

A Grant Proposal to:

**Framingham State University
Nonprofit Giving Course**



Bottom Line

Get in • Graduate • Go far

Success depends on you

Boston Growth Campaign

Grant Contact:
Mike Wasserman
Executive Director - MA
617.524.8833
mike@bottomline.org



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2014-2015

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I. About Bottom Line

Mission and History

In Boston and across the Commonwealth and the country, college is seen as the way out of the cycle of poverty for urban students. Young people are told that working hard and focusing on school will get them to college. Yet most low-income, first-generation students who make it to college end up leaving without a degree and are burdened by debt, compared with an 80% college completion rate for students from the top income quartile.

Bottom Line was founded in Boston in 1997 to address this inequity by helping low-income and first-generation students get into college, graduate from college, and go far in life. We achieve this mission by providing one-on-one guidance to students from college applications until college graduation. These services have achieved significant results: 98% of our high school seniors have been accepted to college and more than 78% of our college students have graduated in 6 years or less.

Once a small organization serving 25 high school seniors in Boston, Bottom Line has grown to support more than 2,600 high school and college students across Massachusetts. Bottom Line serves students from the City of Boston and surrounding communities and the City of Worcester. In addition to Bottom Line's growth in Massachusetts, the organization has also opened offices in New York and Chicago and is currently serving students from those communities as well.

The need for mentors, guidance, a network of consistent support, and access to resources is not unique to any age group or income level. For students who lack financial resources and who are the first in their family to attend college, though, those resources are not easily available. That is the role that Bottom Line plays, and the hard work and commitment of our students paired with the long-term support we provide has erased the college completion gap between the most and least resourced students in the country.

Goals and How We Are Achieving Them

Access Program: Our goal this year is to support 625 high school seniors from MA (500 students from Boston and surrounding communities and 125 students from Worcester). We aim to help students navigate the college application process and find a college that is a good fit personally, academically, and financially by providing one-on-one guidance and support.

Students begin working with Bottom Line in the summer before their senior year of high school, and we help them navigate every step of the college application process. At first meetings, students discuss their interests, aspirations, academic history, and family with a Bottom Line counselor. While the specific services Bottom Line provides vary according to individual needs, counselors typically help 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. Working with a caseload of approximately 55 students, counselors build a strong relationship with each student during regularly scheduled one-to-two hour meetings. In contrast to a drop-in model, this approach allows counselors to support students individually through any obstacles that arise during the application process.

While other college access programs typically end after the admissions applications and/or financial aid applications have been completed, we pay particular attention to the critical college decision-making process. When college acceptances and financial aid award letters arrive in the spring, Bottom Line helps

each student review options to select a college that best meets academic, financial, and personal needs. Through tracking data from former Bottom Line students and from colleges, we are able to identify which schools will be most affordable and a good fit. This decision is critical to success: attending an unaffordable college, for example, can leave a student much more vulnerable to dropping out with high debt.

Success Program: Our goal this year is to support just under 2,000 college students across Massachusetts who attend one of our 20 target colleges – schools that provide a quality, affordable education, but where graduation rates are especially low. We aim to guide students throughout their college experience by providing one-on-one mentoring and support in 4 areas, which we call our DEAL model: (D)egree, (E)mployability, (A)id, and (L)ife.

After our Access students make their college decisions at the end of their senior year of high school, we invite those who choose to attend one of our target colleges to join our Success Program. Typically, about two thirds of our Access students will end up joining our Success Program.

In addition to our Access students, we also partner with high schools, colleges, afterschool programs, and non-profit organizations throughout the community to connect with students who did not work with Bottom Line in high school, but who are still planning to attend one of our target colleges and would benefit from the network of support and guidance that we provide. We currently focus most of this recruiting on Boston's Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan neighborhoods. But next year, we hope to expand this network of support to students across Boston, and eventually we would like to bring this support across the Commonwealth.

Between our Access and Success programs, approximately 1 in 4 college-bound students from the city of Boston will receive support from Bottom Line. We're proud that we have been able to reach this scale, but we also know that we are forced to turn away students every year, so we plan to continue our growth.

The Success Program begins with mandatory team-building Transition programming during the summer before the first year in college. Students attend three group events as well as individual problem-solving sessions with counselors: a one hour Kick Off orientation meeting, a day of Training Camp, and an evening Send Off celebration. The programming includes question-and-answer sessions with upperclassmen, pep talks, and workshops on skills related to college success - all designed to prepare students for the academic rigor and cultural shock of college.

Once students arrive on campus, Bottom Line counselors continue to work one-on-one and in-person with a caseload of 80 to 90 students and serve as financial aid advocates, academic advisors, career counselors, and mentors. Using our codified curriculum and connecting with students on campus, counselors offer regular support in the four areas most tied to a student's success: **D**egree, **E**mployability, **(f**inancial) **A**id, and **L**ife, or **DEAL**.

Degree means assisting students to progress toward graduation by selecting a suitable major, monitoring academic progress, developing study strategies, and connecting with on-campus resources. 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. Bottom Line helps students improve their employability by assisting them 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. Lastly, Bottom Line counselors serve as role models and mentors to support students through life's challenges. The strong relationships counselors build with students enable them to offer support and guidance through unexpected obstacles, such as

illness, pregnancy, debt, bereavement, academic probation, or transferring to another college. This comprehensive support is provided for up to six years or until a student graduates.

Once students enter their junior year of college – when we assess whether they will graduate within two years – they are each assigned a career counselor who continues to use the DEAL model but with a heightened focus on a career curriculum designed to make sure they are prepared for the workforce upon graduation. Services include assessing career paths, writing resumes and cover letters, networking skills, securing internships and finding jobs.

Goals for Next Year: Looking ahead to 2015-2016, Bottom Line – Massachusetts will continue its growth trajectory and expand to serve over 3,000 high school and college students from Massachusetts. We will continue to support 625 high school seniors, but through expanding the number of target colleges where we support students and expanding our recruitment of students who did not work with us in our Access Program, we will grow our Success Program by nearly 20% to serve 2,382 students.

Metrics of Success

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 Acceptance: Regular communication with our students through phone calls, office visits, and email allow us to document college acceptances each spring. Our goal is always for 100% of our high school seniors to get accepted to college. Last year, all but one of Bottom Line’s high school students were accepted to college.

College Persistence: Using our “DEAL” model, we have created DEAL rubrics that measure a student’s key indicators of progress (we call them “milestones”) based on their year in school (first-year, sophomore/middler, junior, and senior). We continue to use this rubric throughout the year to find the areas where we can provide the most impactful support to each student. This system also allows us to measure how many of the students we support are on track to graduate. Below we have included a chart showing the graduation rates and on-or-off track status of students in our Success Program. We haven’t included HS Class of 2014 because they are still all on-track.

Program Results	High School Class							
	1998-2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
All Success Program participants	715	143	171	215	305	327	401	523
# who graduated from college (alumni)	530	126	144	164	147	1	0	0
# enrolled & on track to graduate in 6 years	0	0	0	25	109	298	369	503
# enrolled, but unlikely to graduate in 6 years	0	0	0	6	16	5	0	3
# not enrolled	0	0	0	20	33	23	32	17
# did not graduate in 6 years	153	19	27	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% graduated or remain on track	74%	87%	84%	88%	84%	91%	92%	96%

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. Currently, 78% of students who began working with Bottom Line in 2008 and before have graduated with a degree. Over the past several years, we have made strides in developing more sophisticated programs by codifying our rubric and curriculum, building our student database, and fostering stronger relationships between students and counselors. As a result, our two recent classes of students graduated at rates above our 80% mark, 87% and 84%, respectively. We expect that our current students will continue this exciting and impressive success rate.

Employment Rate: Our targeted career counseling and events are tailored to help build our students' capabilities to launch their careers. Our goal is for 75% of graduating students to have a career-relevant opportunity that leverages their college education within three months of obtaining a diploma. These opportunities can be full-time employment, fellowships or service years, graduate school, or part-time employment that requires a college degree. 74% of students who graduated from college in 2014 had career-relevant opportunities within 3 months – 20% higher than the national average. We continue to build out our career programming and our career partnerships with local corporations as a way to support even more students and increase our employment rates.

The Director's Level of Commitment to the Cause

I, Mike Wasserman, am the Executive Director of Bottom Line-Massachusetts. I have served this organization for 9 years and I am still inspired to come to work every day by the commitment and dedication of our Bottom Line students and the amazing team of college counselors who believe in and support our students. Our strength as an organization is that we are both committed to our students and committed to holding ourselves to a level of excellence that can set a standard for the non-profit industry. By rigorously evaluating our programs, using data to inform our curriculum, using results to hold our staff accountable, and following through on the promises we make to students, I believe that Bottom Line is the most effective college access and success program in the country. We have been recognized by the National College Access Network, the College Board, and the White House for our work. Every one of the staff at Bottom Line is committed to our work, and we appreciate you considering us for support at any level to further our mission.

Bottom Line Alumni Involvement

Bottom Line now has more than 1,000 college graduates who are alumni of our program. We stay engaged with our alums in a variety of ways. First, we have regular newsletters that highlight alums doing exciting work, highlights job opportunities for alums, and share updates on our program. We also hold networking events throughout the year so that our community of alumni remains strong. We ask our alums to support Bottom Line financially, and as more Bottom Line graduates build their careers, their financial support has increased. And finally, we look for alums to help our programs grow. Some Bottom Line alumni have done that by coming back to work at our organization as counselors. Others will connect their companies and employers with Bottom Line so that current students can connect with internships and job opportunities. Overall, our alumni network is strong and growing. Within 4 years, we will have 2,000 college graduates. And within 6 years, we will have 3,000 graduates. So, this is a group of young professionals that will continue to grow and hopefully will help Bottom Line continue to grow.

Other Sources of Funding

Bottom Line receives support from a wide variety of individual donors, private foundations, and corporate partners. We have worked hard to build these diverse sources of funding. We are specifically asking you to support our growth campaign in Boston. For that initiative, the three main funders have been the Lewis Family Foundation, the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation, and the Klarman Family Foundation.

How Bottom Line Has Addressed Challenges

As our organization has grown and developed, we have constantly faced challenges. We address challenges as they arise by soliciting regular feedback from students and staff, evaluating data on our program inputs and outcomes, and through regular strategic planning. Three years ago, we faced a challenge because the curricula for our Access and Success programs were getting so robust that it was hard for staff to be fully expert at both the college application process and the process of getting through college. At the time, our staff had a mixed caseload of high school and college students. Based on discussions, feedback sessions, and planning meetings, we decided to split our staff into either Access or Success counselors and have them specialize. And as a result, we changed our management structure, evaluation systems, and hiring practices.

More recently, when we started recruiting students directly into our Success Program in who had not worked with Bottom Line in high school, we were faced with the challenge of building a recruitment pipeline from scratch. In our first year (2013), we decided to focus our energy on high school and non-profit partners. We learned that many of these partners did not stay in contact with students at the end of senior year, so they were not able to connect students to Bottom Line. The following year (2014), we learned from this experience and invested much more of our time into relationships with colleges who could tell us which students had enrolled at their school, and we relied more on students to refer friends and family, and as a result, we finished recruitment one month sooner this year.

Confirmation That Bottom Line Has No Legal Troubles

We confirm that Bottom Line has no legal troubles and that we comply with all legal requirements related to organizational management and financial management.

II. Project Description

Amount Requested and Purpose

We request a \$10,000 investment to support Bottom Line's growth campaign, which is our initiative to expand our impact in Boston's Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan neighborhoods. We began this 5-year initiative in 2012. At the time, we were supporting 116 college freshmen from those three neighborhoods in Boston and a total of approximately 450 students across all college years. In the last 2 and a half years, we have expanded our program so that today we're support 302 college freshmen and a total of 947 college students from those neighborhoods. By 2020, we hope to be serving 1,700 students annually through our College Success Program. To begin this multi-year growth campaign, the Lewis Family Foundation made a pledge to match up to \$2.5 million over 5 years. To date, we have been able to raise just over \$2.25 million and we have \$240,000 left to raise. We would be honored if you chose to help us

support our effort to raise the final \$240,000. By doing so, the \$10,000 you commit to Bottom Line would be matched by the Lewis Family Foundation, leading to twice the impact.

How This Project Stands Out as Distinct

This project is focused on creating a significant impact in a specific section of Boston with the highest rates of crime and poverty and the lowest rates of educational attainment. For students growing up in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan, they see more students dropping out of high school than graduating from college. Our focus and our mission is to change that. We have been able to expand so that nearly half of all college-bound students from those three neighborhoods have Bottom Line's support. With this effort, we can significantly change the graduation rate in these neighborhoods, which not only impacts the students we support, but changes what it means to attend college for all of the younger students who live in those neighborhoods.

Future Directions of the Project

It is this focus on Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan that led us to create a pathway into our Success Program for students who did not work with Bottom Line in high school. We created that pathway so that more students would have access to our effective support network. Next year, to continue expanding our reach, we are creating a Bottom Line program that will support students going to community college, and we'll focus on creating pathways that help students make the transition from a 2-year to 4-year college. Nationally, only 15% of all students who begin attending community college earn a bachelor's degree and less than a quarter earn any degree at all. We believe we can change that and by doing so, we can reach an even greater percentage of the college-bound students from Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan.

Metrics Indicating Local Impact

As we have discussed throughout the proposal, we are looking at the percentage of all college-bound students from Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan who are receiving Bottom Line's support, we are looking at the number of students who graduate from college, and we look at the number of students who leave college and are able to connect with a career path. Beyond that, through surveys of our alumni, we have found that more than 75% of our alumni remain connected to their communities after graduating from college. What this means is that all of the benefits of a college degree aren't leaving those communities. Instead, when students return to their community as college graduates, it raises the education level of the whole community. And higher education levels lead to more money, more resources, better health, and higher happiness at both the family and community level.