



**DISCOVER U**  
FANTASTIC LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

2020



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# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

"My hope is that through this pandemic you continue to realize our mission is not a luxury but a necessity and that you are able to continue to stand with us and we try to bring more opportunities for more amazing students."

## Dear Friends,

Since joining the team in 2017 it has been my pleasure to witness DiscoverU grow exponentially and help connect more and more students to Fantastic Learning Opportunities.

As a nonprofit you try to plan and manage risk but we could not imagine the scale of disruption COVID would cause on our ability to work with students. We know that life does not stop, and students still need to learn even if the traditional structure is unavailable.

Fortunately our program pre-pandemic relied on virtual tools. With increased investment and quick action on the part of the program team, we were able to augment our program to provide services virtually. Additionally, many of our FLO partners nimbly rethought their programs to provide virtual learning experiences that engaged our students and created community and connection while providing novel learning.

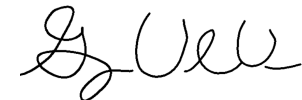
We and our program partners have put much thought into what makes a FLO a FLO: whether it takes place on a

college campus, in a foreign country, or in a student's own living room. We've sought out relationships with virtual programs that give students the ability to: connect and build community with peers and instructors, and explore new subject matter not taught in a traditional classroom, in a rigorous and engaging way.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work with so many amazing students and their families, we are grateful for the amazing schools and school districts that help us in this work. We are grateful for all of you, our supporters, whose generosity allows us to continue this amazing work even in this uncertain time.

Thank you for your interest and support, and please feel free to reach out to us directly if you have any interest in being more involved in DiscoverU. We are growing in spite of COVID, and we welcome everyone to help us in this work.

**Thank you,**



**George Vander Veer**  
Executive Director



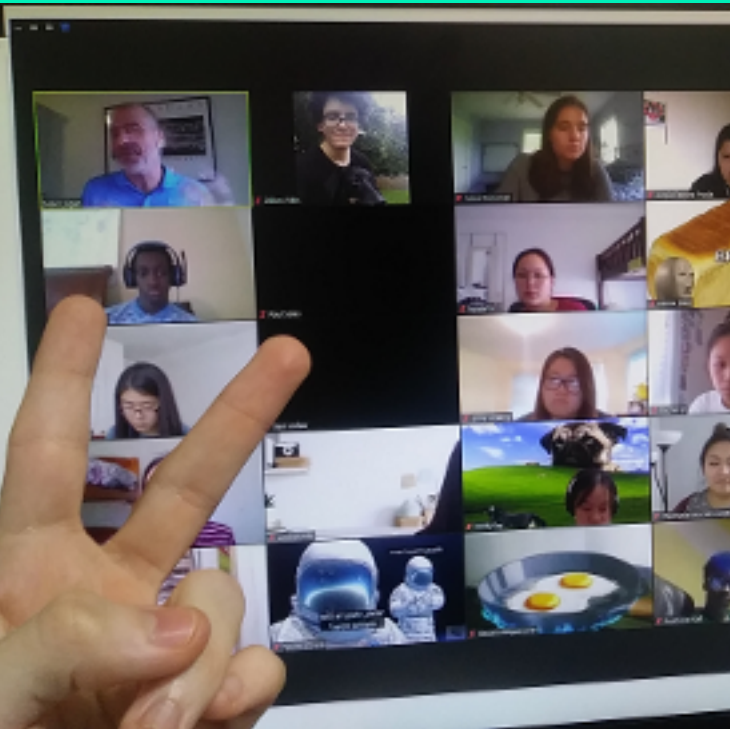
**DISCOVERU**  
FANTASTIC LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

**SCAN HERE TO  
SEE OUR YEAR  
IN REVIEW!**





# WHAT MAKES A FLO, A FLO?



While we were obviously disappointed by the limitations set forth by COVID-19 related quarantine, we threw ourselves into finding new ways to bring experiential learning to our students. Our program team created dozens of how-to videos on our YouTube channel, and we revised and upgraded our Salesforce-based student portal to allow for video chat, screen sharing, and other virtual tools.

In May of 2020, we published a brief entitled ***Experience Matters: Equalizing Access to Experiential Learning during a Global Pandemic***, which set guidelines for programs striving to provide high quality virtual learning experiences and gave recommendations to schools, districts, and students and families around experiential learning. Importantly, we landed on what makes a FLO, a FLO; and how to translate that to the digital world.

## FLOS SHOULD PROVIDE:

EXPOSURE TO NOVEL SITUATIONS & KNOWLEDGE

TANGIBLE  
TAKEAWAYS  
THAT CELEBRATE  
& PROPEL  
PARTICIPANTS TO  
FURTHER  
LEARNING

EXPLICIT  
OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR COMMUNITY  
BUILDING AND  
COLLABORATION  
WITH BOTH  
PROGRAM LEADERS  
AND PEERS

EXTENDED  
DURATION THAT  
FOSTERS  
DEVELOPMENTAL  
PROGRESS

# FLOS IN THE COVID AGE

While the full educational impacts of the pandemic may not be known for some time, it is clear that districts, programs, and families should prioritize experiential learning to help mitigate the inevitable gaps that school shut downs will impose on our students' knowledge and skills. Our students are resilient and eager to learn, and are making the best of a tough situation. In fact, we were surprised that students rated the tangible impact of their virtual experiences similarly to their in-person experiences from prior years (98% pre-pandemic vs 94% in 2020).

**98%**

**rated their FLO experience as  
"Excellent" or "Very Good"**

**4/5**

reported they  
were exposed to  
new material

**3.5/5**

reported they  
experienced  
community

**3.8/5**

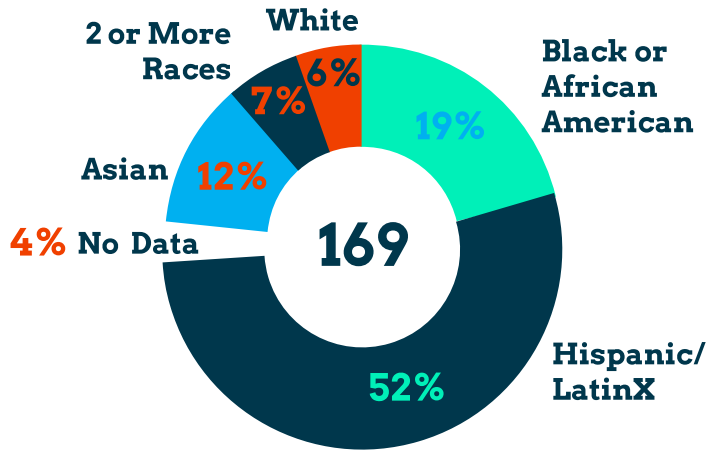
reported they  
had tangible  
takeaways



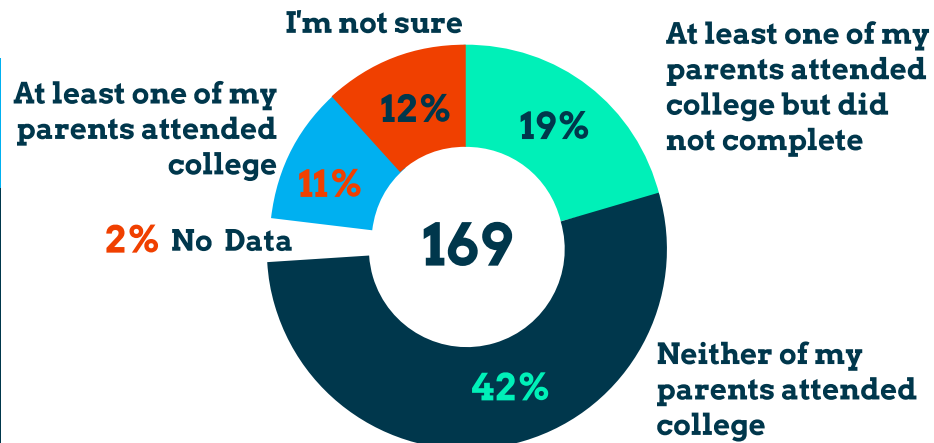
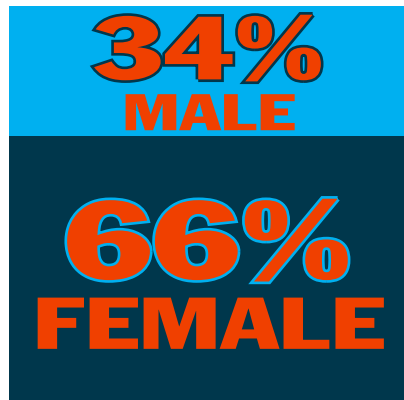


# OUR AMAZING STUDENTS

"What motivated me to complete my Camp Neuro application is my passion of becoming a nurse and dedication to help others in need. FLOs keep me motivated to learn and open new doors of my own creativity and interests...FLOs help my growth as a human being and expand my mind as I discover me!"  
**-Rubi, North Forest High School '22**



**30**  
**SCHOOL COMMUNITIES**



# PROGRAM RESULTS

## STUDENTS ATTENDED

**48**

**UNIQUE  
FLO  
PROGRAMS**

"What I believe are the most important things that I learned [at the Rice University Ethics & Society FLO] were the different ethical theories I have not learned in a classroom setting. This FLO also helped me to grow more comfortable with 'attending' virtual learning courses, which has fortunately increased my flexibility."

**-Steven, Eastwood Academy '21**

**168**

students completed  
**195 FLOs**



**466**

students  
received **204**  
acceptances

**592**

students  
submitted **478**  
applications

## FLO FINANCIALS

**TOTAL FLO  
COST**

**\$71,777**

**\$393**

**AVERAGE  
DISCOVERU AID  
AWARD**

**TOTAL FLO  
PROVIDER  
SCHOLARSHIPS**

**\$26,410**

**\$53**

**AVERAGE STUDENT  
BALANCE**

# PROGRAM SUPPORTS & OUTREACH

"For me, I hadn't realized how many opportunities were out there and if it weren't for DiscoverU, I don't think I would have ever done this."

*-Joseph, Washington High School '22*



**3,107**

**Presentations &  
FLO advising  
sessions**

**9,193**

**emails sent to  
parents and  
students**

**11,051**

**Text  
messages  
exchanged**

**611**

**Answered  
phone calls  
with students &  
parents**

## OF FLO COMPLETERS:

**93%**

**Used the Student  
Portal to find their  
FLO**

**96%**

**Interacted with their  
FLO Advisor at least  
once**

**80%**

**Interacted with other  
DU staff in preparing  
for their FLO**

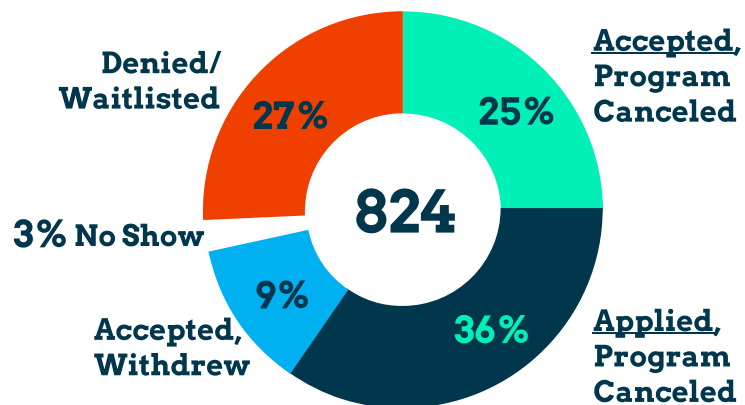
**66%**

**Received and  
responded to text  
messages**



# COVID IMPACTS

## REASONS FOR NON-PARTICIPATION



# 582

students submitted **824** applications that did NOT result in FLO completion

of those applicants, **113** were supported to successfully complete another FLO program

# 113

# 96

students applied to multiple FLOs but did not successfully complete any





# OUR STAFF

**Our staff grew to 14 this year, the largest in organizational history!**



**Esther Argueta**  
FLO Advisor



**Julius Bayone**  
FLO Advisor



**Rose Castillo-Reyes**  
FLO Advisor



**Lynda Daniel**  
FLO Consultant



**Whitney Casey Griffin**  
FLO Program Manager



**Emily Sketch Haines**  
Director of Programs



**Rodrick Hawkins**  
FLO Advisor



**Presley Liesman**  
FLO Program Coordinator



**Abigail Molloy**  
FLO Access Manager



**Nyra Tanner**  
FLO Advisor



**Maria Thompson**  
FLO Advisor



**Stephanie Turcio**  
FLO Advisor



**George Vander Veer**  
Executive Director



**Ashley Willett**  
Director of Development

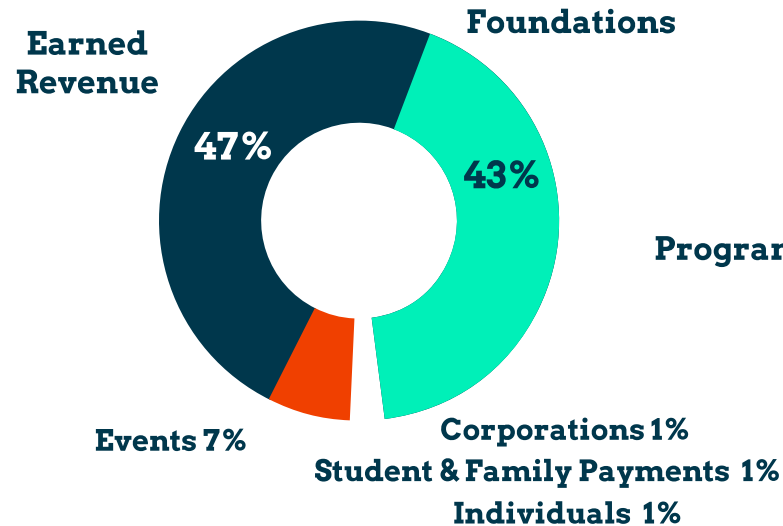
# FINANCIALS

## REVENUE

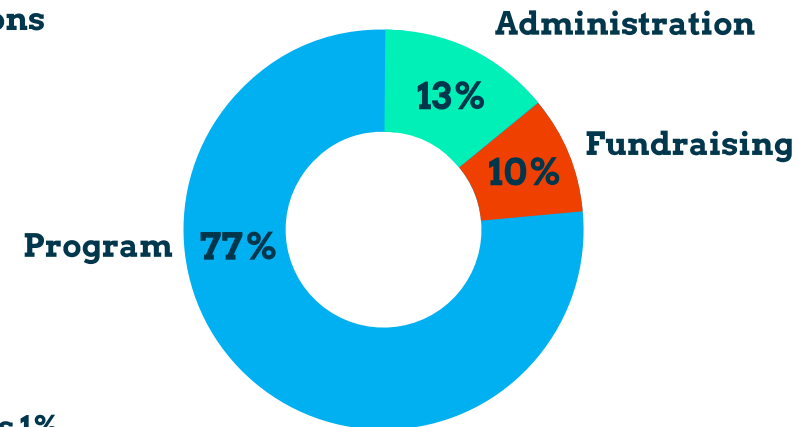
**EARNED: \$559,902**  
**PRIVATE: \$610,804**  
**EXPENSES: \$1,037,667**

**NET GAIN:**  
**\$133,039**

## INCOME



## EXPENSES



## FUNDERS & PARTNERS

Samuels Family Foundation



HOUSTON  
ENDOWMENT

The Powell Foundation



Tapeats  
Fund

EMERGE



CRISTOREY  
JESUIT  
COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL OF HOUSTON

**HISD**  
Innovation & Postsecondary  
Programming





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# ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Nadia Bruner**

*Suttle Freeman, LLC*

**Amber Ramirez-Hoffman**

*DiscoverU Parent*

**Dr. Scott Van Beck**

*Community Volunteer*

**Monica Piquet-Rodriguez**

*DiscoverU Co-Founder*

**Dr. Bobbi Samuels**

*Samuels Family Foundation*

**Champ D. Warren III**

*Smith Warren & Associates*

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**Thank  
You,  
Donors!**