



# APPLY TOGETHER

## **The Problem**

The college application process is confusing, especially for students at high schools without a strong college-going culture. As a result, thousands of students each year make decisions about where to go to college based on incomplete information, and do not understand the extraordinary opportunities available to them. Many attend less-selective schools where they are at a great risk of dropping out.

## **The Opportunity**

The schools in our nation with the highest graduation rates tend also to be the most selective. In recent years, these schools have invested heavily on expanding their financial aid programs, and establishing mentorship and tutoring programs to attract students of diverse backgrounds. For example, some top schools established a policy under which students with a family income below \$60,000 would pay no tuition. One school commissioned a study to evaluate this policy's effectiveness in attracting lower-income applicants. The study found that "Many apparently qualified students still do not apply, and a disproportionate share of these 'missing applicants' come from high schools that have little or no tradition of sending applications to selective private colleges."<sup>1</sup>

The message is clear: thousands of America's brightest students do not understand how to access the opportunities available to them. They need an extra push to help them make informed decisions about where to go to college, and how to apply.

## **The Numbers**

Although almost all high-achieving, low-income students attend college, less than 60% will actually earn a degree. One of the strongest predictors of whether these students will graduate is the selectivity of the school they attend: while only 56% will graduate at non-selective universities, 90% will graduate at highly-selective schools. In fact, at highly-selective schools, there is almost no difference in graduation rate between higher- and lower-income students.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Solution**

ApplyTogether helps high-achieving students from low-performing high schools attend four year colleges with high graduation rates. We match these students with a mentor, and the pair works together, using our website, to research, apply for, and finance an excellent college education.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wyner, J., Bridgeland, J., & DiIulio, J. (2008). *The Achievement Trap*. Civic Enterprises. Available at: [www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/jkc.pdf](http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/jkc.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Avery, C., Hoxby, C., Jackson, C. K., Burek, K., Poppe, G. & Raman, M. (2006). *Cost Should be no Barrier: An Evaluation of the First Year of Harvard's Financial Aid Initiative*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 12029. Available at: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w12029>.