

IMPACT REPORT: EMERGE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Vision + Mission

EMERGE's mission is to empower and prepare high performing students from underserved communities to attend and graduate from selective colleges and universities across the nation.

Opportunity and Impact

There are untapped opportunities for underserved youth available at selective colleges with robust financial resources and academic offerings, as only 3% of the students at the nation's most selective institutions come from the bottom quartile income level, whereas 72% come from the top-quartile. Despite a broad perception that selective colleges are financially inaccessible, selective colleges often have large endowments and desire to attract and enroll the most highly qualified students from all backgrounds. Even though financial aid policies make it very feasible for a low-income student to receive aid from selective colleges, less than ¼ of high-achieving, low-income students ever even apply to these institutions.¹



EMERGE identifies 10th grade students across the district, and between 11th and 12th grade, students participate in after-school sessions, receiving support to enroll in high-impact summer opportunities and intensive college and financial aid advising. Additionally, students attend summer college visits and mentoring. Through EMERGE's developmental and holistic approach, the district has increased the number of HISD students applying to and matriculation to selective colleges and universities.² Our most recent graduating class of 350 students applied to an average of seven selective colleges and universities, with 81% attending colleges classified as very selective to most selective.

Studies have highlighted that low-income students who attend selective colleges benefit from greater levels of support and resources, graduating at much higher rates compared to their peers with similar academic preparation attending less selective institutions.³ 83% of EMERGE students have graduated college within six years, and thousands of EMERGE alumni have become talented and active community members; there is a great need in the community to continue preparing the city's future leaders through Houston ISD's EMERGE program.

¹ Giancola, J., & Kahlenberg, R.D. (2016). True Merit: Ensuring Our Brightest Students Have Access to Our Best Colleges and Universities. *Jack Kent Cooke Foundation*. https://www.jkcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/JKCF_True_Merit_FULLReport.pdf.

² Holzman, B., Thrash, C., & Chukhray, I. (2022). *Understanding the Effect of EMERGE on HISD Student Outcomes*. Houston, TX: Houston Education Research Consortium, Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University.

³ "Family Income and the College Completion Gap." Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy, 15 July 2017, <https://edpolicy.education.jhu.edu/family-income-and-the-college-completion-gap/>.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Target Student Population

700 high performing, low-income students across 42 HISD campuses

Target Grade Level

10th – 12th grade *students are recruited in 10th grade, they start the program their junior year.

Student to Staffing Ratio

- The student to staffing ratio for Program Managers who work with 11th grade students is 50:1 (average).
- The student to staffing ratio for Program Managers who work with 12th grade students is 40:1 (average).

List of Campuses and Staffing

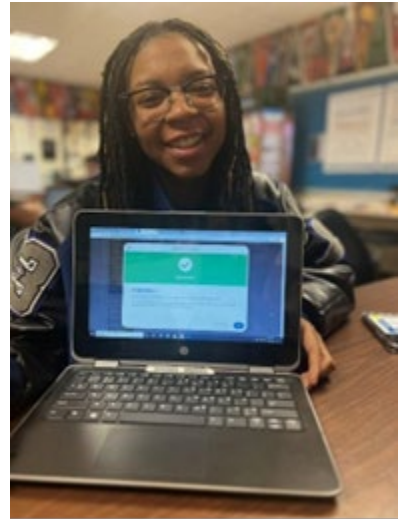
We serve 42 HISD campuses and have two program managers assigned to each school.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Austin High School | Mickey Leland College Prep |
| Bellaire High School | Milby High School |
| Carnegie Vanguard High School | Mount Carmel Academy |
| Challenge Early College HS | North Forest High School |
| Chavez High School | North Houston Early College HS |
| DeBakey HSHP | Northside High School |
| East Early College HS | Scarborough High School |
| Eastwood Academy | Sharpstown High School |
| Energized for STEM Acd Central | Sharpstown International |
| Energy Institute High School | South Early College HS |
| Furr High School | Sterling High School |
| Heights High School | Texas Connections Academy Hou |
| Houston Academy International | Waltrip High School |
| Houston MSTC | Washington BT High School |
| Jones Futures Academy | Westbury High School |
| Kashmere High School | Westside High School |
| Kinder HSPVA | Wheatley High School |
| Lamar High School | Wisdom High School |
| Law and Justice High School | Worthing High School |
| Long Academy | Yates High School |
| Madison High School | Young Women's College Prep |

PROGRAM IMPACT

Student contact amount (hours, sessions)

- Juniors attend 13 total curriculum sessions (26 hours of instruction) + at least two annual individual check-ins with their Program Manager.
- Seniors have at least 12 individual check-ins their senior year with their Program Manager + four spring curriculum sessions on the transition to college



Goal Progress (22-23)

- 12th Grade
 - 87% of the Class of 2023 submitted five or more applications to EMERGE Target Schools.
 - Goal: 85%
 - 98% of the Class of 2023 in the top 10% applied to UT and/or Texas A&M.
 - Goal: 100%
 - 94% of the Class of 2023 outside of the top 10% applied to at least one TX public university they had assured admissions to by January 15th.
 - Goal: 85%
 - 91% of the Class of 2023 submitted an early application to an EMERGE Target School.
 - Goal: 90%
- 11th Grade
 - 97% of students created a Common App account AND completed the Activities section.
 - Goal: 95%
 - 75% of our juniors have applied to at least two outside learning opportunities
 - Goal: 80%

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Notable events

The annual **New Student Orientation** welcomed the newest class of EMERGE Fellows: The Class of 2024. This event took place on Saturday, August 27th at Worthing HS, and included sessions for both students and their parents/guardians. 600 people, including students and their families, attended the event.



On Saturday, December 3, EMERGE led a goal-setting workshop **on How to Make the Most Out of High School** at Rice University for 30 10th grade students who participated in Connectrix (formerly Young Owls) the summer after their 9th grade year. The students represented the following high schools: Carnegie (5), HAIS, Jane Long (4), HSPVA, Northside (2), Sam Houston (6), Westbury, and Young Women's (11). The session had the following learning outcomes: 1. Identify and define the 10 components of a selective college application, 2. Rank what is important to selective colleges and universities, and 3. Gain an understanding on what I can do NOW to prepare for the college journey.



On Saturday, March 4th, EMERGE hosted a **How to Pay for College** event for juniors and their families at Worthing High School from 9 am to noon. At the event, participants learned about the importance of filing taxes and how filing taxes directly contributes to the amount of financial aid a student will receive. EMERGE presented information on how to file taxes and the common mistakes we have seen in the past in terms of filing statuses. Families viewed examples of financial aid packages and learned about FAFSA and the CSS Profile. About one-third of families attended with their student, so there were about 300 people at the event.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)



On March 29, March 30, and April 18, EMERGE hosted 415 9th and 10th grade students from 19 campuses at Rice University for the **HISD Young Scholars Camp**. Students from Austin, Bellaire, Chavez, Furr, Houston MSTC, Kashmere, Madison, Milby, Northside, Scarborough, Sharpstown, Sterling, Waltrip, Booker T. Washington, Westbury, Wheatley, Wisdom, Worthing, and Yates learned about selective college admissions from Rice University, the importance of preparing for the PSAT with Khan Academy from College Readiness, the benefits of taking rigorous courses in high school from Postsecondary Programming, and the EMERGE program.



On May 13, EMERGE is hosting its annual **EMERGE Senior Celebration** for the Class of 2023. The event is meant to recognize each EMERGE senior for their accomplishments and to welcome them into the EMERGE Scholar community. The event begins with a brunch for students and their families. During the ceremony, we provide highlights on the class and recognize seniors who were nominated by EMERGE staff members to receive the HISD Impact Award, an award for an EMERGE senior who has made an impact on their school community.



Five EMERGE juniors will be traveling to London this summer. The British American Foundation offers high school students an opportunity to travel to Great Britain to visit sites of historic, cultural, and artistic importance, and learn about British culture. Of the 10 students who were selected to receive the Junior Achiever Award for this summer, five are EMERGE juniors. The selected students represent the following high schools: Chavez, Energy, Sharpstown International, Westside, and Young Women's. Key takeaways from the previous year's event included: "Visiting Windsor Castle and walking in the room that Queen Elizabeth had sat her foot on felt so surreal. Seeing the London Eye and riding the Uber Boat across the London Bridge was something I could only imagine. Eating fish n chips at Brighton made me feel like the coolest African-born American girl."

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)

Additional Highlights

- Five EMERGE juniors were selected to participate in the prestigious summer program, Thrive Scholars. Over 1,400 students across the nation applied, about 700 advanced to the finalist round, and only 250 nationwide were offered admissions to the program. Recipients represent four high schools: Carnegie, HAIS, Sharpstown International, and Texas Connections Academy. Thrive Scholars receive six years of comprehensive support from their junior year in high school to after they graduate college. Over 90% of Thrive Scholars end up attending top 100 colleges, and 85% of them earn a B average or better in college with an average GPA of 3.4. In addition, Thrive Scholars offers specialized career advising for the following pathways: Tech & Engineering, Life Sciences, Finance, Consulting, and Law.
- Terrance Evans, a senior at North Forest HS, was awarded the Dr. Michael L. Lomax Student Success Scholarship, a full-ride scholarship to attend Morehouse College.
- Francisco Chavez, an EMERGE senior at Milby High School, was awarded the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship, a highly selective scholarship that provides up to \$55K/year. He was one of 100 students selected from 5,600 applicants nationwide. He will be attending Johns Hopkins University in the fall.
- Seven of our EMERGE seniors were awarded the Posse Scholarship, and 10 were awarded the QuestBridge Match Scholarship.
- Karina Urias, a senior at Waltrip HS, will be attending West Point next fall.
- EMERGE was selected as the National Association for College Admission Counseling's 2022 Inclusion, Access, and Success Award honoree.
- In October 2022, Bentley University, a private institution in Waltham, MA, invited four EMERGE seniors to visit the campus. The students who attended the fly-in were from Sharpstown HS, Young Women's, East Early, and Milby. Bentley has a 90% six-year graduation rate and meets 100% of a student's financial need. Its focus is on combining a business education with arts and sciences.



CHALLENGES

A major challenge for EMERGE is sustainability. We are entering the last year of a three-year cycle of funding from the Houston Endowment, which has been our primary source of funding for the past eight years. The Houston Endowment decreased its funding each year of this grant to push HISD to provide more of its own funding toward the program. With the current budget constraints facing the district, the future of EMERGE is at risk.

We are working with the EMERGE Fellowship's Development team and recently embarked on a joint brand refresh project to ensure that the history and impact of EMERGE is captured in a way that fosters greater support for the program. We have also worked on potential solutions that would make the program leaner, such as eliminating the college trip portion of the program. We are also exploring how we could leverage out-of-state outside learning opportunities and a fly-in program.

Next Steps



EMERGE is weighing changes to the 11th grade year, which is curriculum heavy. Eleventh grade Program Managers have reported difficulty reaching more influence-type goals when one-on-one time with students is limited. The 12th grade team has expressed concerns about the quality of work students are producing in their 11th grade year.

Another change we are exploring is re-introducing test prep. EMERGE took a break from test prep during the pandemic with the shift to test optional policies. However, data on the admit rates for students who submitted test scores and who did not was recently released at a conference, and the admit rates were higher for students who submitted their test scores. The data also mentioned that GPAs are losing their signaling strength since grading policies have, across the board, become more lenient. Colleges' confidence in GPA as a sign of academic preparedness has declined.

EMERGE is exploring a partnership with an outside organization called Prompt to alleviate the editing support our staff currently provides students and to ensure that students are getting high-quality, consistent feedback on their essays. It's difficult to ensure that all Program Managers are excellent advisers AND editors.

STUDENT STORY HIGHLIGHTS



Edwin Ortiz Aguirre, Worthing High School '19, Earlham College '23

“My high school journey was turbulent as something unexpected happened. I was deported to El Salvador at the start of my freshman year. I was there for almost two years, and when I came back, my zoned school, Worthing High School, held me back a year. At first, this seemed like a setback, but looking back, this was a very crucial time, as it made me eligible to apply for the EMERGE program as a rising junior.

I did not know about EMERGE until I was selected to attend a recruitment session, where I met Mr. Lopez. He gave us a presentation on what EMERGE is and how it helps high-achieving low-income students like myself enroll in college. I was initially naive, thinking that the program would fund my college education, but I soon realized that what the program does is beyond valuable.

My journey as an EMERGE Fellow has been nothing short of amazing! Thanks to the program, I got the opportunity to tour colleges I never thought I would. I was one of the many students who toured colleges in the Boston area, where we stayed at Brandeis University and toured Harvard, Tufts University, Wheaton College, and others.

I am grateful for the EMERGE program because it has guided me in becoming a better student and person overall. The program does so much more than just help you apply to college. The sense of community and belonging fostered by EMERGE is truly special. I have connected with like-minded peers who share similar aspirations, and we have formed lasting friendships and support networks. I also consider everyone who mentored me as my family.

My personal experience with EMERGE and my dedication to its mission has motivated me to join the team after I graduate college. I am eager to contribute to EMERGE's efforts in making a positive impact on the lives of first-generation, low-income students.”

STUDENT STORY HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)

Excerpt from Houston Chronicle opinion piece written by Derrick Ngo, Energy Institute '19, Harvard University '23

“I’m a senior at Energy Institute High School in the Houston Independent School District. I am honored to share my journey. Before I continue, please remember this: Each of you has the power to help someone beat the odds.



I grew up with the odds stacked against me. I am one of six children and the first of my siblings to go to college. I don’t have my father in my life. I attended 12 different schools between kindergarten and 8th grade. And, for most of my life, my mother has been in and out of jail.

That is five strikes against me. When people think about the type of student who gets into the most selective colleges in the country, no one is imagining a student with my story.

Because students with my story don’t go to the most selective colleges in the country unless they have a program like EMERGE in their lives. Most people with my story end up like my siblings have — high school dropouts and incarcerated.

But calculating the odds has always been part of my DNA. When you spend every weekend of your childhood running around casinos, while your mother gambles away everything, you learn quickly that to survive you have to pay attention. So, when I entered high school, I decided that I needed to attend one school for all four years. To do that, I had to live alone and not depend on my mother’s transient lifestyle.

When I started high school, overnight, I transformed from a “C” student to an “A” student, and I became the valedictorian of my high school.

In 10th grade, I attended the information session on my campus about EMERGE — a program that prepares high-performing students from underserved communities to attend selective colleges and universities. I heard about other EMERGE students who had gotten into schools like Penn, Stanford, and Duke all on full scholarships. I knew this program was a “beat the odds” opportunity, so as soon as the application opened, I applied. A month later, I was accepted.

Over the last two years, EMERGE has taken me to visit colleges all over the country, connected me to a rigorous summer program at Princeton, helped me to increase my SAT scores and connected me to incredibly talented program managers. ...

This fall, I decided to apply to the most selective college in the country — Harvard. Last year, they accepted 1,900 students out of 42,000 applicants. I did the math: That’s 4.5 percent admit rate. The odds were stacked against me.”

GOAL ALIGNMENT

Program Goal

To increase the number of high performing, low-income students who attend and graduate from the nation's most selective colleges and universities on-time and with limited debt.

Board Goal Progress

The percentage of graduates that meet the criteria for CCMR as measured in Domain 1 of the state accountability system will increase 8 percentage points from 63% for 17–18 graduates to 71% for 22–23 graduates reported in 2024.

Office of CCMR Department Goals

- Increase the number of schools achieving A-C in domain 1 of the state accountability system.
- Increase out-of-classroom learning and experiential opportunities for students in CCMR programs.

Short-term Goals/Outcomes

- Accept a class of 365 sophomores (Class of 2025) composed of: $\geq 22\%$ African American , $\geq 40\%$ Male , $\geq 90\%$ First Gen & Low-Income, ≥ 5 students/campus,
- 95% of juniors complete the Common App Activities section.
- 90% of juniors write a draft of their personal statement of 400 + words.
- 80% of juniors participate in an outside learning opportunity before senior year.
- 75% of juniors complete two teacher recommendation request forms.

Mid-term Goals/Outcomes

- 90% of seniors submit an early application to an EMERGE Target School.
- 100% of seniors in the top 10% apply to UT and/or Texas A&M, and 85% of seniors outside the top 10% apply to at least one TX public university outside of Houston that they have assured admission to by Jan. 15.
- 85% of seniors apply to at least 5 EMERGE Target Schools.
- 70% of all seniors' financial aid letters will be collected.

Long-term Goals/Outcomes

- 85% of seniors matriculate to (and graduate from) a selective college or university (EMERGE Target School + "EMERGE-approved" TX public universities + other colleges with $\geq 65\%$ six-year graduation rates.
- 96% of our high school graduating classes successfully matriculate to their stated college or university.
- 75% of students report they are satisfied with their college experience.⁴
- 75% of students graduate with less than \$22K in debt.⁵
- 80% of students graduate from college within six years.