



"Dreams aren't just fantasy, they are road maps waiting to be used."

The Problem

Georgia is experiencing an opportunity gap in education. The high school graduation rate is only 72.5%, 3.5% below the national average (GradNation). We see that a contributing factor to this gap is a lack of peer mentorship and supportive communities. While some mentorship programs exist, they are not student-led or driven. Therefore, the lack of interest, support and motivation often causes students to give up on their dreams.

The Market

Many programs seek to tackle the problem of low graduation rates. Some do this through rigorous after school academic programs, some focus on adult mentorship, and others provide extracurricular activities to keep students engaged. Some use peer mentorship as the key method keeping students in school, and have monthly meetings and events. Like many other programs, Dream Chasers' after school program has academics, extracurricular activities and mentorship meetings. However, it is special in that it is student-led. All students are empowered in creating their community.

Budget

Dream Chasers has won \$5,500 from previous grant competitions. We are applying for a Davis Projects for Peace Grant, as well as a PCSE Seed Grant. This budget reflects what we would do if we won \$10,000.

\$7,000 - Building

Last year, Dream Chasers lost the Kennesaw Teen Center due to gentrification. Having a center is integral to vision of Dream Chasers. Having a center provides a place for students to spend time after school, and for mentors to lead workshops and events. This amount will help us secure a location for training and operation during the 2017-2018 school year and beyond.

\$1,000 - Community Engagement

Dream Chasers will use this money to engage the community during the summer and spread the word about the organization and its work. We will put out advertisements and hold promotional community events. These include a movie night, a flag football tournament and giving out free ice cream at the local park.

\$1,000 - Back to School Bash

For the past three years, Dream Chasers has held a Back to School Bash to get students excited about the upcoming school year. Last year, over 500 students and the Mayor of Kennesaw attended. At this event, Dream Chasers will pass out backpacks and school supplies.

\$500 - Training

With the help of school counselors, Dream Chasers is recruiting upperclassmen high schoolers and local college students to be mentors. These mentors will undergo a five day training workshop during the summer. This will cover activity costs, handouts, and food for the mentors.

\$500 - Legal Fees

This will cover any fees for forms, applications, or accounting that needs to be done.

Our Timeline

Now until May

Recruit, interview and create team of high school and college mentors.

June 1st

Sign a lease for Dream Chasers' new location and move into the new space.

June 26th-30th

Train new mentors using the Dream Chasers curriculum

All of July

Community engagement and relationship building with potential supporters, sponsors, and funders for the Back to School Bash and for the future

August 5th

Dream Chasers' 4th annual Back to School Bash

Our Solution

Dream Chasers is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to closing the opportunity gaps in the South and Midwest by creating student-led communities guided by school counselors. For three years, our after-school peer mentorship program in Kennesaw, GA has been providing students with an environment that supports them through graduation, and to achieve their academic dreams beyond. Our model is fully student-led and matches middle schoolers with high school students, and the same high schoolers with college students. Senior mentors provide encouragement, lead college-readiness and leadership trainings, and help students find opportunities using our scholarship app S.H.I.P. - School Help is Possible. Mentors and mentees also build a strong community with regular events and monthly community service projects.

Metrics

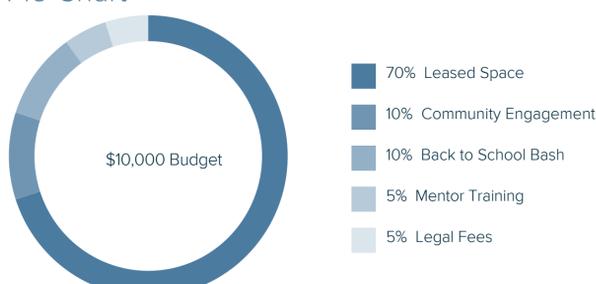
Dream Chasers is dedicated to supporting students in following their academic dreams. We want to help students not only graduate from high school, but go on to college. Therefore, our markers for success will be increases in high school graduation rates, and increases in the number of students winning scholarships. Right now we are located in Kennesaw, GA, but our long term vision is replicating our model of a supportive, peer community to Atlanta and beyond.

Short term goals:
 -To train 40 college and 40 high school mentors over the summer
 -To lease a 1,400 square foot center for Dream Chasers by June 1st

Medium goals:
 -To be in partnership with 10 prominent middle and high schools in Kennesaw
 -To increase our partnerships with foundations and potential stakeholders who want to support Dream Chasers' work

Long term goals:
 -To increase the high school graduation rate in Kennesaw
 -To scale Dream Chasers to Atlanta, and to replicate the success that Dream Chasers has achieved in Kennesaw by 2018

Pie Chart



The Dream Team



Name: AJ Wilson

Founder and Executive Director of Dream Chasers

Email: alwilson@wesleyan.edu

Major: Government (American Politics)

Certificates: Education and Civic Engagement

Class: 2018

I bring a very tenacious attitude that looks for results and not simply things that sound good. I am a resourceful leader who knows his strengths but is smart enough to recognize and admit his weaknesses. I am a listener who looks to collaborate with others and is not afraid to take calculated risks. I personally care about this work because I am a product of Kennesaw Georgia and love the city of Atlanta with all my heart. I know that I am so fortunate to be one of the few students to go to a school like Wesleyan and I am dedicated to changing that culture in Kennesaw and making Georgia an educational leader nationally because these are my people.



Name: Rhea Drozdenko

Deputy Director of Dream Chasers

Email: rdrozdenko@wesleyan.edu

Major: Sociology

Certificate: Civic Engagement

Class: 2018

I am a passionate individual who cares about people and bringing community involvement everywhere I go. I am a social intrapreneur, presenting creative ways of thinking to a pre-existing organization. With five years of experience with public speaking, volunteer management, and creating workable systems, I offer coalition-building skills and attention to detail. Most importantly, I am passionate about helping idealistic people bring innovative visions into reality. As someone who came from a working-class family, attended community college, and is now at Wesleyan University—I understand the power of mentorship and strong community.



Name: Julian Payne

Director of Kennesaw, GA Dream Chasers

Email: julian.payne31@yahoo.com

Major: Computer Science and Applied Statistics

Minor: Mathematics

Class: 2017 at Kennesaw State University

Growing up I was always taught the importance of education. Even as a toddler, I would sit in my nana's classroom and watch as she taught her special needs students with such passion and exuberance even I was in awe at least as much as a two year old possibly could. Behind every great man or woman, there is someone who took the time to see the hidden value in them and made the decision to make a personal investment in their lives. Just like my nana who took her time to pour into her students, I want to give other students the same opportunities I had because I consider education the great equalizer. I have always wanted to pour into other people's lives and have the opportunity to be that role model, but more importantly the person who sees value in them when it is invisible to most.

Our Partners

