

FRIENDS OF WHEELS STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026



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OUR HISTORY

Founded to ensure all WHEELS students have the best options for college and beyond.

Friends of WHEELS was founded by teachers and leaders from the Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School, a public, district, unscreened preK–12 school. We are one of the few NYC nonprofit organizations dedicated to supporting all of its students—not just the highest-performing—to identify and persist in reaching their college and future goals.

Friends of WHEELS began by serving the first class of WHEELS graduates in 2012 and has served 750 students and alumni in the years since.



100%

of WHEELS students who have applied to college have received at least one acceptance

88%

College matriculation rate (first fall enrollment) for WHEELS students

This is more than **18% higher** than the citywide average

70%

of the class of 2012 have completed their bachelor's degree within 6 years

This is more than **double** the national average for first generation students!



Our Mission:

Friends of WHEELS amplifies youth and community power by inspiring, guiding, and advocating for youth to determine their college, career, and leadership futures.

Our Vision:

Friends of WHEELS envisions equitable preK–college opportunities that propel all youth to thrive in postsecondary life and strengthen our communities.

Our Core Values:

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY We will work to change the deep educational inequities rooted in systemic racial and socioeconomic segregation, lifting up every child’s right to a quality education.

RACIAL JUSTICE We will work to undo the structural racism that permeates every part of our society in order to build a just and equitable future in which all people can reach their full potential.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP We will work to ensure that young people’s voices are included in the decisions that affect their communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE We will work to combat climate change by improving the environmental conditions in Washington Heights and Northern Manhattan.

COMMUNITY We will work to create and sustain community partnerships to win results and spark change, rooted in our commitment to Washington Heights.



WHY WE EXIST

College and career pathways are deeply inequitable.

Underrepresented students—BIPOC youth, youth from low-income communities and first generation college students—face significant institutional obstacles at every step of the journey to access college and career opportunities that align with their goals and dreams for adulthood.

And at the same time, youth bring many assets to solving complex social issues. Communities benefit when organizations like Friends of WHEELS provide youth with robust opportunities to contribute, advocate and organize.

1:221

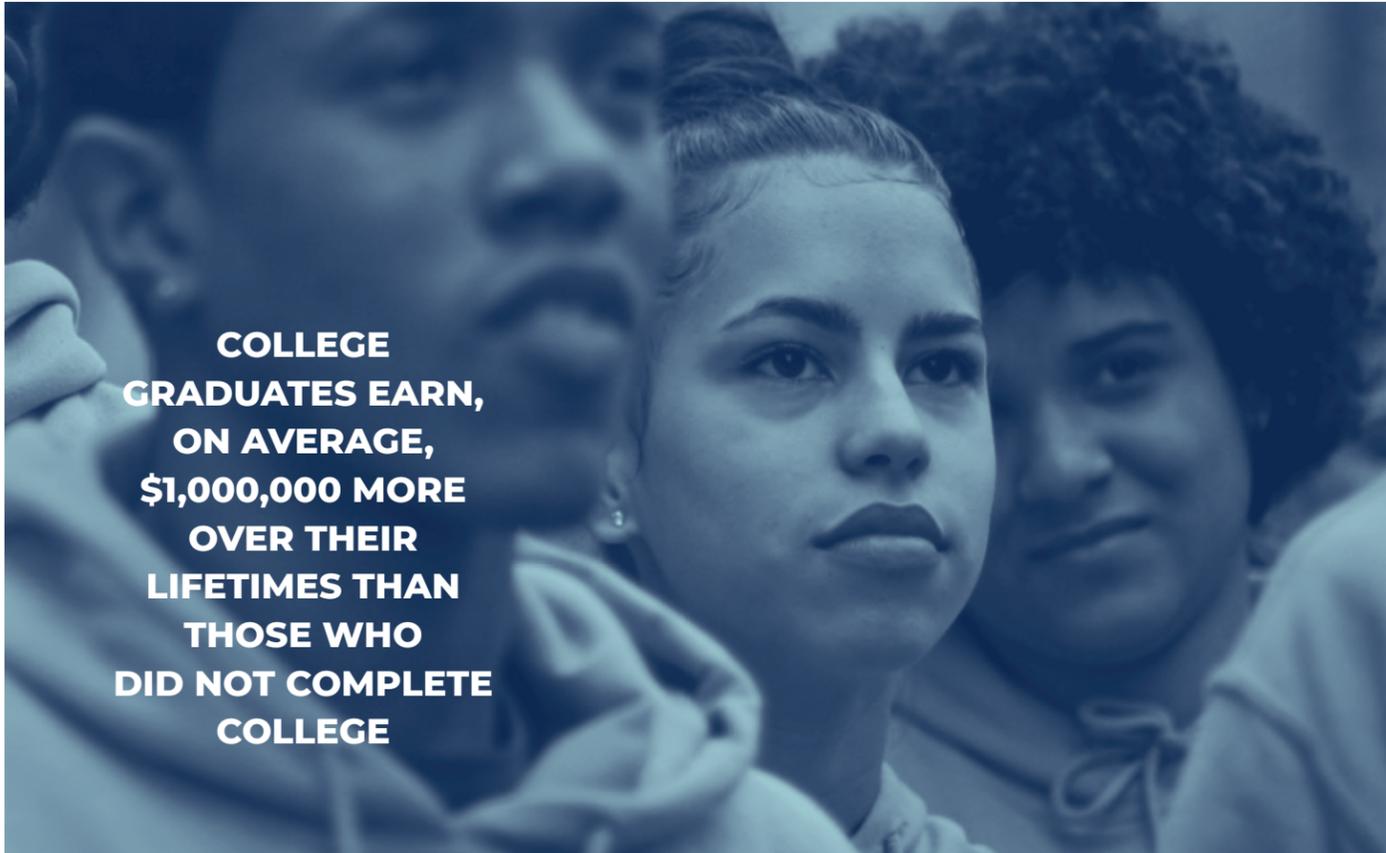
Average ratio of college counselors to students in NYC public schools

LESS THAN

1 in 3

National graduation rate for first generation college students

YOUTH VOICES ARE FAR TOO OFTEN UNDERVALUED AND UNDERLEVERAGED



COLLEGE GRADUATES EARN, ON AVERAGE, \$1,000,000 MORE OVER THEIR LIFETIMES THAN THOSE WHO DID NOT COMPLETE COLLEGE

Building on eight years of impact-driven experience, we will leverage three strategies to achieve our goals.

1

STRATEGY:
DEEPEN OUR WORK WITHIN WHEELS

- We will provide a trajectory of experiences for WHEELS students to include leadership development training and mentoring, while matching students with an external paid work-based learning opportunity and after school and summer enrichment experiences.
- We will spearhead a new alumni program model, training alumni as peer mentors, as well as mentoring WHEELS students, while connecting WHEELS alumni with a career-focused mentoring community of professionals.
- We will support the development of external partnerships for the preK–8th grade, as we look ahead to 2027 to launch a full preK–12 program.

2

STRATEGY:
GENERATE A REPLICABLE MODEL

- We will conduct an evaluation of our model with an external research partner.
- We will develop a toolbox for others to advance equitable postsecondary pathways, leverage and expand youth leadership and advocate for and secure additional resources.
- We will generate resources, technical assistance tools and trainings for other youth, schools and communities to achieve greater impact for more young people.

3

STRATEGY:
EXPAND OUR REACH BEYOND WHEELS

- We will support youth leadership to build a Clean Air Green Corridor in the community, improving environmental justice in Washington Heights and developing a model of youth-led climate justice for other schools and communities- and youth-led community development.
- In collaboration with Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) in Canada, based on nine years of groundbreaking YPI programming led by WHEELS teachers, we will launch YPI NYC, reaching 20 high schools in NYC through the program.
- We will expand our work to and lead our program with two other Washington Heights high schools.

By 2026, our key actions will result in the following achievements:

DEEPEN
OUR WORK
WITHIN
WHEELS

1

Work-based learning and leadership development will be included as essential activities of college and career access.

GENERATE
A REPLICABLE
MODEL

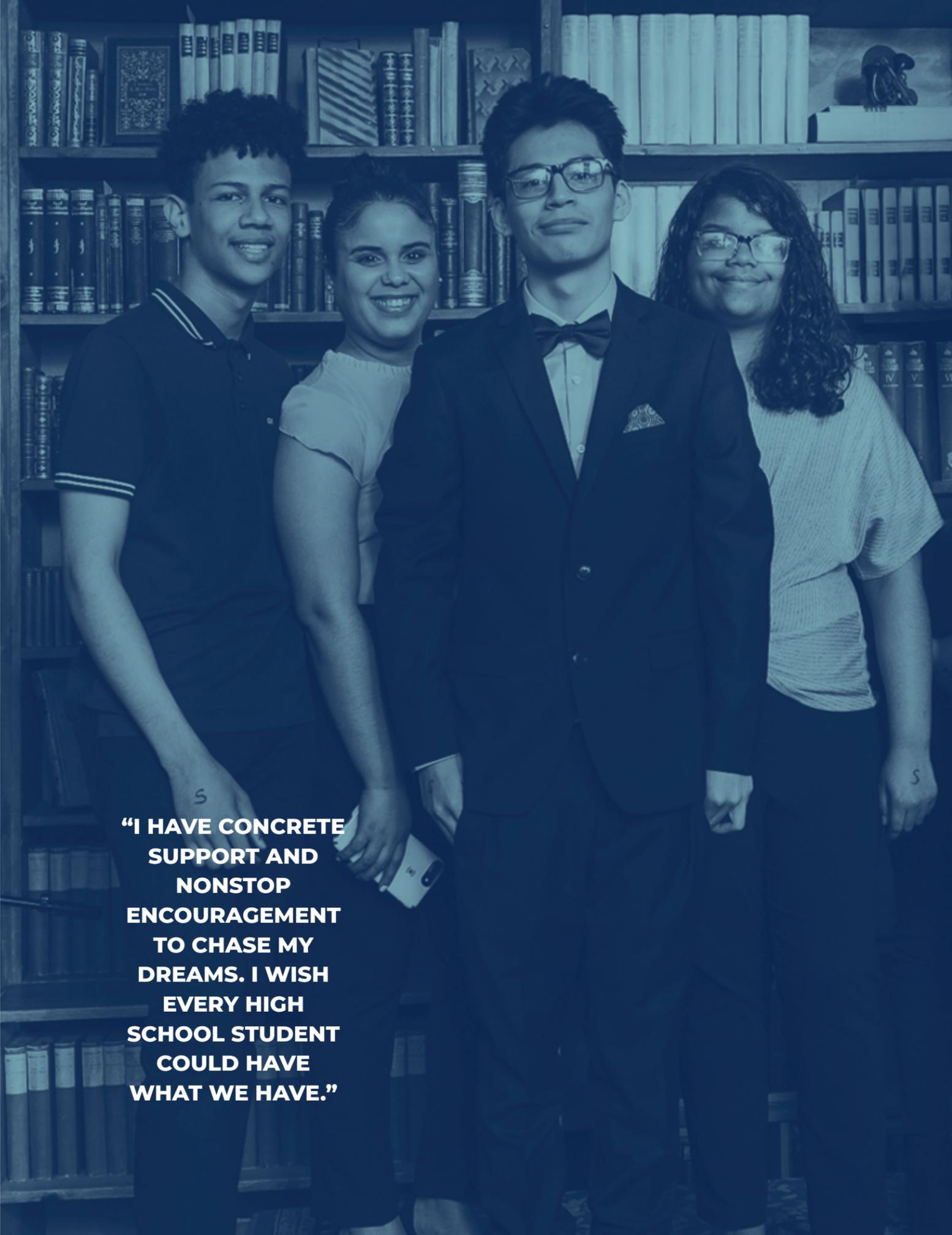
2

All NYC high schools will have access to a universal model of college access, career and post-secondary support.

EXPAND
OUR REACH
BEYOND
WHEELS

3

More high school students in Northern Manhattan will experience improved leadership and post-secondary outcomes.

A photograph of four diverse high school students standing in a library. From left to right: a young man in a dark polo shirt, a young woman in a white top, a young man in a dark suit and bow tie, and a young woman in a white top and glasses. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is filled with bookshelves.

“I HAVE CONCRETE
SUPPORT AND
NONSTOP
ENCOURAGEMENT
TO CHASE MY
DREAMS. I WISH
EVERY HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENT
COULD HAVE
WHAT WE HAVE.”

OUR FUTURE: KEY STEPS & TIMELINE



1

DEEPEN OUR WORK WITHIN WHEELS

Implement first phase of leadership, work-based learning and mentoring for WHEELS students

Implement second phase of leadership, work-based learning and mentoring for WHEELS students

All WHEELS high school students participate in comprehensive leadership, work-based learning and mentoring

Secure ten new partnerships for WHEELS Lower and Middle Grades

Achieve increased post-secondary and leadership and wellness outcomes with 1,500 WHEELS students and alumni

2

GENERATE A REPLICABLE MODEL

Develop proprietary curriculum

Develop proprietary toolbox of resources

Launch 3 year program evaluation

Generate income through sharing our toolbox

Complete evaluation and disseminate results

3

EXPAND OUR REACH BEYOND WHEELS

Rebrand and identify new name, logo and brand identity

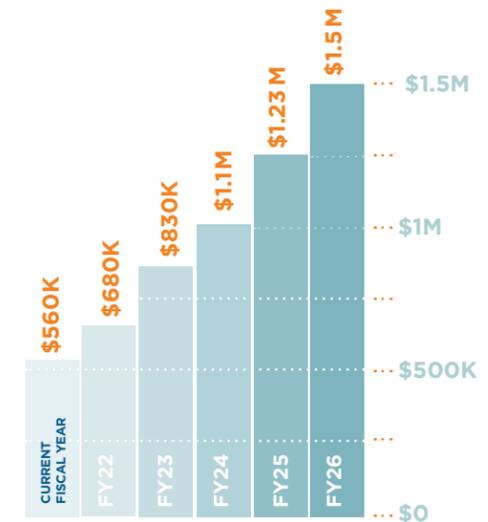
Launch YPI NYC

Secure long-term facilities in Washington Heights; expand Corridor work and YPI; identify two new partner high schools to scale our model

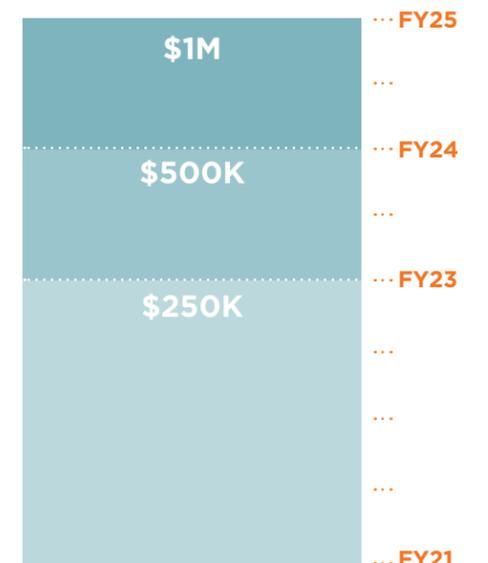
Launch program model at two Washington Heights high schools

Achieve full vision for the Clean Air Green Corridor; Reach 20 high schools with YPI; and, achieve significant results with two new high school partners, serving 1000 students in new school communities in Washington Heights

Operating budget:
We will achieve a 30% growth rate over the next five years.



Impact revenue:
We will generate \$1M additional revenue to build reserves and impact capital.



THE FRIENDS OF WHEELS TEAM

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