



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: HACLA Press Release

SoCal CAN partners with the Housing Authority for the City of Los Angeles to provide college advising to public housing residents

Alison de Lucca, executive director of SoCal CAN took time to chat with David Kietzman, managing partner at [Momentum Solutions](#) about the [Project Soar](#) program and their exciting new partnership with the HACLA.

When the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced it was launching a two-year pilot program to help low-income public housing students nationwide pursue higher education, the Housing Authority of Los Angeles (HACLA) turned to its best local resource to collaborate.

Southern California College Access Network (SoCal CAN), an alliance of over 70 organizations that collectively works to promote a college-going and completion culture for low-income and first-generation students in Southern California, was well positioned to help HACLA, the nation's largest and leading public housing authorities, provide college planning and financial aid advising to its residents ages 15 to 20.

"SoCal CAN isn't a direct service provider but this was an exciting opportunity for us to tap into the deep and varied expertise of our member organizations," said SoCal CAN Executive Director Alison De Lucca. Since it began in 2005, SoCal CAN has cultivated a network of college access and success organizations that gather to learn from each other, collaborate to leverage resources and advocate on higher education policies.

Its success is verifiable: National statistics indicate that only about eleven percent of low-income students who enter college ultimately graduate, but students tracked through SoCal CAN's member groups graduate at rates between 78 and 85 percent.

In December HUD announced that HACLA would receive \$452,000 from Project SOAR (Students + Opportunities + Achievements = Results) to deploy three full-time "Education Navigators" to serve 250 students ages 15 to 20 through College Resource Hubs established at five HACLA sites (one downtown, one in East Los Angeles and three in South Central Los Angeles).

With funding in place, HACLA and SoCal CAN went to work on developing an effective program plan that would satisfy HUD criteria. They decided to adopt a "drop in" model already utilized by SoCal CAN member College Access Plan. Through this flexible approach Education Navigators will give students individualized counseling and step-by-step advice during office hours, to best address their specific needs and grade-level issues.

Partnership is a key ingredient for success, so two other SoCal CAN member organizations were asked to contribute. As the grant places heavy emphasis on helping students and families complete the U.S. Department of Education’s Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce will hold financial aid workshops; its yearly L.A. Cash for College workshops have helped more than 238,000 students and families apply for financial aid programs since 2002.

To help reinforce the college going culture at home, Family in Schools (FIS) will conduct a series of workshops designed for parents and guardians. FIS currently partners with over 400 schools and organizations to empower parents and families in supporting their children’s education.

Level Up, SoCal CAN’s regional college success program, will give first generation college students extra support during their critical freshman year by connecting them with an upperclassman ambassador and additional resources to ensure a successful year.

Project SOAR launched in September 2017 on all five housing sites. The Education Navigators have been developing relationships with residents and other social service organizations at the housing site while simultaneously helping a growing number of students apply to college, submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and research scholarship opportunities.

“This is SoCal CAN’s first contract with a public agency and with it we have an opportunity to leverage public and private dollars to reach more students who would otherwise not be receiving support,” she said. “As a network we are committed to creating greater collaborations. The expansion of college access ecosystem is so core to who we are and what we do.”

Together we **CAN.**