



Recognizing Their Potential, Realizing Their Dreams: DREAM's Class of 2023 Postsecondary Commitments

DREAM's Class of 2023—a cohort of 96 graduating seniors, 95% of whom are Black and/or Hispanic and 28% of whom have identified special needs—continues a tradition of pursuing diverse and ambitious postsecondary pathways that are rooted in student choice and agency.

- In 2023, **95% of DREAM Charter High School's graduating class applied to college and 100% of those who applied to college and professional pathways were accepted**, including the school's first-ever Ivy League acceptance (Dartmouth College).
- On average, the Class of 2023 received **8 college acceptances per student**—a mark of the school's commitment to student choice and identifying the best fit for each scholar's aspirations.
- DREAM seniors were awarded a total of more than **\$2 million in grants and scholarships** for their first year of college, highlighting their exceptional dedication and academic prowess.
- Two DREAM students were among ten in NYC to be awarded the prestigious **UNCF Gray Scholars scholarship**, valued at \$50,000 per year toward any HBCU. In addition, a third DREAM student was awarded the highly competitive **QuestBridge Match Scholarship** to attend Boston College on a full ride.
- Among the 95% of students who have committed to an approved postsecondary pathway, 90% have chosen to attend a **four-year college or university**, 6% have committed to **professional pathways**, and 4% have chosen **two-year colleges**.
- Of those who have elected to attend a four-year college or university, **34% are headed to private, out-of-state public, or HBCUs; 31% to CUNY** 4-year institutions including Hunter and Baruch; and **25% to SUNY** 4-year institutions including the high-ranking Binghamton and Stony Brook campuses.
- Among our college-bound graduates, **25 students have committed to Opportunity programs (HEOP & EOP)**, accounting for 27% of all committed students and further highlighting a dedication to personal and professional growth.
- **Students pursuing professional pathways** will earn credentials in fields as wide-ranging as automotives, flight school, pharmacy tech, phlebotomy, and medical assistant programs. To date, over 20 DREAM graduates have completed programs in civil service, the NYC Parks and Recreation Department, and St. Nick's Alliance, among others.

Close the Gap: Meeting 100% of Student Need

In DREAM's Class of 2023, 84% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. DREAM's Close the Gap grants provide critical funding for students whose first-choice college was unable to meet their full financial need, giving them the opportunity to choose a college based on best fit rather than solely on affordability. This year, DREAM offered **\$68,000—an average of \$8,500/year**—to cover the financial aid gap and allow **eight** graduating seniors to attend their first choice college. DREAM Close the Gap recipients are collectively attending schools with an average institutional graduation that is **6.5x the national average** for low-income students, and that **exceeds the national graduation rate** for all students.

Forging a Path to College Persistence

At DREAM, we know that finding best-fit college pathways for our students increases their chances of college persistence. With supportive academic environments, limited financial burdens, and campus communities where they can thrive, DREAM graduates have even greater chances to fulfill their visions of success. Below, learn how several graduating seniors have carved out their unique college paths with support from DREAM.



TYLER BENNETT was on a study abroad trip in Colombia when he learned he had become the first-ever DREAM Charter High School student accepted to an Ivy League school. But he knew pursuing his passions may mean a different path. A lifelong performer, Tyler had also applied for a scholarship from the Garden of Dreams—a foundation that works to bring life-changing opportunities to young people—and was awarded \$60,000, an amount that put his dream of studying drama at **NYU's Tisch School of the Arts** in reach. Faced with two amazing options and a difficult decision, he says the support of DCHS teachers and staff ultimately led him to Tisch. "DREAM has taught me that staying focused and determined will always lead you to bigger things," Tyler added. **"But being who you are in every space always matters."**



KIARRA WALTERS was looking for a college with high-level academic options and a lively and diverse community. After months of research with DREAM's Office of College Access and Postsecondary Success, **Emory University** in Atlanta topped her list. A highly selective school, Emory boasts just a 13% acceptance rate, so Kiarra worked with DREAM's Director of College, Briana Avery, to apply Early Decision—a strategy often employed by students in affluent and private high schools. "Ms. Avery wanted to make sure we all got the same equal amount of opportunities," Kiarra recalls. In the smaller Early Decision applicant pool, Kiarra's high grades and strong application stood out even more, meaning she finalized her college plans earlier than many of her classmates. "It was a weight off my shoulders," she says. **"If you know where you want to go, Early Decision is a great tool in your toolkit."**



ISHMAEL MANON found himself choosing between more than 10 college acceptances this year, but the deciding factor kept coming down to cost rather than the best fit for him and his future plans. Fortunately, one of Ishmael's college counselors advised him to apply for DREAM's Close the Gap initiative, which provides critical funding for students whose first-choice college did not meet their full financial need. Hoping to study business at **Binghamton University**—where the graduation rate for minority students is 15 percentage points higher than his next option—Ishmael was ultimately awarded \$6,000 a year by the Close the Gap committee, exactly what he needed to make his college dreams a reality. **"Money is the first thing people think about when they go to college," he says. "Close the Gap will help get you there."**



ALICIA CALDWELL is considered the "go-to" student at DREAM Charter High School—a strong thought partner for school-wide initiatives and a leader within the building. Though attending a Historically Black College or University wasn't on her radar, DREAM's Director of College, Briana Avery, thought it would be a good fit, and encouraged her to apply for one of 10 UNCF Gray Scholarships worth \$50,000 a year toward the HBCU of her choice. When she learned she was accepted as a Gray Scholar, "I ran out of the cafeteria," Alicia recalls. "Ms. Avery was waiting for me. It was a sweet moment." Now headed to **Clark Atlanta University**, Alicia is excited to become part of her new school's campus community. "There are a lot of schools with kids who don't look like me," she says. **"Going to an HBCU means leaving a legacy at a school that's made for you, not against you."**



CLASS OF 2023

POSTSECONDARY COMMITMENTS

CUNY Baruch College - 2
CUNY Brooklyn - 1
CUNY City College - 6
CUNY City Tech - 7
CUNY Guttman CC - 4
CUNY Hunter - 4
CUNY John Jay - 3
CUNY Lehman - 4
CUNY York - 1
Alfred University - 1*
Boston College - 1
Clark Atlanta University - 1
Colgate University - 1
College of Mount Saint Vincent - 1*
College of the Holy Cross - 1
Emory University - 1
Franklin & Marshall College - 1
Hamilton College - 1*
Haverford College - 3
Ithaca College - 1*
Lincoln University - 3
Marymount Manhattan College - 1*
Mercy College - 1
Middlebury College - 1
Montclair State University - 1
Morgan State University - 1
Muhlenberg College - 1
NYU - 1
RIT - 1
St. Bonaventure - 3*
SUNY Albany - 3
SUNY Binghamton - 3*
SUNY Buffalo State - 3*
SUNY University at Buffalo - 2
SUNY Cortland - 2*
SUNY Geneseo - 2*
SUNY New Paltz - 5*
SUNY Oswego - 1
SUNY Potsdam - 1*
SUNY Purchase - 1
Syracuse University - 1
University of Connecticut - 1
UNC at Pembroke - 1
University of Rochester - 1*
The Knowledge House -
Innovation Fellowship- 1
Blumvox Studios: Voice Acting - 1
Bank of America /
St. Nick's Alliance Internship - 3

*Indicates at least one student accepted to Opportunity Program