Poor Get College Counseling

Programs aim to help students whose parents lack higher education navigate process

By Joan Mirochnick

Erin Kelly grew up poor with parents who never went to college, but she is about to do something only 33% of Americans like her do: earn a degree.

The Bottom Line is a relatively new, nonprofit organization that helps students with low-income backgrounds gain access to higher education. Three years ago, the group served just a few dozen students; now it has expanded to 100 schools across the country.

The group, which works with students in the Boston, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles areas, has helped over 2,000 students in just four years. They work with students from low-income families to help them achieve their academic goals.

Bottom Line's services are free to students, creating the nonprofit out of their own pocket. They do research on their own, hire private college consultants to work with their children on the college application process, and give students financial aid.

Poorer students often lack the guidance and support they need to succeed. They don't apply to four-year schools, even when they have the grades to succeed. Others apply, but don't get accepted.

Researchers find that intensive counseling programs are helping disadvantaged students.

Boston-based Bottom Line advises some 3,000 disadvantaged students annually, from junior year of high school through college. It works with students in the Boston, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles areas who show academic promise. Bottom Line's services are free to students, creating the nonprofit out of their own pocket. They do research on their own, hire private college consultants to work with their children on the college application process, and give students financial aid. Bottom Line, started in 1997, works to help low-income students gain access to higher education.

Bottom Line, started in 1997, works to help low-income students gain access to higher education. It provides counseling services to help students navigate the college admission process and find financial aid. Bottom Line is one of several nonprofit organizations that help low-income students achieve their academic goals.

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