

Persist Nashville

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Our City



PERSIST  
NASHVILLE



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# Our Leaders

## Our Leaders: A Word from Our Co-Founders

If 2019 was defined by hustle, 2020 by survival, then 2021 was most certainly defined by growth. We grew our team from 2 to 6. We grew in students we served from 413 to 1762. We grew in our partners, serving students from all 27 MNPS high schools including five charters and the YMCA Black Achievers and Latino Achievers attending over 109 colleges across the country. More importantly we grew in understanding our students, the challenges they face, and their resilience.

After a year of virtual disconnection, our students experienced a “new normal” of masked in person learning with limitations on student community events and interactions with professors and peers alike. Many of our students were forced to “grow up” quickly during the pandemic. Many got jobs to support their family or become the teacher and tutor for their virtual siblings while attending school themselves. To say the pandemic has been hard on low-income high school and college students is an understatement. Yet, the persistence of Nashville graduates has both amazed and inspired us. Despite the challenges, most of our students have persisted and we are grateful to have walked beside them.

We look to the year ahead with excitement. For us, we expect 2022 to be the year of executing. We need to capitalize on our quick growth, ensure we support our existing students well, and make sure we have strong systems in place to ensure accountability and sustainability as an organization. Our strategic plan involves deepening relationships with existing and new students, the development of a backwards design for our 9-12 partners, and creating financial sustainability that will allow us to commit to serving our students and community as long as they need it.

It goes without saying that we would not be in this position, impacting so many students, without you: our friends, supporters, and partners. The important work we get to do is only possible through the support of people like you. You believe in us and believe in our students potential. While the pandemic has exacerbated the crisis of college access and persistence, your support has helped address it head on. We get to spend every day serving students directly, please know that what you have done for them through your resources, time, and expertise is changing trajectories for students in Nashville. We are so thankful for your partnership and we hope this report helps you better understand the true impact you had in 2021. Keep persisting!

- Kristen & Scott



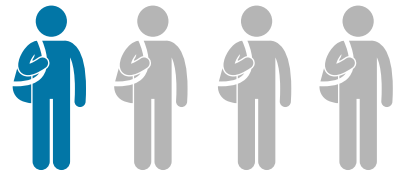


# Our Purpose

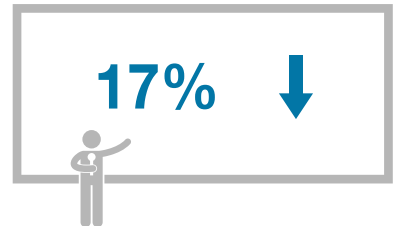


## Problem

Only **1** out of 4 Metro Nashville grads is earning a college degree (2 yr, 4 yr, or technical).



Black and Hispanic students are earning degrees at rates **17% lower** than their white peers.



## Solution

We empower Nashville graduates to earn a college degree



## Coaching



We are a regular source of encouragement and connection for students.

Our coaches had over 63,051 individual interactions with students in 2021

## Community



We invest in student leaders to build community on their campus.

Over 437 students attended Persist events on their campuses this year

## Care



We connect our students with caring professionals in the Nashville area.

We facilitated over 148 meaningful career conversations with students and professional mentors this year.



# Our Theory of Change

## We Believe

Every student, regardless of their K-12 educational experience, can earn a college degree.

It is our responsibility to ensure all of our students from our city, regardless of whether they attend 2yr, 4yr, technical, in-state, out-of-state, public, or private institutions, deserve quality coaching and support.

We cannot support students with a one-size-fits all approach and must provide equitable support to ensure our Black and Latino students enroll and persist equally to their white peers.

### Inputs

Transition Planning  
Fit Coaching  
Persistence Coaching and Motivation  
Soft-Skill Development  
Student Leadership & Community  
Career Connections and Development

### Outputs

College Enrollment  
College Persistence  
College Graduation

### Outcomes

College degree with minimal debt  
Careers aligned to high need jobs and student interests  
Economic Mobility

### Impact

Developing self sufficient leaders who are committed to and capable of investing in our community



# Our Impact



## SCALE

2020

413  
students  
served

2021

1762  
students  
served



## COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Students who engaged with our program enrolled at rates better than Nashville peers.

30%



## PERSISTENCE

Our students persist at a rate better than their peers.

10%



## EQUITY

Our Black and Latino students are enrolling and engaging at rates matching their white and asian peers.



## VALUE

92% of our students would definitely or be very likely to recommend our program to their peers



# Our Students

## Nardin Adly

*Trevecca Nazarene University*

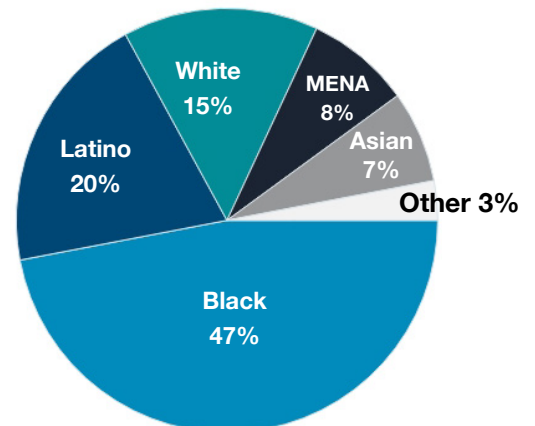
“Persist Nashville has helped me in college by really encouraging me through daily messages/reminders. The weekly reminders and quotes really help connect more to my coach and has reminded me that I have others that I can go to through this whole college experience phase. Persist Nashville has taught me to become organized and understand that its okay not to be okay, and its okay to feel defeated but not okay to give up.”



## Blake Neal

*Tennessee State University*

I have always known that I was going to college, because at my house, that was never a choice. It was an expectation. However, I didn't know where I would find support. I'm an only child and I didnt know anyone else well that was going to TSU. Out of the blue one day, I received a text from someone with Persist. I was hesitant to sign up because I was already overwhelmed with applications, emails, and deadlines. The person on the other end assured me that they would only be there to help me when I asked for it so I agreed to try it. I'm glad I did! I appreciate their text asking me to rate how school is going. They text helpful suggestions and what school was like for them, and even got a brand new laptop because I had to turn my old one back to MNPS. I've attended a workshop(with some good fish served) and they gave me a box of useful goodies at the beginning of the year. I can honestly say that they seem to sincerely care about kids staying motivated to get through their college years and I'm glad I signed up!





## Summer Jenkins

*Fisk*

“The mind is the most powerful thing because your mind guides your physical abilities and I feel like Persist has helped me realize that.”

## Hayley Pewitt

*Nashville State Community College*

I always planned on college. I thought I would go to a University and do something there, but as time got closer and I realized what I wanted to do I decided to go to NSCC and major in Business. I definitely wasn't sure on some things or how to get started but with Persist it has definitely helped. Scott and Gabe were both there for me and helped me when I couldn't figure things out. I really love the Monday Motivation texts. Every week I forget about them and when I read the message it really helps get my week going and give me the extra boost everyone needs on a Monday. I really like being in Persist because they make you feel like you are a part of something and I don't feel judged if I'm going through something or need extra help.



## 2022 Persist Fund

“Without the persist fund I wouldn't have been able to get my textbooks and I literally would've failed chemistry because our entire grade is tied to the book.”

**Jon, MLK graduate**

*Lipscomb University Student*



**133 Micro Grants**

**to students for books, transportation,  
food, enrollment, computers**



**\$20,769**

**Total Distributed**



# Our Coaches

# We've Grown in 2021!

**We've added 4 full time coaches!**



**MELISSA**



**GABE**



**MEGAN**



**DARRELL**

“Scott and Kristen have worked hard to create an amazing work culture at Persist. I say it all the time, this is one of the strongest teams I’ve ever worked for. We have clear goals, we aren’t afraid to make slight pivots, and we really care for the students we serve.” - **Melissa**

“I have worked in classrooms over the course of four years, and realized that my greatest strength is connecting and creating relationships with students and not delivering academic content. Persist has allowed me to work with students, build relationships, and have them feel confident in the decisions they are making throughout their college journeys.” - **Gabe**

“One of my students was texting with me about her semester and I continued to ask her questions to see how she was really doing. As we peeled back the layers, she mentioned at one point that she had some fears and anxieties about graduating - even though her grades were great and she was doing fine in classes. I was able to coach her around some self-care habits and take some time to simply encourage her. Towards the end of our chat, she responded and said, “Thank you! I appreciate you talking with me about stuff like this!” It was a good reminder that our students can face barriers beyond those of the financial or academic kind, and taking the time to ask intentional questions can help us to best support them and equip them for the collegiate journey.” - **Megan**

“Working for Persist has been nothing short of a life changing experience. Persist has taught me how to make life long partnerships with other orgs & schools like Lead, Republic & Oasis who have the same desired outcome and drive as we do. The end goal is to ensure every student gets the same equal opportunity when it comes to education no matter the cost, distance or college.” - **Darrell**

# Our Board

## Board of Directors



**JENNIFER HILL**  
CHAIR

Vice President of Policy and Programming at NPEF



**MARIO MCCLUNIE**  
SECRETARY

Pearl Cohn High School Teacher & Artist



**ANNE HOCKEY TOOMEY**  
COMMITTEE CHAIR

Founding Partner, Jarred Health Care Inc.



**STEFAN HUBBARD**  
TREASURER

Senior Portfolio Analyst at Nephila



**BRETT MICHAELS**  
BOARD MEMBER

Head of Sales, Google Cloud



**DR. PRENTICE ASHFORD**  
BOARD MEMBER

Dean of Community Life, Lipscomb University



**JOHN RYBKA**  
BOARD MEMBER

CEO, RePublic Schools



**ALYSSA ALOYO**  
BOARD MEMBER

Program Manager at Vanderbilt's Office for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion



**LYNISE HARRIS**  
BOARD MEMBER

Chief of Human Assets, 4.0 Schools



**NAOMI ASSEFA**  
STUDENT BOARD MEMBER

Student at Trevecca University



**RYAN FLURY**  
BOARD MEMBER

Executive Director, J.P. Morgan



# Persist Business Advisory Council



**LEWIS AGNEW**

President of  
Charles Hawkins Co.



**JOSHUA IRELAND**

Chief Operating Officer at Woodmont  
Investment Counsel, LLC



**JANE M. SIEGEL, M.D**

Doctor at Tennessee  
Orthopedic Alliance



**JOHN BURTCHAELL III**

Google Cloud Healthcare and  
Life Sciences



**CAROLINE JACOBSSON**

Co-Founder at SidebySide  
Solutions & Founder Strategic  
Communications Consultancy



**SUSAN CHAREST**

Director of Tech Talent Programs  
at Greater Nashville  
Technology Council



**BRETT MICHAELS**

Head of Sales,  
Google Cloud



**ROB SIMMONS**

CEO at Tennessee  
Orthopaedic Alliance

## PERSIST CAREER

Thanks to our Business Advisory Council this year we were able to host:

**126 Career Conversations** between students and professionals.

**9 Persist Fellowships**, which are short term paid jobs for students.

**6 Job Shadowing** and Virtual Career learning opportunities for students.



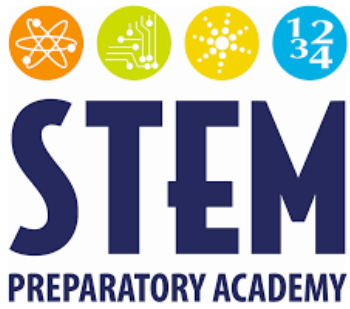
# Our Partners



METRO  
NASHVILLE  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS



**RHS**  
**REPUBLIC**  
**HIGH SCHOOL**  
A REPUBLIC SCHOOL



# Our Supporters

## Persist Founders - \$5000+



CARE FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

HUNTER MOBLEY



BILL AND CRISSY HASLAM FOUNDATION

Joe C. Davis FOUNDATION

CLAY THOMPSON

*The Phoenix Club of Nashville*

THE DAN & MARGARET MADDUX CHARITABLE FUND



CHRIS & EMILY KENNEDY

ANNE & DAN TOOMEY



CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ALLEN & DEBORAH KING

RYAN & SARAH FLURY

## Persist Leaders - \$400-\$4,999



TRUIST

AMBER & ERIC GREEN

LEWIS & KATIE AGNEW

KEVIN & JENNIFER KEETON

JOHN & LESLIE FORD

DANIEL & HANNAH STEPHENSON

DONNA & JOSEPH POKOWITZ

BRETT MICHAELS

JOSHUA & SUSIE MULLEN

CAROLE PETERSON

JAKE & CAROLINE SMITH

STEVEN AND BRENNA SIMMONS

MICHAEL HILL

JENNIFER HILL

GARY & LIZ COHEN

TOM DAVENPORT

JESSICA & JONATHAN PAHL

JAKE & CAROLINE SMITH

SCHOLARS RAISE

LEV & ELIANA HILL

DR. JANE SIEGEL

ERIC & ELLIE OSBORNE

STEFAN & RACHEL HUBBARD

AUDRA MEDURI

## Persist Partners < \$400

STEPHEN & JAMACIA ZRALEK

LINLY STOWE

ALYSSA ALOYO

THOMAS & BETSEY BERNSTEIN

TINA ALLOCCO

NOREEN SANTOS

CHRIS BARBIC

JIM & LINDA CAMPBELL

NICOLE MINYARD

ERIN MILLER

ELWOOD CAMP

ELIZABETH DERROUGH

ANDREW & JESSICA SHAFER

JOSH & KATE ALLEN

VICKI ESTRIN

ROBERT & MONICA BRATTON

JIM & ANNA MADDUX

KENDRA MARTIN

RUTLEDGE LONG

DR. ANDREW WHITE

DAVE HANSON

PATRICK NEWTON

WESLEY BELDEN

BARBARA RYAN

TONY KING

MINH BUI

CARY RYAN

BRAD AKARD

ERIC & SUE NORMAN

TRISHA BOYD

LIZZIE MIRANDA

BRITTANY DO

GREG LAMB

D.L. HOWARD

MARK ALEXANDER

WAYNE WILLIAMS

MORGAN WEISS

CAROLYN WHITEFORD

SUZETTE ALOYO

CHRISTINA THEODORU

SCOTT MELTZER

PRENTICE ASHFORD

BROOKE ALLEN

CASSIDY KUEBLER

JAMES & ANNA MADDUX

JEREMY RALEY

JONATHAN SANTOS

LYNISE HARRIS

ANDREW GOODWYN

HALEY ZAPOLSKI

ZACH SEARCY

LYNISE HARRIS

STEPHEN HUPP

KELLY PIETKIEWICZ

BENJAMIN HUME

KAYLA ALOYO

NORMAN LYTLE

GREGORY JOHNSON

MARK SAUER

SHONDRIETTE KELLEY

DR. CARMEN APRIL

CAROL WATKINS

CHLOE OXLEY

JESSICA LAW

KATE WATTS

KENDRA MARTIN



# Our Financials

## 2021 Cost per Student *(Estimated)*:

**\$330**

per student



## 2021 Approved Budget

**\$604,875**



## 2021 Final Spent *(Estimated)*:

**\$550,354**

\$55K under budget

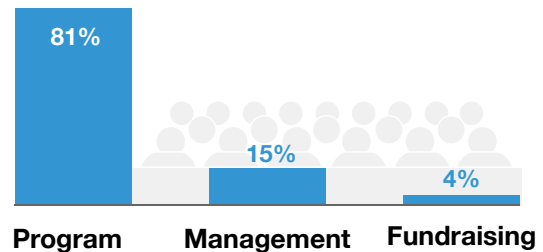


## 2021 Total Revenue

**\$661,738**



## 2021 Budget by Spending:



## Total Budget

**\$771,000**

## What will this allow us to do?

1. Hire an additional Persist coach
2. Serve an additional 400 students to serve total of 2400 graduates
3. Build new technology and data tools that will help us to better serve our students and partner organizations

# Our Plan

In 2022 we have three strategic priorities as an organization as we continue to improve our work.

## Deep Relationships

**Strengthening Partnerships:** We will work directly with school counselors to ensure students know Persist Nashville, what we can do for them, and what a coaching relationship can mean for them. We will provide resources for counselors to help fill gaps and improve their access support for all students.



**Improving Onboarding:** We will ensure that all students who are onboarded into the program have 2 opportunities to engage with a Persist coach before the end of their senior year in high school. We will also ensure that all students and families in our program have a detailed transition plan before leaving high school.

**Student Transition Planning:** We will develop and implement a unique technology solution built off of Salesforce, that will give every student and family a transition plan document with next steps for their post-secondary choice and provide usable data to high schools, colleges, nonprofit partners, MNPS, and Persist coaches to decrease melt.

## Backward Design

**Data Sharing & Systems Development:** We will develop our data systems to better be able to share monthly reports with partner schools, MNPS, and partner organizations. We will invest in data because we believe the information we are collecting through our coaching can dramatically impact the support provided by our coaches, high school counselors, and universities.



**Strengthening HS student soft skills:** Using data from student coaching, Persist will leverage our K-12 partnerships both during the academic year and summer to build learning resources for teachers and teach courses directly to students to better prepare students for the college transition.

## Financial Sustainability

**Strengthening Fee for Service:** We will improve our fee-for-service model and increase fee-for-service contributions to account for 25% of total budget.



**Exploring Scalability:** Persist will begin conversations and design work with national funders and nonprofit partners to scale our Persist model to other cities within the next 3-5 years.

# Our Future



Let's pause for a moment to ask ourselves the question:  
What would it mean for our city if every graduate from our high schools earned a **2-year, 4-year, or Technical degree?**



**Anne Toomey**

*Partner Jarrad Inc, Persist  
Board of Directors*

"It would be a game changer for our growing city which is exploding with opportunity across a number of industries. Would love to see companies finding the workforce they need right here locally. Not to mention the positive impact on families across Middle Tennessee."



**Ommay Khyr**

*Hume Fogg Graduate, Colorado College  
Student, Persist Lead*

"As students gain degrees, they gain knowledge which they are excited to pursue. They also better their futures and the future of our city. This creates upward mobility for our students"




**Lynise Harris**

*4.0 Schools,  
Persist Board of Directors*

"It is a bold and courageous step to ensure power and privilege is shared equitably amongst our students Because it equips them with the necessary foundation to compete for and acquire successful careers."





“Persist Nashville provided me with a community that helps me strive to be the best person I can be.”

**Merna Bassally**

*Lipscomb University. MLK Graduate*



“I am extremely grateful for persist! Without your help, I would not be where I am today.”

**Dimend Little**

*MTSU*

Find out More  
[www.persistnashville.org](http://www.persistnashville.org)

