The Philanthropic Initiative

Act boldly. Give wisely.

Scholarship and College Success Programs

Donor-Driven & Designed for Impact

“This program has impacted my life tremendously by providing me with financial and mental support throughout my four years in college, as well as the years that followed. I will never forget the burdens that were eased...and I hope to contribute in the future to students who were in the same position as I was.”

– TPI college success program alum

Impact starts with intention – and the right partner.

Since 1999, TPI has helped donors, families, foundations, and companies design scholarship and college success programs that reflect their values and deliver measurable impact in transforming lives and helping students thrive. Sparked by a donor who challenged TPI to create a program for extremely talented low-income students who were not making it through college, TPI designed and launched its first college success program more than 25 years ago. The success of this program has inspired the creation of many more such programs, customized to support the unique goals of each client.

Whether you envision a traditional scholarship or an innovative college success program, TPI can make it happen. Our comprehensive approach to program design goes beyond financial aid, leveraging philanthropy to offer students flexible resources, mentoring, academic support, peer networks, and enrichment opportunities. These tools empower students – many of whom are first-generation students or face significant financial and systemic barriers – to graduate and pursue their dreams.

87%

Graduation Rate

TPI's scholarship and college success programs consistently outperform national benchmarks.

Across all TPI-managed programs, students achieved an 87% graduation rate – higher than the average of 54% at both public and at private four-year institutions.[2]

TPI helps donors create programs that change futures.

Education philanthropy is multi-faceted, and funders have the unique opportunity to make a direct, lasting difference in enabling individuals to achieve their life goals. Reducing financial burdens can change everything, enabling students to attend the college of their choice, pursue their passions without limits, and balance pressures of work and school.

In the U.S., 42.8 million borrowers have federal student loan debt, and 42% of students who borrow money to attend school are still paying off loans 20 years later[3]. For students who took out loans to obtain a bachelor's degree, the average amount borrowed in the U.S. exceeded $35,000 in 2025.[4] Students enrolled in TPI-managed and college success programs had an average of $13,000 in loan debt – about one-third lower than the national average.

Our programs don't just open doors; they expand access and equity. According to program data, first-generation college students made up 66% of TPI scholarship and college programs in 2025 – which is higher than the national average of all first-generation undergrads in the US.[5]

For many students, financial aid alone is not enough. Recognizing that students may face any number of serious challenges that can stand in their way, TPI college success programs are carefully designed to combine financial support with mentoring, peer support, and other critical components.

36%
With No Loan Debt

36% of TPI alumni report graduating with zero loan debt. For alumni who do have loan debt, the average is around $13,000 — dramatically lower than the national average of $39,547 per borrower.[3]

"This program allowed me to attend a private college I otherwise would not have been able to attend. I had a mentor as a resource through college and a group of people who believed in me, held me accountable, and helped me strive toward becoming my best self who now mentors the next generation as a teacher, coach, and program advisor."

– TPI scholarship and college success program alum, currently a middle school math teacher

You bring the vision. We bring the expertise.

Every funder's mission is different, and so are the programs we build together. Perhaps you want to pay homage to the town or city you were raised in, or open doors for first-generation students or students from lower income families. All scholarship and college success programs incubated at TPI are unique, but with one commonality: they are designed to meet the funder's goals.

When working with funders to design a new scholarship and college success program, we help clients consider several strategic questions:

1. Who do you want to target?

Define the target population, such as first-generation college students, low-income students, or students interested in a desired professional field, and assess if a program could meaningfully address barriers faced by these students.

2. What types of support will make a meaningful difference for these students?

Consider whether funding tuition alone is enough, or whether wraparound services such as mentorship, academic support, or career coaching are needed to support student success.

3. What will success look like?

Consider what type of impact you most want to achieve – helping students persist and thrive during college and beyond, enabling students to pursue post-graduate opportunities, helping students have a manageable loan burden, or a combination of challenges. Together, we can design a program to support your goals, along with an evaluation plan to assess impact over time.

4. Is this pursuit a sustainable and scalable investment?

TPI can help you think about the long-term viability of the program and how to plan it strategically. Is there a path for scaling successful components to reach more students? What kind of program lifespan can you support?

TPI Program Examples

TPI's strategic, hands-on approach, combines financial assistance with wrap-around supports. For funders, this means a measurable, life-changing impact on students' educational journeys.

Janey Scholars

Janey Scholars is a **place and need-based social support-centered college success program** that is designed to give students in Boston the unique opportunity to build a foundation for success in life. It supports students who are attending highly competitive colleges and have outstanding academic records. The program was created because, despite receiving strong financial aid, many students were not making it through college due to other stressful circumstances. The program provides flexible and individualized financial and social supports that help students excel academically, explore extracurricular activities, dream of and plan for meaningful careers, and develop the skills to secure long-term financial independence and other personal goals.

Ann Theodore Foundation Scholarship Program

As a **place-based and need-based scholarship** and college success program, the Ann Theodore Foundation Scholarship Program supports students from Roosevelt and North Babylon, New York and Manchester, New Hampshire who have substantial unmet needs. Students receive last-dollar scholarship support for up to four years, as well as a laptop, mentoring, and funding for enrichment opportunities. The program is dedicated to making college affordable for low-income students from diverse backgrounds, helping them reach their full potential.

Mary Cafolla Wallace Nursing Scholarship Program

The Mary Cafolla Wallace Nursing Scholarship Program exemplifies a **profession-specific scholarship** program designed to strengthen the nursing workforce. The program supports adults pursuing a second career in nursing through associate or bachelor's degrees. Honoring Mary Cafolla Wallace – a first-generation American, registered nurse, and lifelong patient advocate – the scholarship reflects her belief that people can reinvent themselves with the right support.

How to Get Started

When you work with TPI to establish and manage a scholarship and college success program, the process is guided by your vision, first and foremost. The process typically includes the following steps:

- Define program goals, parameters, student eligibility, selection criteria, budget, evaluation plan, and other aspects of program design.
- Organize outreach to prospective applicants and facilitate application review processes.
- Determine right-sized scholarships that benefit selected students and do not displace other financial aid students have received.
- Communicate with applicants, scholarship recipients, and program participants.
- Support program alumni who go on to thrive in diverse career fields.
- Manage wrap-around supports like mentoring or advising, flex funds, event planning, and networking.
- Develop annual reports, share student updates and outcomes, and track and assess impact over time.

If you are a funder interested in establishing a scholarship or college success program at TPI, email us at info@tpi.org to arrange an exploratory conversation.

“This program helped me feel less alone as a student from a low socioeconomic background. I felt supported in getting a head start in my professional education through funding and mentorship, which allowed me to not always feel at a disadvantage. This provided me with hope and comfort.”

–TPI scholarship and college success program alum, currently a psychiatric nurse

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About The Philanthropic Initiative

The Philanthropic Initiative (TPI) is a nonprofit philanthropic consulting group whose mission is to help foundations, companies, families, and individual donors increase the impact of their giving. We serve as consultants and thought partners to ambitious donors and foundations that embrace innovative thinking in their efforts to catalyze long-term impact. Since 1989, TPI has worked directly with hundreds of donors, foundations, and corporations, and has directed more than $1 billion in giving and influenced billions more. We work to promote effective giving and improve the practice of philanthropy around the globe. Since 2012, TPI has operated as a distinct operating unit of the Boston Foundation. Our reach continues to be national and global. Together, we leverage our resources and capabilities to meet the needs of all types of funders in creating meaningful social change.

RESOURCES

[1] According to all TPI scholarship and college success program data collected from 2024-2025, with comparative benchmarks.

[2] Hanson, Melanie. "College Graduation Statistics" EducationData.org, 2025-10-22, https://educationdata.org/number-of-college-graduates

[3] Hanson, Melanie. "Student Loan Debt Statistics" EducationData.org, 2025-08-08, https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-statistics

[4] Hanson, Melanie. "Average Student Loan Debt for a Bachelor's Degree" EducationData.org, 2025-11-24, https://educationdata.org/average-debt-for-a-bachelors-degree

[5] Our Insights." 2024. Firstgenforward.org. 2024. https://www.firstgenforward.org/our-insights

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