



**UNLIMITED POTENTIAL
UNPARALLED SUPPORT**

IMPACT REPORT 2025-2026

**More students.
More pathways.
More opportunity.
Greater long-term impact.**

Walk Alongside. Open Doors. Uplift Futures.

UPRVA.COM

AT A GLANCE

A YEAR OF GROWTH. A FUTURE OF POSSIBILITY.

In 2025-2026, UP RVA continued to expand opportunity across every stage of the educational journey, strengthening supports, deepening partnerships, and seeing our students thrive.



50

STUDENTS SUPPORTED

across middle school, high school, and college.



4

NEW COLLEGE GRADUATES

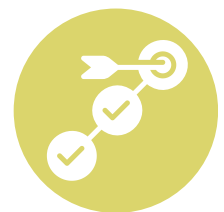
stepping into the next chapter of their lives and careers.



20

NEW STUDENTS JOINING THE PIPELINE

(6th grade - 9th grade) building toward bright futures.



100%

GRADE LEVEL PROMOTION

Students moving forward.



A NEW HOME. MORE POSSIBILITY

This year, UP RVA moved into our new space in Church Hill, a place where students, families, and community can connect, learn, and grow together.



LOOKING AHEAD

With the launch of our middle school program and continued investment in high school and college, we are building momentum for even greater impact in the years to come.

*The future
is bright.*

*We're just
getting started.*

WHAT IS UP RVA?

**ROOTED IN RICHMOND.
POWERED BY PARTNERSHIP.**

We **believe** every student has the potential to thrive. And it takes a community to make it **possible**.



OUR MISSION

UP RVA empowers students to achieve economic sustainability by connecting them to exceptional educational opportunities and surrounding them with the support needed to thrive.



OUR VISION

A Richmond where every student, regardless of circumstance, has the opportunity, support, and confidence to reach their unlimited potential and create lasting change in their communities.

OUR MODEL: PARTNERSHIP AT EVERY STEP

No single organization can change the trajectory of a student's life alone.



STUDENTS & FAMILIES

At the center of everything we do.



STRONG SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Opening doors to exceptional education.



UP RVA

Providing holistic support that empowers students to thrive.



COLLEGE & CAREER

Preparing students for long-term success.



STRONGER RICHMOND

Investing in today's students for a stronger tomorrow.

A FOUNDATIONAL PARTNERSHIP



ANNA JULIA COOPER
SCHOOL



Since UP RVA's founding, Anna Julia Cooper has been an essential partner in identifying talented students and helping families navigate the transition to independent high schools. This trusted partnership continues to open doors and create opportunities.

OUR SCHOOL PARTNERS

Students learn, grow, and thrive at:



St. Christopher's
School



St. Catherine's
School



Collegiate
School



The
Steward
School



Trinity
Episcopal
School

These partnerships provide students with exceptional educational opportunities while UP RVA surrounds them with the academic, social, financial, and personal support needed to succeed.



Opportunity grows when a community works together.

Together, we're creating pathways that no single organization could create alone.



Rooted in Richmond. Powered by Partnership. Building Futures Together.

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THE UP RVA WAY

Throughout this report, you'll see the habits that shape the UP RVA experience and the students growing into them every day.



SELF-MOTIVATION

Knowing your why.

Students lead with purpose and take ownership of their goals and growth.



FUTURE-FOCUSED

Building toward long-term goals.

Students make intentional choices today for the future they envision.



SAYING YES

Staying open to opportunity.

Students embrace new experiences and step into the unknown.



ACADEMIC DRIVE

Committing to growth.

Students push for excellence and challenge themselves to grow.



SELF-ADVOCACY

Seeking support and guidance.

Students ask questions, seek feedback, and use their voice.



COURAGE TO FAIL FORWARD

Learning through challenge.

Students embrace setbacks as part of the journey and keep moving forward.



These habits are more than words. They are the foundation of how we walk alongside students. And how students shape their futures.



“

Opportunity alone is not enough. Students also need the systems, relationships, and long-term support that allow them to fully participate and thrive.”

UP RVA

A LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

IMPACT IS NOT JUST WHAT WE DO—IT'S WHO WE ARE.



“Unlike earthquakes, whose force is measured by seismometers, the impact of our work is measured in human growth.

— Greg McCandless

Five years ago, if you had asked me what the word “impact” meant, I probably would have thought about earthquakes.

Growing up in California, I learned that even a small shift in the ground could create ripples far beyond the epicenter. Today, I think about that word differently. I think about what can happen when a community comes together around young people and their potential.

Nearly ten years ago, **Toby Desch** met a struggling student at Collegiate School and recognized that the barriers standing in her way had nothing to do with her potential. That moment became the starting point for something much larger. What began with one student has grown into a community of **more than 100 young people**, supported by families, educators, donors, volunteers, and our partners at **Collegiate, St. Catherine's, St. Christopher's, Steward, and Trinity Episcopal**.

Over the past five years, we have worked together to deepen that impact by building stronger systems of support for students and families. We see it in students succeeding academically, stepping into new opportunities, becoming the first in their families to attend college, and imagining futures that once felt out of reach.

Unlike earthquakes, whose force is measured by seismometers, the impact of our work is measured in human growth: confidence, resilience, opportunity, and community. And those ripples extend beyond any one student or organization, helping **strengthen the Richmond community we all share**.

Looking ahead, we believe this work matters more than ever. That is why we launched our middle school program in 2025 and why we are thoughtfully preparing to expand our reach in the years ahead while staying deeply grounded in our mission. The world around education and opportunity continues to shift, but the foundation UP RVA built over the last decade is strong. **Because of this community, the impact of UP RVA is only continuing to grow.**

With gratitude,

GREG MCCANDLESS
Executive Director, UP RVA

ACADEMIC IMPACT

ACADEMIC GROWTH THAT LASTS

UP RVA students are taking on greater challenges, building confidence, and developing the habits they need to succeed in high school and beyond.



3.46

MEDIAN GPA

Increased from
3.35 last year



21 OF 24

STUDENTS

are above our 3.0
benchmark



9

STUDENTS

Earned a 3.7+ this
year



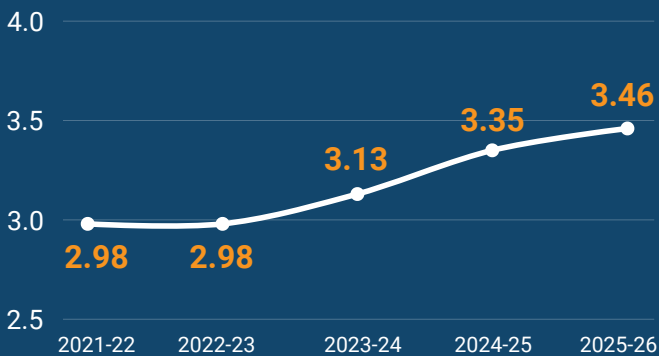
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STUDENTS

earned a 4.0 or
higher

GPA GROWTH OVER TIME

● All High School Students



THE UP RVA WAY IN ACTION

ACADEMIC TRAILBLAZER

Demi Massey, Trinity '28

Demi exemplifies **Academic Drive**, challenging herself with rigorous coursework while maintaining an exceptional academic record. She approaches every opportunity with discipline, maturity, and a desire to reach her full potential.

Her success reflects what becomes possible when talent meets consistent effort.



“

I am sitting here in front of you today, because UP RVA is not just a program — it's a lifeline, a community, a family. It isn't a short-term commitment — it is a lifelong bond.

*Rockira Harris, Howard University
Trinity, Class of 2025*

STRONG, CONSISTENT GROWTH

Of our 17 returning high school students, 13 increased their GPA this year.



+0.21

AVERAGE GPA INCREASE

A 3.5 became a 3.71



WALKING WITH STUDENTS THROUGH COLLEGE

College is a big transition. For many of our students, it also means navigating financial stress, independence, imposter syndrome, and entirely new environments. Our work doesn't end at high school graduation. **In many ways, it evolves.**



22

COLLEGE STUDENTS

Pursuing degrees at 12 colleges and universities.



82%

ON TRACK TO GRADUATE ON TIME

18 of 22 students

≈40–45%
Comparable Student Populations



94%

CONTINUED INTO SOPHOMORE YEAR

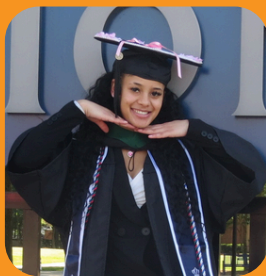
15 of 16 first-year students (past three years)

≈70%
Comparable Student Populations



FOUR MORE COLLEGE GRADUATES.

A FUTURE OF POSSIBILITIES.



KHARI

Old Dominion University
Class of 2026



JAMA

University of Mary Washington
Class of 2026



PARIS

James Madison University
Class of 2026



DEVIN

Old Dominion University
Class of 2026

STARTING EARLIER: OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL PILOT

This year, UP RVA launched its middle school pilot program. An 11 year roadmap of support, opportunity, and belief.



4

STUDENTS

In our pilot class



3

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

across Richmond



FOUNDATIONAL FOCUS

Building confidence, academic habits, and belonging early



THE UP RVA WAY IN ACTION

MOMENTUM MAKER

J'Mya Clemons, Collegiate '28

J'Mya demonstrates remarkable **Self-Motivation**, approaching every day with purpose, determination, and a commitment to continuous growth. She consistently pushes herself academically while encouraging those around her to do the same.

Her drive reminds us that while UP RVA walks alongside students, lasting success begins from within.



OUR COMMITMENT OVER TIME



Building strong foundations today so students can thrive in careers and in life.

Read more about pathways!

UPRVA.COM

7

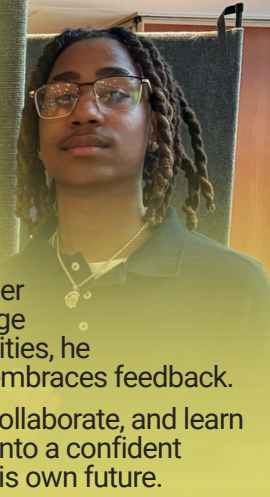


VOICE OF SELF-ADVOCACY

Aaren Cooke, Collegiate '27

Aaren exemplifies **Self-Advocacy**, understanding that success often begins with asking for help. Whether preparing for exams, refining college essays, or exploring new opportunities, he consistently seeks guidance and embraces feedback.

His willingness to communicate, collaborate, and learn from others has helped him grow into a confident leader and a strong advocate for his own future.



A DAY IN MOTION

An average day for an UP RVA high school student.

From the first morning pickup to a late night check-in, we walk alongside our students. On the way, we provide structure, support, and opportunities they need to thrive in school and in life.



6:30 AM

Morning Pickup

Our drivers start early, picking students up across Richmond and getting them to school on time.



7:55 AM

Arrive at school

Students arrive at five independent schools across the Richmond area, ready to learn.



11:00 AM

Study hall check-in

During study hall, our team meets with students on campus to check in, review goals, and problem-solve together.



3:20 PM

After-school pickup

We pick students up from school and transport them to after-school programming, tutoring, athletics, and more.



5:00 PM

Dinner & community

Students share a healthy meal, connect with peers and mentors at after-school on Mondays and Wednesdays throughout the school year.



7:15 PM

Rides home

From practice, rehearsals, events, or after-school we make sure every student gets home safely.



9:00 PM

Evening check-in

A quick text or call to check in on assignments, celebrate wins, and offer support.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY

Our greatest resource is time. As we continue to grow, expanding our academic & operations teams will allow us to spend more meaningful time with more students.



OPERATIONS

WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE OPPORTUNITY REAL

Behind every class, practice, college visit, and late-night ride home is a vast network of people and resources. These numbers reflect the scale and commitment required throughout the **2025–2026 school year** to ensure every student can fully participate.



98,556

MILES DRIVEN

Across Richmond and beyond to get students where they need to be.



11,058

PICKUPS AND DROPOFFS

Transportation touchpoints to schools, programs, events, practices, and more.



1,502

MEALS SERVED

Nutritious meals served at after-school programming and events.



50+

FAMILIES

No two days look the same. Keeping up with the moving pieces of daily life.



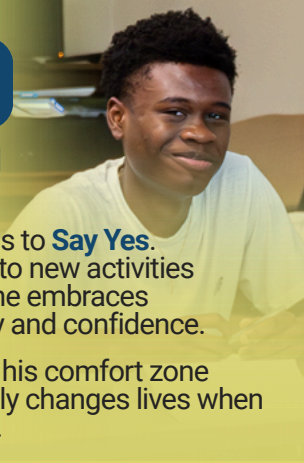
THE UP RVA WAY IN ACTION

OPPORTUNITY CHAMPION

Ma'Khi Damon, Trinity '29

Ma'Khi embodies what it means to **Say Yes**. From leadership opportunities to new activities and meaningful relationships, he embraces every opportunity with curiosity and confidence.

His willingness to step outside his comfort zone reminds us that opportunity only changes lives when students choose to embrace it.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT DAYS

275

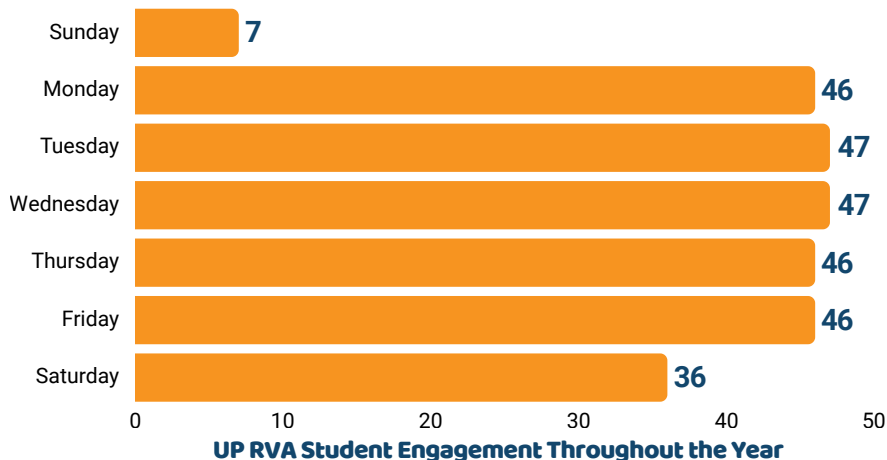
UP RVA engaged with students throughout the year



180

Typical school year

Our work extends well beyond the school calendar. From after-school programming and transportation to weekends, summer programming, college support, and more, UP RVA engaged with students on 275 days this year.



UP RVA Student Engagement Throughout the Year



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY

As UP RVA grows into middle school and expands enrollment, transportation coordination and operational capacity will continue to grow in complexity and importance.



OUR GOAL
Remove barriers.
Create access.
Change lives.

BECOMING

WHO THEY'VE BECOME. WHO THEY'RE BECOMING.

A new tradition. A full-circle moment.

This year, UP RVA introduced two pinning ceremonies that bookended the high school journey.

Freshmen were welcomed into the community and challenged to begin building the habits that will shape their future. Seniors were celebrated for the growth, resilience, and character they have demonstrated throughout their high school years.

Together, the ceremonies served as a reminder that every UP RVA student is on a journey of becoming.

UP RVA WHO THEY'RE BECOMING Freshman Pinning Ceremony

[READ MORE](#)

A moment to welcome our freshman into the UP RVA community and challenge them to embrace growth, ask for help, and say yes to the opportunities ahead.



WHO THEY'VE BECOME Senior Pinning Ceremony

[READ MORE](#)

A moment to celebrate our seniors and the incredible young adults they have become—ready to lead, ready to serve, and ready for what's next.



NEARLY \$200,000 AWARDED

In addition to UP RVA scholarship awards, the Class of 2026 earned more than \$200,000 in scholarships from colleges, universities, and external organizations.

UP RVA SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

TOBY DESCH FOUNDER'S SCHOLARSHIP \$5,500 ONE-TIME AWARD



Awarded to a senior who embodies the heart of UP RVA—excellence, character, and commitment to uplifting others.

NAIIM BYRD

"The mayor" shows up for every opportunity and inspires everyone around him with his positive presence and leadership.

SELF-MOTIVATED SCHOLAR \$2,500 PER YEAR FOR 4 YEARS (\$10,000 TOTAL)



Awarded to a student who takes initiative, stays resilient, and never gives up—finding a way every time.

NY'KEILA SHORT

Humble, focused, and consistently pushing herself to try new things and grow in every way.

FUTURE-FOCUSED SCHOLAR \$1,250 PER YEAR FOR 4 YEARS (\$5,000 TOTAL)



Awarded to a student with determination, vision, and the drive to succeed in college and beyond.

TAE'VEON JOHNSON

Laser focused on his dreams and goals—on the field, in the classroom, and in his community.

WHAT'S NEXT: EIGHT SENIORS. COUNTLESS MEMORIES. BRIGHT FUTURES AHEAD.



ROCQUEL
WILSON



TAE'VEON
JOHNSON



TYRA
GILLIAM



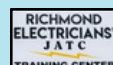
NAIIM
BYRD



NY'KEILA
SHORT



NACERE
HART



DAE'ZARRIAH
COLES



TAVON
MCKENZIE



ADMISSIONS & STUDENT MOVEMENT

BUILDING PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY

UP RVA students move through an intentional network of schools, relationships, and opportunities—guided by people who believe in them and a community that walks alongside them through every step.



STARTING EARLIER

Middle School Admissions

5 NEW STUDENTS

Joining UP RVA in Middle School for Fall 2025

3 NEW 6TH GRADERS

- St. Christopher's School
- St. Catherine's School
- Collegiate School

2 NEW 7TH GRADERS

- St. Christopher's School
- Collegiate School

WHERE THEY ARE COMING FROM

- 1 Student from Saint Andrew's School
- 3 Students from public schools Richmond (2), Henrico (1)
- 1 student joining UP RVA while continuing at Collegiate.



PREPARING FOR HIGH SCHOOL

Provisionally Admitted 7th Graders

9 PROVISIONALLY ADMITTED

for the 2027-2028 school year



7 students from Anna Julia Cooper



1 student from Landmark Christian



1 student from Orchard House



These students will continue 8th grade at their current schools in 2026-2027 while UP RVA works with them and their families to prepare for high school placement at one of our five partner schools



ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL

New 9th Graders for Fall 2026

8 NEW 9TH GRADERS

Joining our high school partner schools



2 students moving up from middle school



5 students from Anna Julia Cooper



1 student from Seven Hills School

HEADED TO OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS

- St. Christopher's School
- St. Catherine's School
- Collegiate School
- Steward School
- Trinity Episcopal School



BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

Our Class of 2026

8 NEW GRADUATES

8 high school graduates headed to the next step



7 college commitments



1 4-year trade school



Bright Futures Ahead



Lifelong UP RVA Community



Our graduates are stepping into new chapters and are ready to lead, give back, and create change.



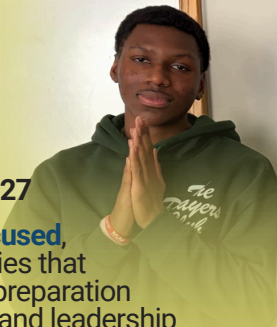
THE UP RVA WAY IN ACTION

EYES ON THE FUTURE

Henry Wyche, St. Christopher's '27

Henry is consistently **Future-Focused**, investing today in the opportunities that will shape tomorrow. From SAT preparation to college access programming and leadership experiences, he approaches each step with purpose.

His determination and long-term vision are building a strong foundation for the future he hopes to achieve.



A PARTNERSHIP THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Anna Julia Cooper is the epicenter of UP RVA's story.

From our very first students to the strong, ongoing partnership we share today, AJC has been foundational to our mission and our impact. Together, we open doors and build futures.



50+

UP RVA students from AJC



10+

Years of deep partnership and trust



Countless

Lives Forever Changed

STRONG PARTNERS. STRONGER TOGETHER.

Our partner schools are more than educational institutions—they are collaborators in equity and opportunity. Together, we create environments where UP RVA students are known, challenged, and supported to grow.



St. Christopher's School



St. Catherine's School



Collegiate School



Steward School



Trinity Episcopal School

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY

As UP RVA grows, we are working to ensure that more students and families know these opportunities exist. Expanding awareness of our admissions process and reaching more mission-aligned students remains a key priority for the years ahead.



More students. More partners. More pathways. More Impact.

Q&A WITH OUR BOARD CHAIR

ANNE RUSBULT

Reflections on impact, growth, and what's next.



“**STUDENT EMPOWERMENT CREATES RIPPLES.**”
Anne Rusbuldt

2025-2026 UP RVA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Anne Rusbuldt, Chair
Tom Byrd, Treasurer
Rand Robins, Secretary
Nora Crouch
Richard Cullen, Jr.
TeShawn Cunningham
Dr. Stacie Davis
Toby Desch, Founder
Meleah Mitchell
Melissa Jiulianti
Fitz Totten
Donny Wade



BIG PICTURE

What stands out to you most about this past year at UP RVA?

"Having our own space has truly unlocked UP RVA's potential. We've been able to grow our staff, expand programming, welcome tutors, donors, and neighbors, and build systems that better support our students and families."



GROWTH & CHANGE

How has UP RVA evolved over time?

"We've grown and become more professional, but what hasn't changed is the heart. We continue to invest in relationships because that's what helps students thrive. Their success is our success."



STUDENTS

What stands out most about UP RVA students?

"Drive and grit are certainly part of their story, but what stands out to me most is their perspective, compassion, and gratitude. They have an incredible ability to persevere, and it's inspiring to watch them grow into confident young adults."



COMMUNITY IMPACT

Why does this work matter for Richmond?

"Richmond is stronger when every young person has the opportunity to thrive. Investing in young people strengthens families, neighborhoods, and our city. Our students bring hope, joy, and leadership to their communities."



LOOKING AHEAD

What excites you most about what's next?

"I'm excited about our middle school program and the opportunity to start earlier. I'm also excited to see more UP RVA graduates return as mentors. Life is about relationships, and watching our community continue to grow feels incredibly meaningful."

ANNE RUSBULT

Board Chair, UP RVA

GROWING WITH PURPOSE

Our vision for 2030 is simple: start sooner, walk alongside longer, and create more pathways to opportunity for students across Richmond.

What began as a high school program has evolved into a long-term educational journey—from middle school through college and beyond. As we grow, our commitment remains the same: empowering students to lead, achieve, and uplift their communities.



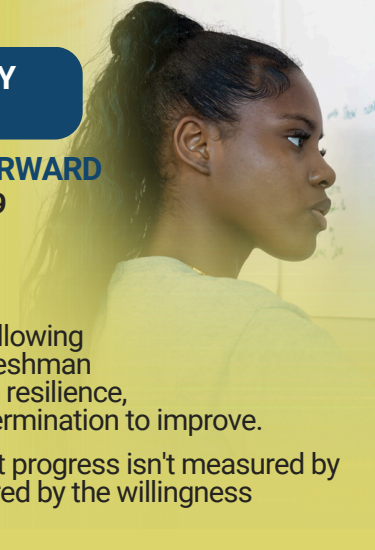
THE UP RVA WAY
IN ACTION

COURAGE TO FAIL FORWARD

Nevaeh Jones, Trinity '29

Nevaeh embodies the **Courage to Fail Forward**, choosing growth over perfection. Rather than allowing setbacks to define her freshman year, she responded with resilience, self-reflection, and a determination to improve.

Her story reminds us that progress isn't measured by never falling—it's measured by the willingness to keep moving forward.

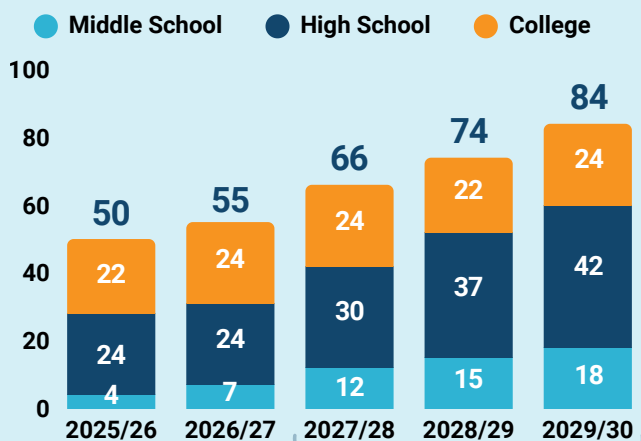


OUR GROWTH TRAJECTORY: 2026-2030



STUDENTS SERVED

Building a pipeline of opportunity from middle school through college.



2027–2030 figures are projected

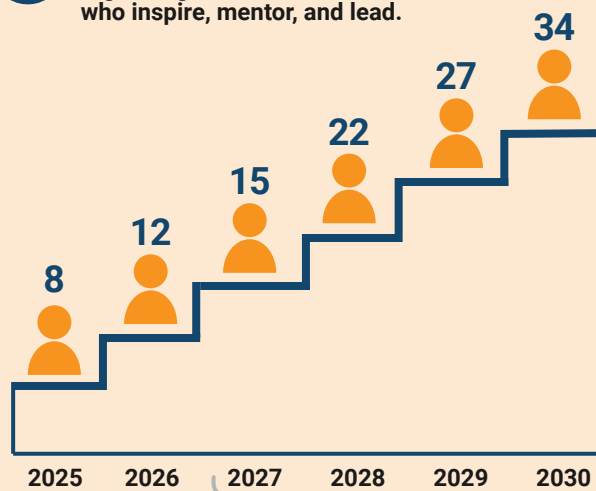


By 2030, we will serve more than 80 students across middle school, high school, and college.



COLLEGE GRADUATES

A growing network of alumni who inspire, mentor, and lead.



2027–2030 figures are projected



By 2030, over 30 UP RVA alumni will have earned their college degrees and will be investing back in our community.



BY 2030

80+
STUDENTS

30+
COLLEGE GRADUATES

ONE GROWING NETWORK OF
future leaders.

THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:



STARTING EARLIER

Expand our middle school program to build strong foundations and open doors sooner.



WALKING LONGER

Expand pathways through high school, college, and career.



GROWING CAPACITY

Grow our team, systems, and partnerships to sustain impact and create more opportunities for students.



FINANCIALS

INVESTING IN OPPORTUNITY

Resources. Intentional. Impactful.

Every dollar we invest is a dollar unlocking opportunity for Richmond students—today and for the long term.



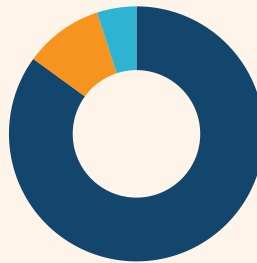
\$1.8 MILLION

TOTAL EXPENSES

FY25-26

Invested in students, families, and a future filled with possibility.

WHERE OUR DOLLARS GO



● **Program Services**
83%

● **Management & General**
11%

● **Fundraising**
6%

INVESTING IN WHAT MATTERS MOST



TRANSPORTATION
\$385,000

The infrastructure that makes opportunity accessible every day

- Vehicle costs
- Maintenance & insurance
- Driver salaries
- Gas & operations



TUITION & STUDENT SUPPORT
\$580,000

Ensuring every student has access to the schools and resources they need to thrive.

- School tuition
- Fees & materials
- Educational travel
- Enrichment opportunities



ACADEMIC & COLLEGE SUPPORT
\$250,000

Long-term academic support from middle school through college and beyond.

- Academic coaching
- College support
- Test prep & applications



OPERATIONS & STAFFING
\$535,000

The people and systems that sustain consistent, high-quality support.

- Staff salaries & benefits
- Program operations
- Systems & technology
- Facilities & supplies



~\$20,000

**AVERAGE ANNUAL INVESTMENT
PER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT**

A comprehensive investment that includes tuition, transportation, meals, academic support, advising, and the relationships that change lives.

FUNDRAISING

A COMMUNITY THAT BELIEVES.

Local hearts. Lasting impact.

Our work is powered by a community that believes in students, invests in their potential, and shows up every day.

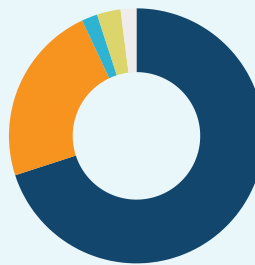


\$2.3 MILLION
TOTAL FUNDS RAISED

FY25-26

Powered primarily by individuals and the belief that every student deserves opportunity.

WHERE OUR FUNDING COMES FROM



- Individuals 70%
- Foundations 23%
- Government 3%
- Corporations 2%
- Special Events 2%

ROOTED IN RICHMOND

The majority of individuals donation come from right here at home.

91%

Richmond Area

7%

Elsewhere in Virginia

2%

Outside of Virginia



A WIDE COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT



246
TOTAL
DONORS

Individuals, foundations, corporations, and community partners.



92
FIRST-TIME
DONORS

New members of our community of believers in 2025/2026.



74
LONG-TERM
SUPPORTERS

Donors who have invested in UP RVA for five or more years.

IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

How will you be part of the story?



GIVE

Fuel the programs that make opportunity possible.



CONNECT

Introduce students to new people and possibilities.



MENTOR

Encourage, guide, and invest in the next generation.



ADVOCATE

Help others discover the impact of UP RVA.



HOST

Gather supporters and build meaningful relationships.

Thank you to every donor, partner, and supporter who fuels this work. Together, we are changing futures.

OPPORTUNITY CHANGES *Everything.*

Thank You.

Because of a community that believes, invests, and shows up—students walk through doors opened to opportunity and step into futures filled with possibility.



MORE STUDENTS.

Supported.



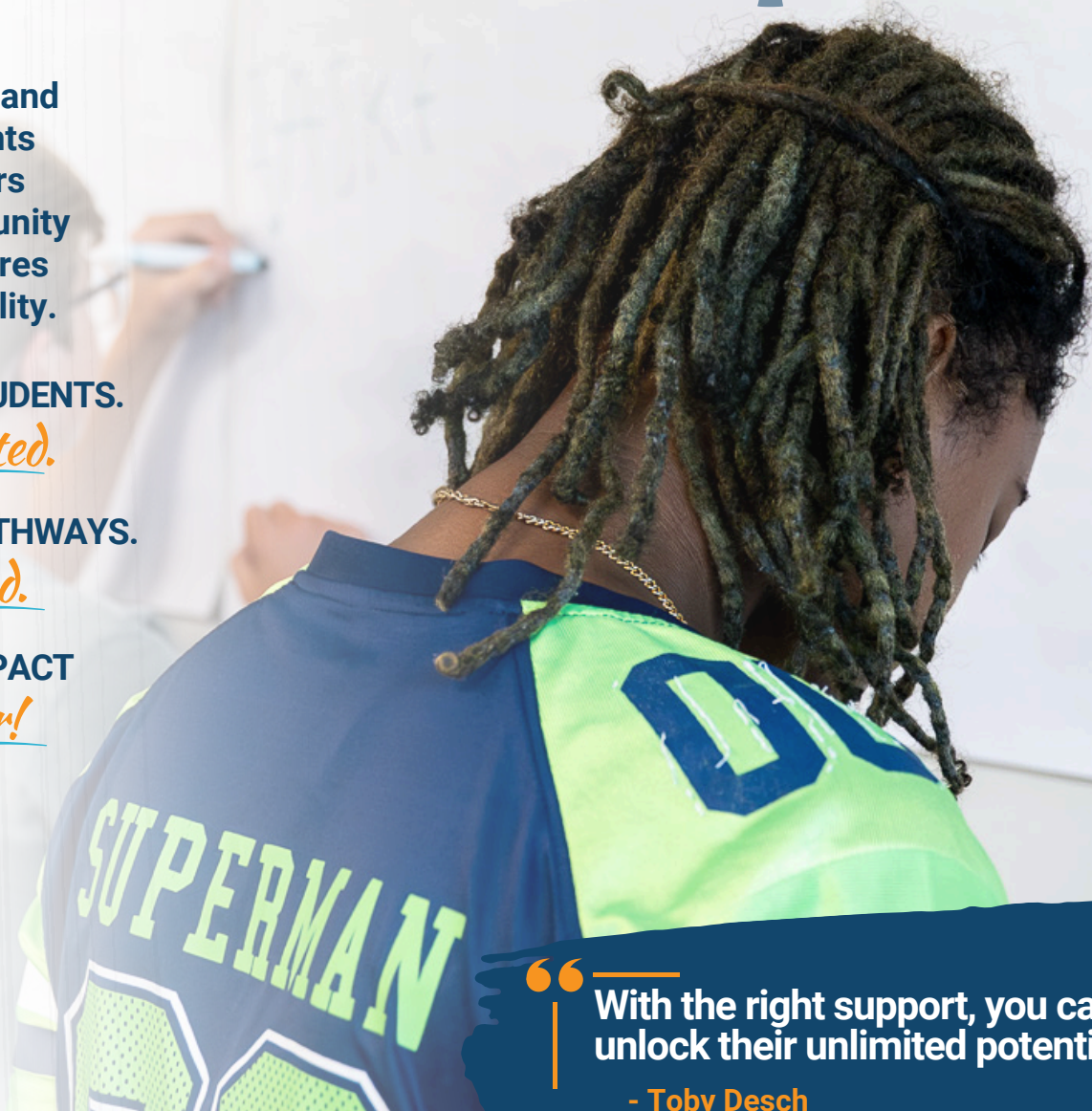
MORE PATHWAYS.

Unlocked.



MORE IMPACT

Together!



“With the right support, you can unlock their unlimited potential.”

- Toby Desch
Founder, UP RVA



*Unlimited
Potential.
Unparalleled
Support.*



3015 N Street
Richmond, VA 23223



UPRVA.COM



@UP_RVA

**WALK ALONGSIDE.
OPEN DOORS.
UPLIFT FUTURES.**

With you, we are building a Richmond where every student has the support, confidence, and opportunity to thrive.