

A Proposal to:

**Framingham State University
Nonprofit Giving Course**



Bottom Line

Get in • Graduate • Go far

Boston Programs Support

Grant Contact:

Emelda Lagos

Director of Grants and Proposals

617.524.8833

elagos@bottomline.org

Organizational Information

The Bottom Line Difference

Our students' stories are the best indicator of our success. Below are narratives that show a glimpse of who our students are and how our programming is helping them access more opportunities so they can reach their full potential and thrive in their communities.

Nuno, UMass Lowell, Class of 2020: For the entirety of Nuno's first year in college, he took the Commuter Rail from Boston to Lowell every day just to get to school because he could not afford to live on campus. In his second semester it looked like he would be unable to enter a class required for his major because there was no train early enough to arrive in time for the start of the class and the later section was already full. This kind of roadblock might allow students like Nuno to get off-track on his path towards graduation. With the support of his Bottom Line Advisor, he was able to get the school to allow him to enroll in the full section. Nuno ended the year with a 3.93 GPA and is now an Electrical Engineering major in the Honors program.

Dominique, Boston University, Class of 2015: Dominique's grandmother was a sharecropper in Georgia. She was born and raised in Boston to a single mother who worked as a custodian at Harvard University. Her older sister enrolled in college and dropped out multiple times and ultimately completed a culinary training program that left her in significant debt. When Dominique was a senior in high school, she knew she needed to find a way to not only get into college but graduate with minimal debt. That's why she joined Bottom Line, to receive one-on-one counseling that allowed her to earn her degree while getting support on financial aid. Today Dominique is paying it forward through a year of service at a Boston Public School by creating a college going culture for students like her. When asked about her path Dominique says, "three generations of women in my family tried and I finally broke the cycle when I walked across that stage to receive my college diploma."

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 2018-2019, Bottom Line – Massachusetts will continue to provide our proven, high-impact counseling curriculum to over 3,500 high school and college students from Boston and Worcester, by helping about 400 high school students get into college, and supporting about 3,100 college students on their path to a degree.

Description of Programs

Bottom Line will support high school seniors in navigating every step of the college application process through our **Access program**. Working with a caseload of 60 students, Advisors build a strong relationship with each student. Access students meet with their Advisor once or twice a month until college applications and financial aid applications are submitted. Once acceptance letters arrive, students meet again with their Advisors to receive guidance on what school would be the best academic, financial and personal fit to ensure students start their college career on the right foot and are therefore less likely to drop out.

Access students that choose to attend one of our target colleges are automatically transferred into our **Success program** and are joined by students who are referred by our partner organizations. These students all receive transition programming over the summer before their first year of college. Once

students arrive on campus, Success Advisors then travel to our target college campuses to meet each student in-person two or three times a semester, keeping in touch in between visits through email, phone and text. Using our codified curriculum, Advisors offer regular support in the four areas most likely to cause a student to drop out of college: Degree, Employability, Affordability, and Life, or DEAL. Our curriculum tracks against specific milestones but is flexible enough to adapt to each individual student's needs. The close relationships our Advisors form with students greatly inform how best to support each student to achieve their goals. At the end of each semester, typically in January and June, Advisors conduct formal assessments to track students' progress against our DEAL rubric to create individualized service plans for the upcoming semester. This comprehensive support is provided for up to six years or until a student graduates.

Organizational Structure

Bottom Line MA currently employs 62 full-time employees in Massachusetts. Our Massachusetts offices are supported by Bottom Line's National office, a National Board of Directors and our Massachusetts Regional Board, which helps guide organizational strategy and fundraising.

Proposal Information

Description of Need

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).

For twenty years, Bottom Line has provided the support that makes our students over four times more likely to graduate from college than their peers. As we have grown, we continue to focus on building strong one-on-one relationships with students and to provide the comprehensive support that has made us the best-in-class college completion program.

Through one-on-one, in person meetings, Bottom Line Advisors are able to assist students to address any barriers encountered during college applications until graduation resulting in the most recent class of Bottom Line students having a 6-year graduation rate of 83%. In 2013, four-year college graduates made, on average, 98% more an hour than people without a degree representing almost a million dollars in earnings over a lifetime. 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 higher rates of volunteerism and voter participation, and lower rates of incarceration.

In the Commonwealth, Boston in particular is poised for rapid job growth in STEM and healthcare fields, among others, that will outpace qualified workers with degrees at current graduation rates. With greater opportunity for continued employment and increased earning potential, a college degree is a specific means out of poverty for many. Our goal is to ensure our Boston students from low-income backgrounds attain that degree with the skills and resources needed to prepare for a successful career path. We are ready to take on this work and provide a pathway for our students to go far.

Request with Goals and Activities

Bottom Line requests \$10,000 from the Nonprofit Giving Course to support our Boston students in 2018-2019. For the coming school year, we will serve 3,110 Boston students with the following goals:

Help Students Get In to College: We plan to support 400 Boston high school seniors. Advisors in our Access program will support students in our Jamaica Plain and Dorchester offices throughout the entire college and financial aid process, providing one-on-one guidance from lists to enrollment.

Help Students Persist and Graduate from College: Bottom Line will be serving approximately 2,710 college students from Boston in our 2018-2019 program year attending one of our 20 target colleges. Over the summer, we provide entering college freshman transition programming to ensure they are ready to start school on solid footing and support the upperclassmen with renewing financial aid, internships, and class selection. Once the school year begins, Success Advisors travel to college campuses each week to meet in-person with students at least twice per semester and more frequently when and if problems arise. In between in-person meetings, Advisors keep in touch with students by email, phone and text to ensure students always have support if an issue arises. This one-on-one support allows our Advisors to ensure students stay on track to graduate within six years.

Deliver Career Support: When students enter their junior year of college, they are assigned one of Bottom Line's career Advisors, who deliver support on our full DEAL model but with increased focus on Employability. Advisors will ensure that these students develop the right skills and have networking opportunities that will lead to meaningful employment upon graduation. Bottom Line hosts a series of career events for students, many in collaboration with corporate partners that are interested in connecting with our students as a way to increase their diverse pipeline of talent. We also host larger-scale career events during winter vacation, where students can engage in networking, mock interviews, and career roundtables.

We have also realized that career support and training can take a much more prominent role in our work. This year we plan to expand the Employer Relations team to four full-time staff, which will add capacity to increase the number of events we host in collaboration with corporate partners, source more internship opportunities, and support recent graduates in securing employment with strong prospects for growth. We continue to aim for 75% of students graduating during the 2018-2019 program year be employed or enrolled in graduate school, within six months of receiving their diplomas. We believe this investment in Employer Relations will not only ensure that students are finding jobs, but that those jobs are a stepping-stone to a successful career.

Talent Development: We made significant strides in the past year building an internal talent pipeline. We are still committed to continuing this work and see our year of growth in this area as setting structures in place to support our efforts. With our National team providing more of the infrastructure, we are eager to use to tools to best support our regional teams. We are also investing in external support for key staff through formalized leadership development programs, such as the Core Program through the Institute for Nonprofit Practice. Leveraging our corporate partnerships, we have secured funding for some of our staff to spend a year gaining the skills necessary to step into senior leadership roles.

Future Plan for Sustaining This Effort

Bottom Line receives support from a variety of funders. We are working to further diversify our revenue stream and build a pipeline of individual donors investing in Bottom Line at various levels. This past year we established a Young Professionals Executive Committee and a Board of Visitors in an effort to engage more donors at a variety of giving levels. We will continue to build out these groups and leverage their networks to feed our other revenue streams. We will also be adding an Events Manager to increase capacity around our major fundraising event, the Get In, Graduate, and Go Far Dinner, as well as host smaller cultivation events throughout the year.

With the expansion of our Employer Relations team, we will be able to build deeper corporate engagement and offer further opportunities for them to connect with our mission. Our strategy to shift from event sponsorship to year-round partnerships has been successful and we are using that momentum to further our reach.

Collaborating Organizations

Relationships with community organizations, high schools, colleges and local corporations contribute to the success of Bottom Line's programs. We are the lead partner in three collaborative efforts that are

working to increase the graduation rate for Boston students: CollegeWorks; Success Boston; and the Boston Workforce Investment Network (WINS). We have also continued our partnership with the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association who have their own access program, but rely on Bottom Line to support their students as they go through college.

We also continue to build relationships with local companies that can help us prepare students for success in the workplace after college. Through internships at companies such as State Street Corporation, Sun Life Financial, and Boston Children's Hospital, our students benefit from valuable career opportunities.

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: Degree, Employability, Affordability, and Life. 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.

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. In this study, we are tracking how students perform in college with Bottom Line's support versus those who do not receive our support. Our most recent reports shows our measurable impact grows over time, showing bigger gains for students in their second year in college than their first. We are hopeful this study will provide key learnings for us and the community at large, so more students can get the support they need.

Conclusion

The Framingham State University Nonprofit Giving Course can make an impact on Boston students as they pursue their dream of a college degree and a successful career path. An investment from you would allow us to continue to provide high-quality guidance to low-income students from Boston. On behalf of the students, alums, board and staff at Bottom Line we thank you in advance for your consideration.