



# 2020-2021 Annual Report







“Reality Changers shows you that school could change your life, even if you don’t think it might.”

# ALVARO

REALITY CHANGERS CLASS OF 2023

Alvaro joined Reality Changers in 2019 and is currently a junior at The Preuss School. He enjoys science and math and is interested in attending UC San Diego or the California Institute of Technology.

## DEAR FRIENDS:

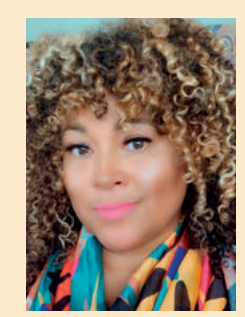
This past year, we celebrated our 20th Anniversary! Reality Changers started in 2001 with just four students. Today, we have more than 3,000 graduates who live, work, and study all over the world.

Since 2001, we have not only expanded to serve more first-generation students but also adapted our programming to better meet their needs. For example, we created the Alumni Network to serve youth after high school, we established new partnerships to diversify our offerings, and we added professional development and career-readiness curricula to our programs.

We know that delivering high-quality, change-making programs requires flexibility, collaboration, and a can-do attitude; especially during an ongoing global pandemic.

Together, with the support of our community and the absolute determination of our students, volunteers, and staff, we were able to implement online programming for an entire school year. Last year, our youth toured colleges, worked with tutors, gave speeches, attended alumni reunions, and more—all virtually. While we know that distance learning is less than ideal, we are proud to have kept our virtual doors open and graduated 137 students during this time.

Thank you for being a member of the Reality Changers community. We’ve grown so much in the past twenty years and we can’t wait to see what happens in the next twenty!



Sincerely,

Tamara Y. Craver  
President & CEO

### OUR BOARD

**Board Chair:**  
Lisa Davidson

**Vice Chair:**  
Steve Ortiz

**Treasurer:**  
Nicole DeBerg

**Secretary:**  
Dr. Jasmine D. Darnell

Kimberley Phillips Boehm

Pamela Gabriel

Channing Hamlet

James McElroy

Nick Moran

Aditi Salvi

Alexis Urias  
*Reality Changers Class of 2014*

Veronica Villaseñor

Christopher Yanov

Parker Zangoei

**Honorary Board Chair:**  
Vicente Fox

**Honorary Board Chair:**  
Marta Sahagún de Fox





# ABOUT US

## OUR MISSION

Reality Changers prepares youth to become first-generation college graduates and agents of change in their communities.

## WHO WE SERVE

Reality Changers serves young people who will be the first in their families to graduate from college. Our diverse students are members of communities that are typically underrepresented on college campuses.

## OUR WHY

At Reality Changers, we know that a college degree doesn't only expand career opportunities for individuals, but also builds equity for families and communities. Program graduates become agents of change by joining the workforce, starting businesses, engaging in advocacy, and giving back.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

We believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion are connected to our mission and critical to the well-being of our staff and our community.

For this reason, Reality Changers champions and walks alongside first-generation college students as we work together to overcome systemic barriers rooted in racism and oppression. We are accountable to the diverse communities that we serve--especially those that include people of color--and actively affirm the dignity of all individuals.

“Even though College Apps Academy was virtual because of the pandemic, I got a lot out of it. My instructor was good at communicating and she was always there. I enjoyed the interactive activities.”

# ALEXIS

REALITY CHANGERS CLASS OF 2021

Alexis joined Reality Changers in 2020, during the fall of her senior year at Morse High School. She is currently a freshman at the University of California Los Angeles, where she plans to study biology and child psychology.



# OUR PROGRAMS



## COLLEGE TOWN AND COLLEGE APPS ACADEMY

Programs for 8th-12th graders are based on a Self-Awareness, Resourcefulness, and Resilience methodology that is designed to help students develop academic and socio-cultural skills for success.

### ACTIVITIES:

- College readiness programming
- Tutoring
- Leadership development
- Public speaking
- Community service opportunities
- Job shadowing
- Step-by-step application guidance for colleges, scholarships, and financial aid

## THE ALUMNI NETWORK

The Alumni Network helps Reality Changers program graduates meet their academic, personal, and professional goals.

### ACTIVITIES:

- Academic and career advising
- Success coaching
- Transfer and graduate school application support
- Financial aid advising
- Professional development opportunities
- 1:1 mentorship
- Networking
- Reunions

## PARENT AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

Reality Changers engages parents and families by sharing information and resources, seeking input on organization procedures, and facilitating involvement opportunities.

### ACTIVITIES:

- Monthly meetings
- Volunteer opportunities
- Family Advisory Council
- Connecting families to community resources, especially COVID-19 information





# LEARNING DURING A PANDEMIC

## ONLINE LEARNING

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Reality Changers programs remained mostly virtual for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Virtual programming was designed to be engaging, relevant, and gracious. Staff worked hard to stay abreast of industry best practices and education theory, while centering the needs and experiences of our youth. Weekly programs were broken into bite-sized, gamified lessons that focused on our key learning topics: college knowledge, academic readiness, and leadership development.

Together with our volunteers, we were able to facilitate 1-on-1 virtual tutoring sessions on a weekly basis, with additional support available as needed.

## MEETING NEEDS

In addition to health concerns, the COVID-19 pandemic created new problems and exacerbated existing stressors for students and families.

Since March of 2020, Reality Changers has worked hard to help connect students and families with community resources like food pantries, mental health services, COVID testing and vaccination clinics, free school supplies, and more.

# PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS



Reality Changers is proud to work together with students, families, volunteers, donors, organizations, and businesses to create change for youth and their communities.

## CODING THE FUTURE

Together with San Diego Squared, Robolink, Softstack Factory, and The San Diego Foundation, Reality Changers provided more than 500 hours of computer coding training to students, including hands-on experience with AI and drones.

## CONNECTING TO MORE THAN WIFI

When some of our students expressed challenges accessing wifi and computers for at-home distance learning, David's Harp Foundation stepped in. Students were able to connect to classes from their large, social-distancing-compatible office. After school, participants had the opportunity to try out music creation and production with industry professionals.

## LEVELING UP

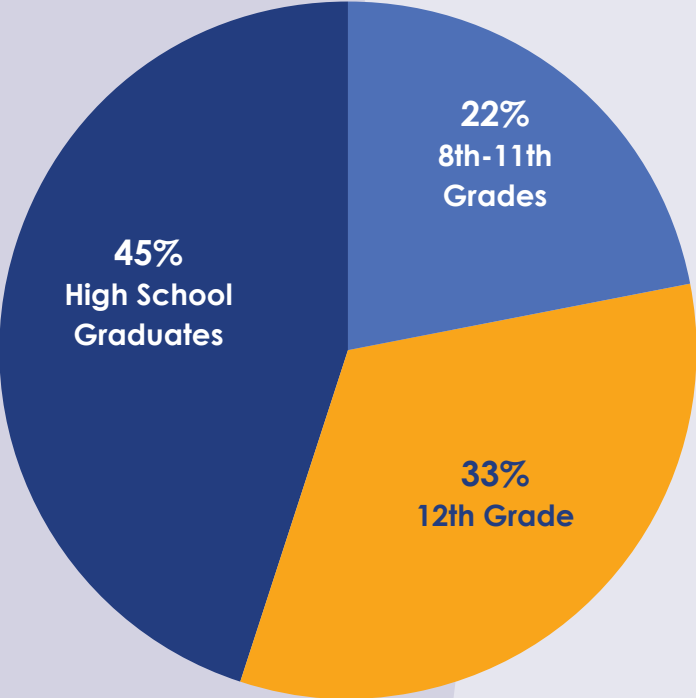
In the summer of 2021, we partnered with San Diego Unified School District and The San Diego Foundation to offer in-person programming and help mitigate the effects of COVID-related learning loss for more than 100 students.



# HIGHLIGHTS: JULY 2020–JUNE 2021

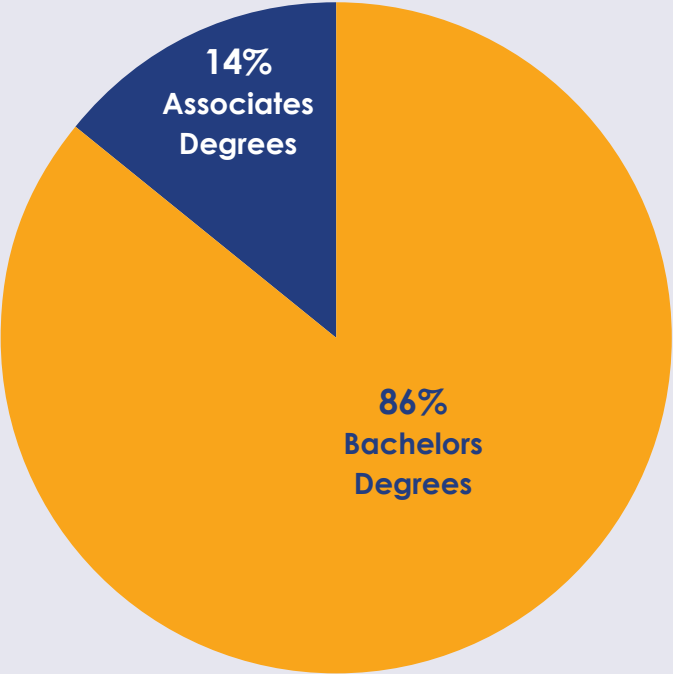


**TOTAL YOUTH SERVED = 423**



**138 TOTAL VOLUNTEERS DONATED  
1,700+ VOLUNTEER HOURS**

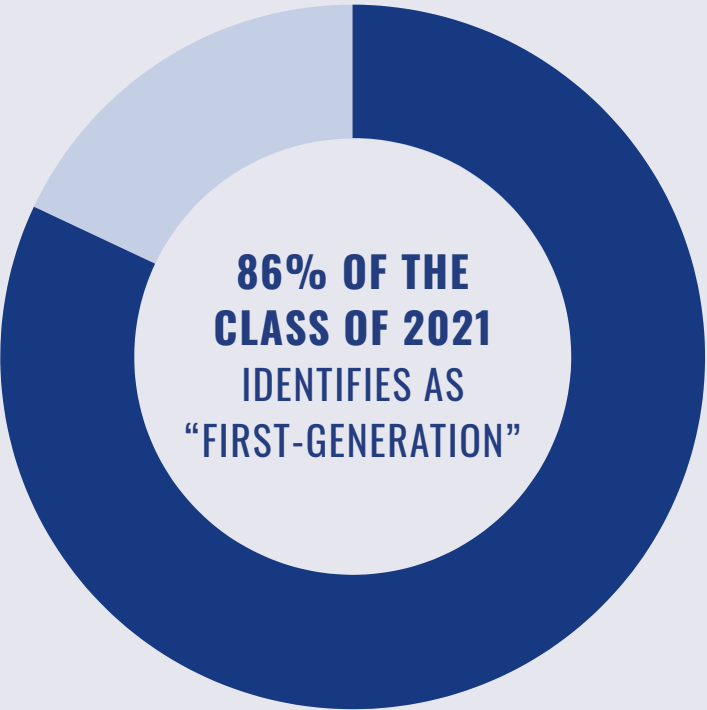
**TOTAL POST-SECONDARY  
DEGREES EARNED = 153**



**HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS RECIEVED  
685 COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE LETTERS.**



**ON AVERAGE, STUDENTS EARNED  
\$21,862 IN GIFT AID  
FOR EACH YEAR OF COLLEGE.**



**REALITY CHANGERS  
MOVED TO A NEW OFFICE  
ON THE WILSON MIDDLE  
SCHOOL CAMPUS.**





“Reality Changers has definitely been the backbone in my life. In high school, college, and, even now, whenever I have questions about anything, or I just need to talk to someone, I know that Reality Changers is always going to be there.”

# KARINA

REALITY CHANGERS CLASS OF 2017

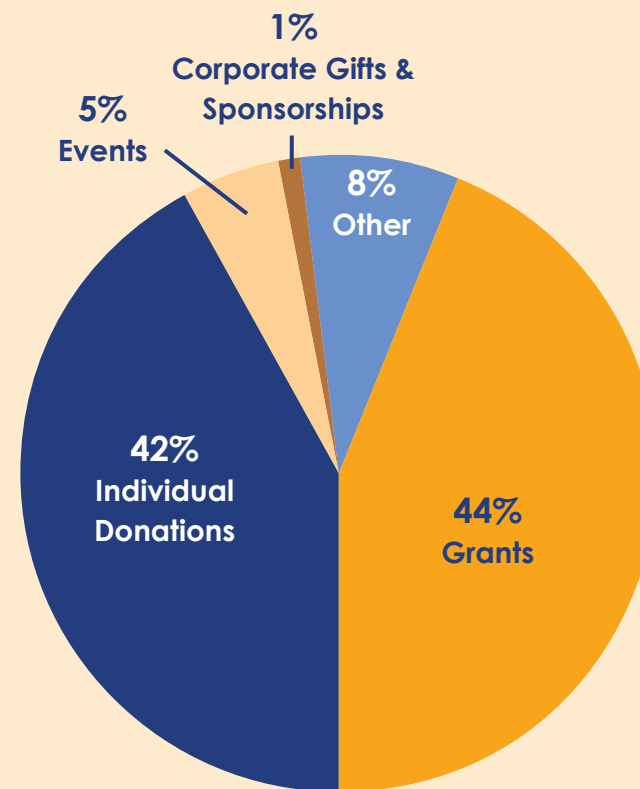
Karina recently graduated from the University of California Berkeley with a double major in Legal Studies and Psychology and a double minor in Portuguese and Ethnic Studies.



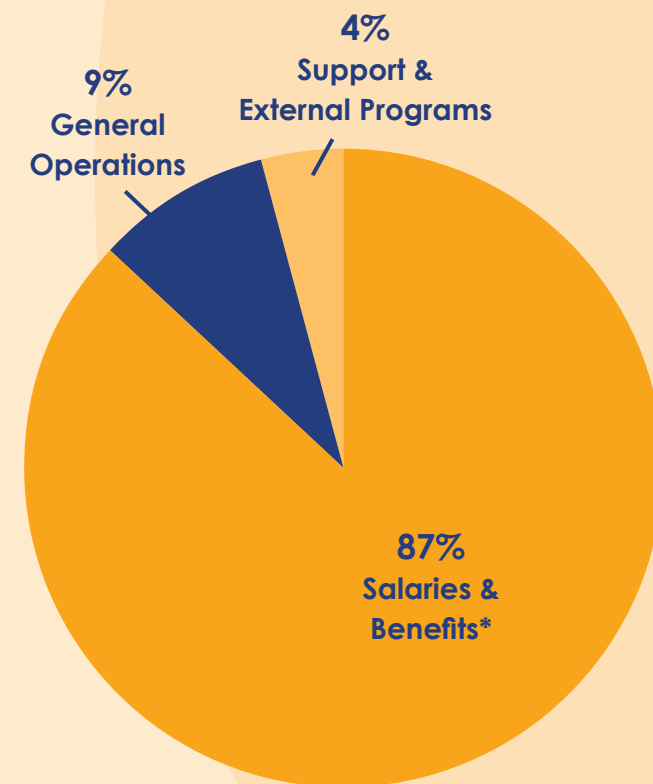
## 2021 FISCAL YEAR FINANCIALS



**TOTAL REVENUE = \$1,996,407.06**



**TOTAL EXPENSES = \$1,765,155.86**



\*Reality Changers is a direct-service organization. This means that all services are delivered, free of charge, to program participants by trained staff.

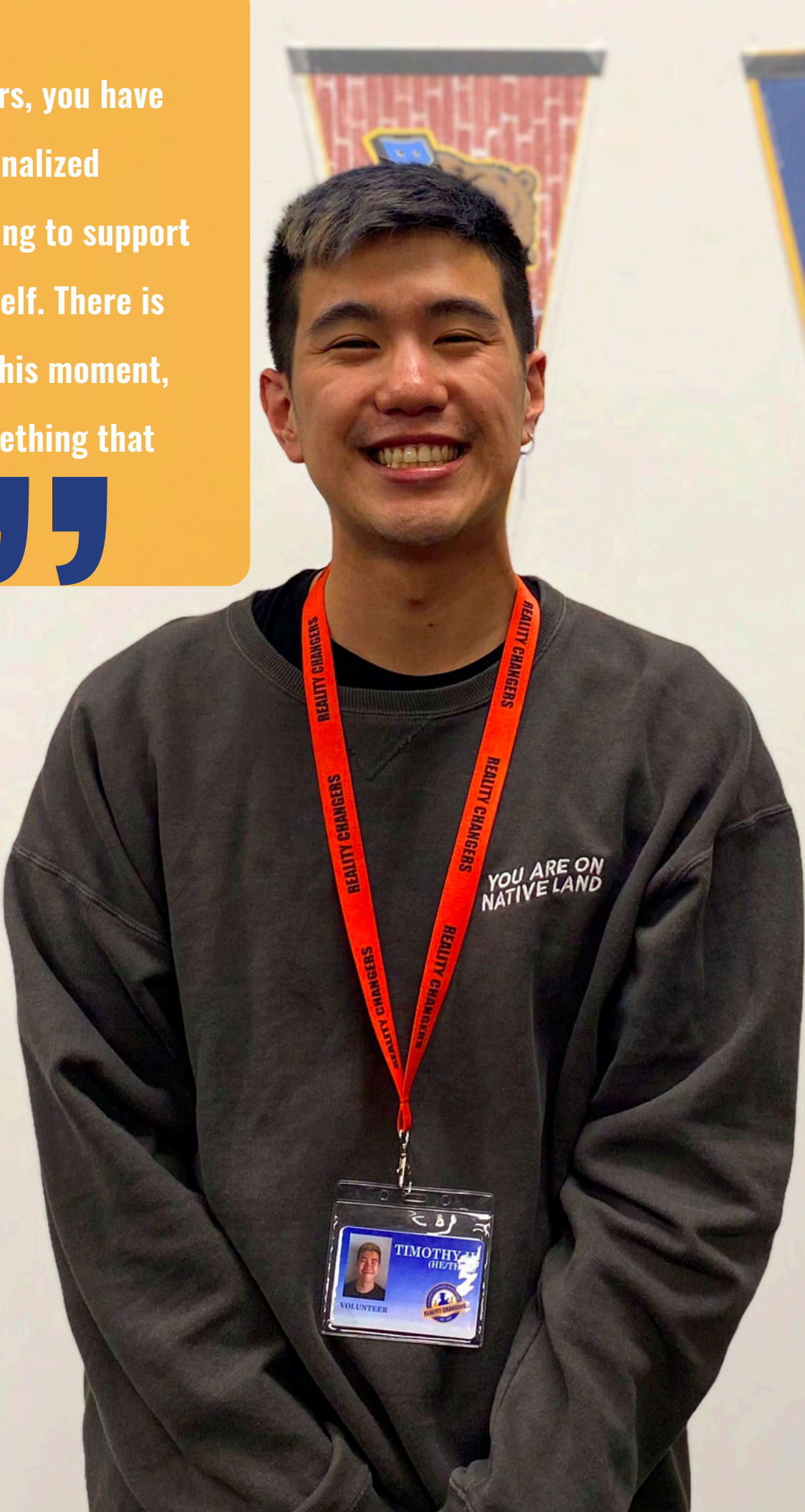


“At Reality Changers, you have members of marginalized communities coming to support the community itself. There is power in that. In this moment, community is something that we all really need.”

# TIM

REALITY CHANGERS  
VOLUNTEER

Tim is a full-time 6th-grade teacher. He volunteers on a weekly basis as a tutor and room advisor.



# GET INVOLVED

## VOLUNTEER

You can be the tutor, mentor, or cheerleader that makes a difference in a young person's life!

## DONATE

Make a donation to help youth achieve their dreams.  
Visit: [realitychangers.org/donate](https://realitychangers.org/donate)

## JOIN THE LEGACY CIRCLE

Plant seeds for future generations. Consider adding Reality Changers to your estate plan or making a bequest.

**Contact:**

Dawn Wensel at 619-516-2220 or Dawn@RealityChangers.org





I'd like to thank the donors who give to Reality Changers. When I was a student in the program, I saw that people like me can become college graduates. Today, with your support, I can be that role model for others. Thank you!

# MICHAEL

REALITY CHANGERS CLASS OF 2017

COLLEGE TOWN ACHIEVEMENT COACH



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