONARDO GUTIERREZ

UNT Dallas Graduate and EIF Lead Advisor
at Wilmer-Hutchins High School



“Growing up, I didn’t have a lot of family support or guidance on figuring out life after high school. My EIF Advisor, who is still my mentor today, created a safe space for me during school hours. Not until I applied for an EIF Scholarship and my advisor said that he thought I’d be a good fit for college did I see a path for myself. That scholarship changed my life.”



—PRENTICE RICHMOND

Senior Sergeant at the Dallas County Sheriff’s Office
Lincoln High School Alumnus and East Texas A&M
University Returning Student



“When Brandon Walker was my advisor at W.W. Samuell ECHS from 2017 to 2019, I knew I had someone approachable, understanding, and committed to helping me reach my college goals. Now, I work hard to be that same person for my students, offering them the authentic support that once guided me.”

—ALAIRA SPELLMON

Texas A&M University and
EIF Advisor at Vanguard High School

“EIF had a significant impact on my high school experience, especially when it came to preparing for college applications and programs. Before EIF, I didn’t really know where to start or how to navigate the college process as a first-generation, low-income student. They guided me every step of the way, from writing essays to submitting applications, and helped me believe that attending a prestigious college was possible. Thanks to their constant support and resources, I was able to apply to schools I never thought I could reach.”

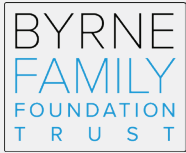


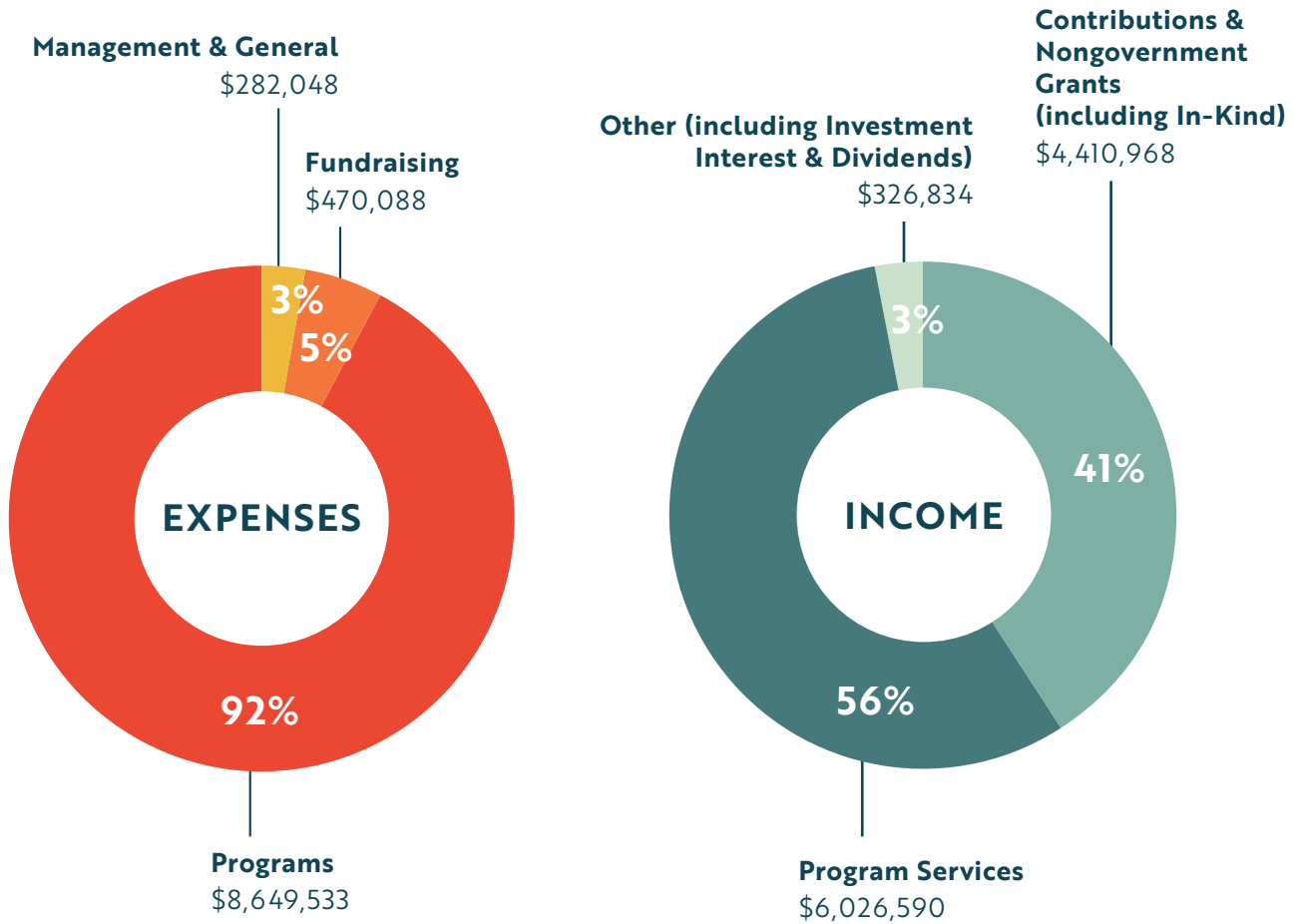
—SALVADOR C.

Gilliam HS Graduate and Oberlin College Student

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Education is Freedom's mission to transform lives through education would not be possible without our dedicated supporters:





“Collaboration is the key to success. EIF’s partnership is the bridge our students need to a bright future. Their white glove service addresses the uniqueness of each student and sets them up for success—a true difference maker.”

—DR. RICARDO LÓPEZ
Superintendent, Garland ISD





Our Future is Bright

Education is Freedom’s geographic reach—and our opportunities for impact—continue to grow. In the fall of 2025, four additional districts joined the EIF network: **Cedar Hill, Duncanville, Lancaster,** and most recently, **Carrollton-Farmers Branch**. With these new partnerships, EIF advisors will now provide personalized college and career advising to **more than 41,000 high school students in Dallas County**, a milestone that reflects our commitment to scaling access and economic mobility.

Our vision is focused on a future where all young people have the resources, knowledge, and skills to find, obtain, and thrive in careers that pay family-sustaining wages. Toward that vision, we are **enhancing our middle school career exploration program, expanding into workforce development**



initiatives, and extending supports to students in college and beyond. These investments ensure that every student we serve receives the guidance needed to achieve postsecondary success.

As EIF moves strategically forward, we seek philanthropic and community partners to join us in our mission. Together, we can create pathways to economic mobility for thousands of students each year.

If you or your organization would like to partner with us, please contact us at 214-432-8550. Your investment today helps shape the Dallas County of tomorrow.

EDUCATION IS FREEDOM TEAM

EIF Team

DR. SUSANNA RUSSELL

Chief Executive Officer and President

CHRIS SMITH

Chief Operations Officer

CORINNE FIAGOME

Senior Development Director

DR. BRANDON MAXIE

Managing Director of Programs

RAY MERRILL

Managing Director of Programs

CHRISTY KIESLING

Managing Director of Talent Acquisition and Development

SUSAN WANSERSKI

Executive Assistant to the CEO

DIAMOND EDWARDS

Director of Training

JACKSON FELTY

Director of IT and Data Management

BRANDON WALKER

Director of Community Outreach

DEVON LOCKARD

Data Manager

RACHEL ACEVEDO

Family Engagement Specialist

CELSA DE JESÚS

Training Specialist

REAGAN LUSK

Marketing Specialist

BRIYANNA FALKNER

Office Assistant

Advisor Managers**ALEXIS CLARK**

ESME GARCIA

RODDRICK JONES

MARK MITCHELL

NABIL NASER

DEBBIE RICHMAN

MILTON SANDIFER

LI'KAYLA TURNER

Lead Advisors

CASSANDRA ASARE-SACKEY

HAILEE BARTLETT

E'LEXIYA BOLES

JENNIFER CABRERA

STEPHENY CABRERA

LEONARDO GUTIERREZ

DANIELA HERNANDEZ

AUSTIN HIGH

DEVAUGHNTA JOHNSON

TERRANCE KELLEY

ETHOIA LEWIS

MILLENIA LOPEZ

DALON MITCHELL

BOBBY MORNES

ASHLEY NEAL

BIANCA SALAZAR

RASHAUD STIGGERS

KAM TAYLOR

DAVID VEGA

SAMUEL YOUNG

Career Liaisons

JOSHUA DE HOYOS

JEFFERY MCKELLER

ADVISORS

VALERIA ADAN-ABAD

TAKIYA ALEXANDER

MARISOL ANASTACIO

MARISSA ANCHIA

PAUL ARCE

LIZETTE AVILA

EMILY BACHTELER

ERIN BALBUENA

KARA BANBURY

CITLALY BARRERA

RESHITA BECKHAM

SHAUNTESA BRAND

DIANA BRIONES

REBECCA BURNS

ALEXIA BUTCHER

KYMVELY CALDERON

VICTORIA CEBALLOS

DOMINIQUE COLBERT

AKIRA COOK

ANTHONY DARLINGTON

RAFAEL DE LEON

MYA DORSEY

IDRIS FAHMI

BROOKLYN FAIRLEY

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ABEL GUTIERREZ

ERICA HALL

KAYA HAMILTON

AMAARA HARRIS-MITCHELL

ASIA HENRY

MARGARITA HERNANDEZ

CORBIN HINES

LUCY HOLGUIN

ATARAH HOOTEN

EVELYN HUIZAR

THA IANG

SAVANAH JACKSON

CYNTHIA JAIMES

CARLY JENKINS

IAN JOHNSON

MADISON JOHNSON

YAEGY KIM

AMY LARRY

ITZEL LOPEZ

SHANNON LOUGH

MYIA LYNN

DENNIS MACIAS

MERIAN MANCHEV

GISSELLE MARTINEZ

TRISTAN MARTINEZ

YAMINAH MARTINEZ

JESSENYA MEZA

FRANCISCO MINNE

SERMARC MITCHELL

BRENDA MONTALVO

FIONAH MUKASA

JEFFREY NICKERSON

EMMA O'CONNELL

FERNANDA PALOMO

BRITTANY PERRY

LUPITA RANGEL

SHAYLA ROBINSON

LORI'L SANDERS

EMILY SANTOS GONZALEZ

VERNESHA SIMMONS

GARRINECIA SINGLETON

ERIKA SOLTERO SOLANO

ALAIRA SPELLMON

KAYMEISHA TARKINGTON

BROC TAYLOR

RAQUEL TOVAR

VICTORIA TRAYLOR

ALAIN URIBE

ALEXANDRA VELAZQUEZ

BREANNA WARD

DAVID WINSLETT

CARLTON "KC" WRIGHT

100% of EIF's Higher Education Advisors are certified by the National College Attainment Network. Staff and Board of Directors listings current as of December 31, 2025.

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Founding Director, Principal Impact Collaborative, UNT Dallas

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Managing Director, Sycamore Tree Capital Partners

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Former President, University of North Texas at Dallas

DREX OWUSU

Chief Learning Officer, Perot Museum, The Commit Partnership

NATALIE YOUNG WILLIAMS

President and CEO, Tarrant To & Through (T3) Partnership



INVESTORS

Thank You

Education is Freedom could not transform lives through education without the help of its generous individual, corporate, and foundation investors.

Your funds help students access critical resources for continuing their education beyond high school, whether that is career training, college, or the military.

Provided through EIF's Advisors, these resources allow students to earn a livable wage and enter into a sustaining career. Thank you for helping us create lasting impact!

LEA ANN ALLEN

BLACKROCK FOUNDATION

BLUE MERIDIAN PARTNERS

THE BOONE FAMILY FOUNDATION

BYRNE FAMILY FOUNDATION TRUST

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OPPORTUNITY 2040

SUSANNA RUSSELL

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UNITED WAY OF METROPOLITAN DALLAS

WRIGHT LAW

ANONYMOUS

In Memoriam

Each memorial gift represents a story of love, legacy, and community impact. This year, we are humbled to recognize those remembered through tribute giving:

HANAN ALI LACEY

ANGIOLINA MARGO RAMIREZ

MARGARET ANNE OSBORNE RUSSELL

ELAYNE WAX

We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this listing. If your name has been omitted or listed incorrectly, please accept our sincere apologies and contact Corinne Fiagome, Senior Development Director, at cfiagome@educationisfreedom.org so we may update our records.



**EMPOWER,
EDUCATE,
ELEVATE.**



EDUCATION
IS FREEDOM

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