

**A Proposal to:**

**Framingham State University  
Nonprofit Giving Course**



**Bottom Line**

**Get in • Graduate • Go far**

Success depends on you

***Worcester Success Program Support***

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## *Organizational Information*

### **Organizational History**

Bottom Line was founded in 1997 to help low-income and first-generation students get into college, graduate from college, and go far in life. Today, Bottom Line still puts these goals at the forefront of everything we do. Once a small organization serving 25 high school seniors in Boston, Bottom Line has grown into a multi-state support network for over 7,000 students. We provide one-on-one, in-person guidance from college applications until college graduation for each of our students. In addition to serving Boston, we have operated offices in Worcester, MA since 2008, Brooklyn, NY since 2011, and Chicago, IL since 2014.

### **Organizational Goals and Objectives**

In 2017-2018, Bottom Line – Massachusetts is continuing to provide our proven, high-impact counseling curriculum to about 3,370 high school and college students from Boston and Worcester, by helping about 430 high school students get into college, and supporting more than 2,940 Massachusetts college students on their path to a degree.

### **Description of Programs**

#### *Access Program*

Bottom Line supports high school students in navigating every step of the college application process. Working with a caseload of 50-60 students, Counselors build a strong relationship with each student during regularly scheduled one-hour meetings. While the specific services Bottom Line provides vary according to individual needs, counselors generally support students in five areas: generating a list of colleges suited to students' academic and financial situations; writing essays; completing applications; securing financial aid; and making a college choice.

#### *Success Program*

The Success program begins with mandatory transition programming during the summer before the first year in college. Students attend group events as well as individual problem-solving sessions with Counselors. The programming is designed to prepare students for the academic rigor and cultural shock of college. Once students arrive on campus, Bottom Line Counselors work with a caseload of 80 to 90 students. Using our codified curriculum and connecting with students on campus, counselors offer regular support in the four areas most likely to cause a student to drop out of college: **D**egree, **E**mployability, **A**id (financial), and **L**ife, or **DEAL**.

- *Degree*: we assist students toward graduation by helping select a suitable major, monitoring academic progress, developing study strategies, and connecting with on-campus resources.
- *Aid*: we assist students in renewing financial aid annually and also work with them year-round to resolve problems with tuition bills, determine how to pay balances, and encourage decisions that will allow them to avoid excessive debt.
- *Employability*: we assist students to secure internships and part-time jobs, create and update their resumes, and build a unique brand that will allow them to leave college ready to thrive in the workforce.
- *Life*: Counselors serve as role models and mentors to support students through life's challenges, such as illness, pregnancy, bereavement, academic probation, or transferring to another college.

This comprehensive support is provided for up to six years or until a student graduates.

### **Organizational Structure**

In 2017-2018, Bottom Line plans to employ approximately 59 full-time employees in Massachusetts. Our Boston and Worcester offices are supported by Bottom Line's National office, a National Board of Directors and our Massachusetts Regional Board and Worcester Advisory Board, which help guide organizational strategy and fundraising.

## Proposal Information

### Description of Need

#### Constituents

Bottom Line targets students who are college bound and eligible to attend two-year or four-year colleges but are likely to face barriers once they get there. The majority of Bottom Line students are low-income (as defined by family income at 200% of federal poverty guidelines) and first-generation-to-college (neither parent has a degree from a U.S. college).

*Worcester Demographics:* Of the Worcester high school Class of 2017 students we are serving, 40% are Black, 19% are Hispanic, 10% are Caucasian, 16% are Asian, 4% are Other, and 11% are multi-ethnic.

Below is additional demographic data on these students:

Site	# of HS Seniors	Average AGI	Average SAT (2 sections)	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation to Attend College	Low Income	Average GPA
Worcester	104	\$34,916	1010	94%	97%	3.51

*The Need for a College Degree:* Is a college degree still relevant today? Bottom Line and several national studies say yes, a degree is still in demand and still leads to accelerated success. In 2013, four-year college graduates made, on average, 98% more an hour than people without a degree.<sup>1</sup> Beyond increased income, research shows that those holding a college degree also experience increased life expectancy, better general health, and an improved quality of life for themselves and their families. Further, society benefits from each college degree attained through lower rates of incarceration, higher rates of volunteerism, and higher voter participation rates.<sup>2</sup>

#### *The Need in Worcester*

The poverty rate in Worcester (19.0%) is nearly double that of Massachusetts as a whole (10.7%). The median household income in Worcester (\$45,846) is about \$20,000 less than the Massachusetts average (\$65,981). Communities of color are especially hard hit economically. For instance, the unemployment rate of Latinos in Worcester (15.8%) is significantly higher than the average (7.4%).

Through one-on-one, in person meetings, Bottom Line counselors are able to assist students to address any problems encountered during college applications until graduation resulting in the most recent class of Bottom Line students having a 6-year graduation rate of 83%.

### Request with Goals and Activities

Bottom Line requests \$10,000 from the Framingham State University Non-Profit Giving Course to support our Worcester Success Program in the 2017-2018 program year. We are serving 418 college students from the Worcester community to ensure they persist on their path towards college graduation. This grant would go towards funding one of two counselors serving students at Framingham State University. For the current school year, we have set the following programmatic goals:

*Help Students Persist in College:* We are providing continued guidance to approximately 418 college students from Worcester attending one of 22 Massachusetts regional schools, including 12 students currently enrolled at Framingham State. All our Success students receive support on our DEAL model (Degree, Employability, Aid and Life) to help them persist through college to earn their degree. By providing one-on-one support, our counselors help ensure that at least 80% of all of our Success students graduate within six years.

<sup>1</sup> Economic Policy Institute, as quoted by David Leonhardt. "Is College Worth It? Clearly, New Data Say," New York Times, May 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, A. & Swail, W.S. "Is More Better?", Educational Policy Institute, May 2005

*Expand our College to Career pipeline:* Our team of Career counselors provide targeted vocational support to all Massachusetts college juniors and seniors. They work with students on the full DEAL model, with an added focus on Employability, as these students get closer to entering the workforce. Acknowledging that career support and training can take a much more prominent role in our work, we have created an Employer Relations Manager full-time position who focuses on matching our students with internships and employment opportunities. Bottom Line also holds a series of events each year that help connect students to local employers. Our goal is for 75% of students who graduate during the 2017-2018 school year to be meaningfully employed or enrolled in graduate school within six months of receiving their diplomas.

*Build A Talent Development Pipeline:* Bottom Line has increased our staff size significantly over the past five years as we have grown the number of students we have served. This not only includes adding counselors that serve our students, but adding more managers to supervise and support counselors, more director level positions to build out teams and departments, and more fundraising and operations staff to ensure we are able to sustain the organization. We are proud in the time we have grown, that we have hired a talented and diverse staff. However, in order to continue to build our capacity and create a true talent pipeline, we need to invest in professional development. This year we are piloting learning communities for managers and emerging leaders. These groups meet monthly on a variety of topics that help build our organizational capacity through a trained and engaged staff.

### **Future Plan for Sustaining This Effort**

Bottom Line relies on a diverse mixture of support from foundations, corporations, and individuals. We have grown at a rapid pace and have leveraged several large multi-year funders to do so. This has created some short-term stability but we need to invest more deeply in creating sustainable structures and funding streams.

We will continue to invest in and steward our foundation and corporate partners who have been leaders in supporting our growth, in our fundraising events such as our annual Worcester Dinner, and in our individual donors that support us through our annual fundraising efforts such as our direct mail appeal and online giving. To further our fundraising efforts in Worcester, we have hired a Worcester Site Director, Melanie Perreault-LeBoeuf and Framingham alumna, to oversee local fundraising effort including growing local individual support, expanding corporate partnerships, and working with our Massachusetts development team on local events and grant requests.

We believe a sustainable income stream from funders that are specifically supporting our Worcester office is critical to maintain the impact on our students from Worcester over time.

### **Collaborating Organizations**

Bottom Line and the Worcester College & Career Readiness Network collaborate on a written resource/website where students, parents, and community members can connect with access organizations, share best practices for college access support and build a timeline for getting guidance counselors and principals more heavily involved with local community organizations. Through this joint effort, college access organizations in Worcester will be able to accurately cross-refer students in the coming years and Bottom Line will be able to target our recruitment in the areas where we know there are fewer students enrolled in any program. In addition, especially through our career program, we have built partnerships with a variety of corporate partners in Worcester, including Hanover Insurance Group, Bowditch and Dewey, Saint-Gobain, and UMass Memorial.

### **Evaluation**

As an organization dedicated to helping students get into college and graduate, our students' acceptance to and graduation from college are our primary measures of success. However, we also track the interim progress of our college students so that we can determine obstacles students face, provide needed support, and calculate the effectiveness of our services.

*College Persistence:* Bottom Line uses our “DEAL” model, which organizes our services into 4 categories: **D**egree, **E**mployability, (**f**inancial) **A**id, and **L**ife. We have created separate DEAL rubrics tailored to a student’s year in school (first-year, sophomore/“middler,” junior, and senior) with corresponding milestones for each DEAL dimension. We continue to use this rubric throughout the year to measure each college student’s progress in our online database, and twice per year, we formally assess and update each student’s DEAL status.

*College Graduation:* Bottom Line tracks the status of our college students through campus visits, phone calls, and emails. We also use the National Student Clearinghouse to confirm our data. We aim for 80% of our college students to graduate in six years or less, a rate that mirrors the wealthiest, most-resourced students in the country. Our most recent cohort, high school class of 2011, graduated at a rate of 83%.

*Employment Rate:* Our targeted career counseling and events are tailored to build our students’ capabilities to launch their careers. Our goal is for 75% of graduating students to be employed or enrolled in graduate school six months after obtaining a diploma – more than 20% higher than the national average. We track this through conversations in-person and via phone and text. As we continue to build out our new Student Database, we will be better able to track and report on employability metrics.

*Long-term evaluation study:* Bottom Line’s Massachusetts and New York offices are participating in an external random control trial evaluation of our programming, conducted by Ben Castleman, Assistant Professor of Education and Public Policy at University of Virginia. This is one of the first highly rigorous evaluations conducted of college success programs in the country. We believe that it will make our services more efficient, attract support from major funders, and provide insights benefiting the education community as a whole. In this study, we will track how students perform in college with Bottom Line’s support versus those who do not receive our support.

## **Conclusion**

Bottom Line is making an impact on Worcester students as they pursue their dream of a college degree and a successful career path. With an investment from the Nonprofit Giving Course we can continue to provide our high-quality guidance to low-income students from Worcester. On behalf of the students, alumni, board and staff at Bottom Line we thank you in advance for your consideration.