2023 Impact 100 Richmond Grant Finalist

Program: Pathways to Science

Organization: Randolph-Macon College

Pathways to Science at Randolph-Macon College engages with high school Latinas in Central VA to promote high school graduation, college attendance, and entry into STEM fields. They do this through a summer residency series, scholarships, and peer-to-peer mentorship. This innovative, one-of-a-kind program was established at Randolph-Macon in 2017 by a group of female faculty passionate about equity in education. The need is undeniable. Not only does the data show that Latinx high school students experience the highest dropout rates of any group, but Latinas suffer from lower rates of college attendance and lower rates of participation in STEM careers than their male counterparts. In just 7 years, demand has far exceeded capacity with *Pathways to Science* receiving 5x more applicants than they can accept. Preference is given to students who are new arrivals to the US, at risk of dropping out, or living in poverty. Once accepted, participants attend a 6-day, 5-night residential program held on Randolph-Macon's campus each summer after their freshman, sophomore, and junior year of high school. The residency includes college-prep workshops, team building experiences, guest speakers, exploration of STEM disciplines with faculty, and off-campus STEM field trips. Each participant is also matched with a Randolph-Macon student (usually a Latina STEM major) who serves as their mentor throughout the school year. To help with the financial burden of higher education, participants receive a scholarship to attend the college of her choice, which covers most of the cost of an associates degree. To date *Pathways to Science* has served 92 Latinas. Not a single participant has dropped out of high school, compared to around a 15% drop-out rate for this population. Furthermore, more than 90% of participants have gone on to attend post-high school education. A $100,000 grant from Impact 100 would allow *Pathways to Science to admit their next cohort of high school freshmen and for the opportunity to participate in this transformational 3-year program.*