



IMPACT IMPACT IMPACT

EqualChance
forEducation

2025-2026

IMPACT REPORT

EqualChanceforEducation.org

ABOUT US

Founded in 2014 as a grassroots scholarship initiated by a single act of generosity, ECE has grown into a comprehensive support model that integrates financial assistance, mentoring, and community-based guidance to ensure scholar success from enrollment through graduation.

Equal Chance for Education (ECE) expands college access for high-achieving, FAFSA-ineligible scholars, many of whom are immigrants or first-generation college students, across Tennessee through scholarships, mentoring, and holistic support.

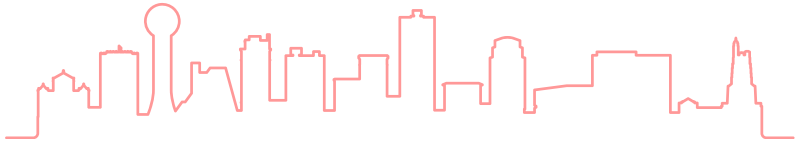


OUR SERVICES

- ➔ \$25,000 college scholarships, awarded over 4 years
- ➔ Mentoring (1-on-1 and Group)
- ➔ Specialized guidance on navigating college

A Proven Process

Initial Inquiry



1

High-achieving, FAFSA-ineligible Tennessee high school graduates apply through Equal Chance for Education's website between November 1 and February 15. Applicants must secure admission to at least one ECE partner institution.

2

Selection & Transition

Following an in-person interview, finalists are selected and asked to confirm their intended ECE partner college or university. Winners are announced in April. Prior to matriculation, scholars receive hands-on guidance to ensure a successful transition to college.

3

Award Grant

ECE awards a maximum of \$25,000, disbursed directly to the partner institution in increments of \$3,125 per semester. Institutional grants are applied. Scholars and their families pay the balance.



4

Mentoring

ECE Scholars participate in mandatory quarterly group mentoring sessions (virtual or on-campus) during their first two years in the program. In their third and fourth years, each scholar is paired with a dedicated volunteer mentor as they prepare for graduation and career success.



Partner Institutions

2025-2026 Application Cycle



Leaders

Officers & Staff

Taking action...

2026

Chairman: Neil Krugman
Treasurer: Dr. Richard Rhoda
Secretary: Abena Echternach
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Program Director: Betsy Martinez
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Scholarships awarded
since 2014

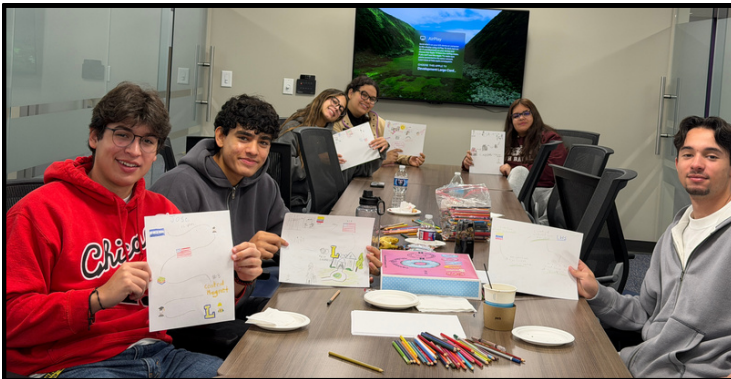
730

ON-CAMPUS SUPPORT

This year, ECE partnered with **Lipscomb University** to pilot an **On-Campus Support** Initiative designed to help scholars successfully transition to college, persist through challenges, and graduate within 4 years of enrollment.



Zulett Chavez Garcia,
ECE On-Campus Coordinator
Lipscomb University
Office of Advancement



Through their On-Campus Coordinator, scholars build **community** while learning how to navigate and take full advantage of **campus resources**, helping them stay organized, connected, and supported throughout the semester.

SCHOLAR *Overview*

Scholarships
Awarded



730

Graduates



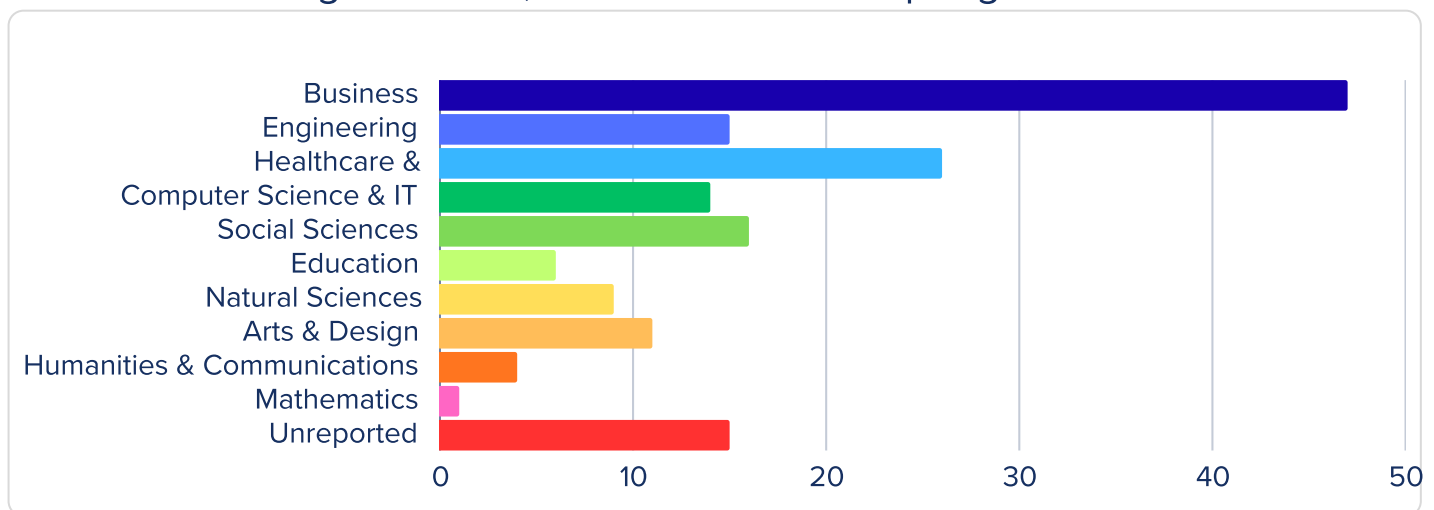
389

Scholars
Enrolled at Start
of Spring 2026



165

Degree Areas, Scholars Enrolled Spring 2026



2026 COHORT

New
Scholarships
Awarded
50



16

Male



34

Female

Partner
Universities



9

Average
High School GPA



3.705

Home Countries
represented



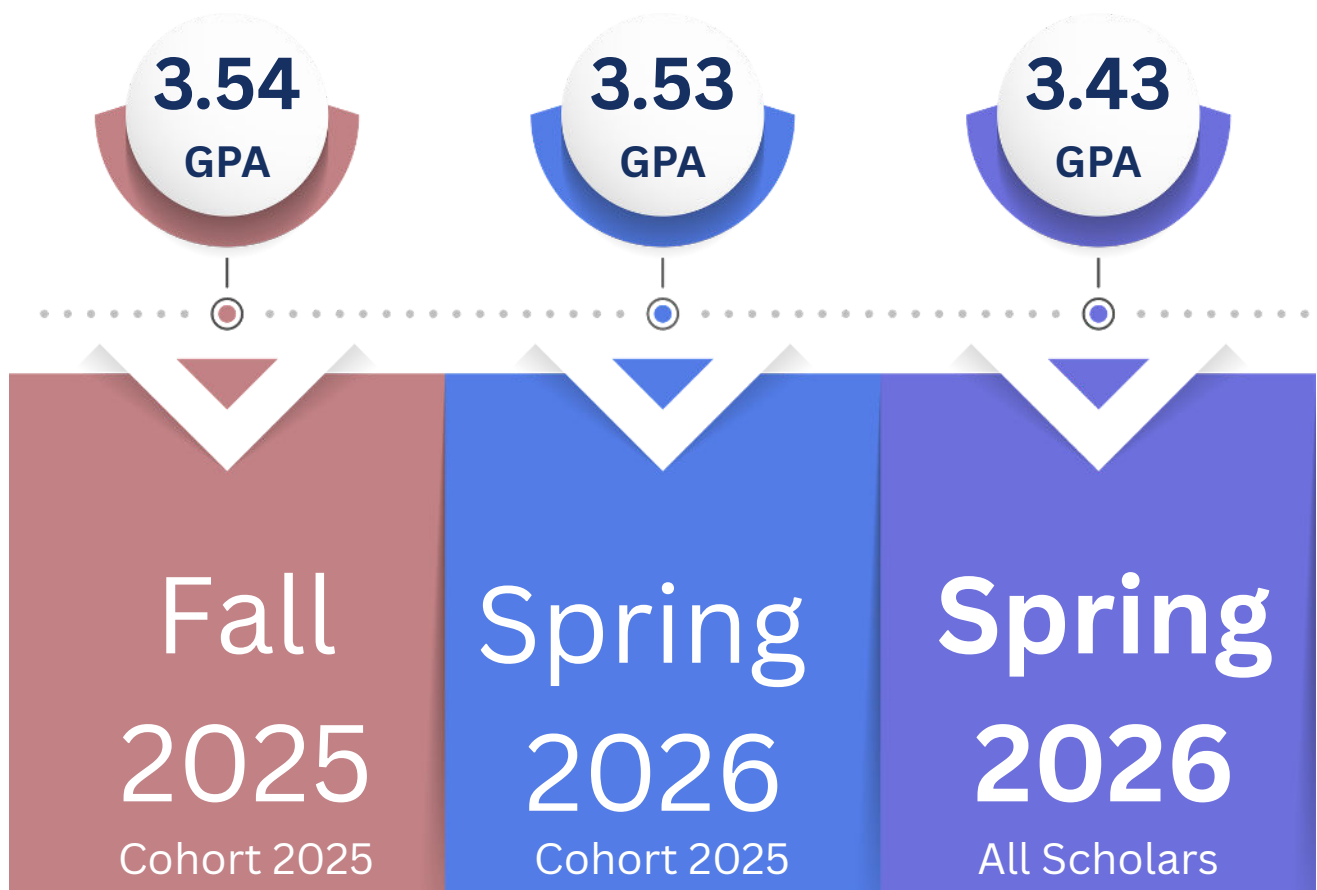
12

Average age of
arrival to US



9.92

Making the Grades



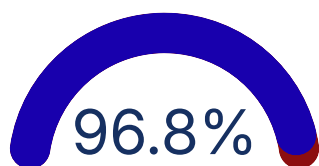
ECE scholars must maintain a minimum 3.0 Grade Point Average.

For context, the average undergraduate GPA in the United States is approximately 3.15,* highlighting the strong academic performance of ECE scholars despite unique barriers.

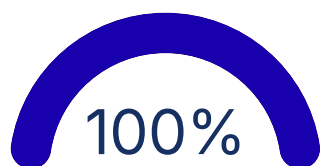
*2020 data from the [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\)](#).

SCHOLAR *Outcomes*

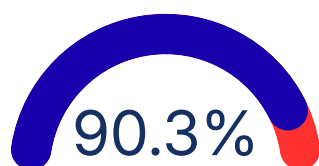
1st Year Persistence



96.8%
Fall '25



100%
Spring '26



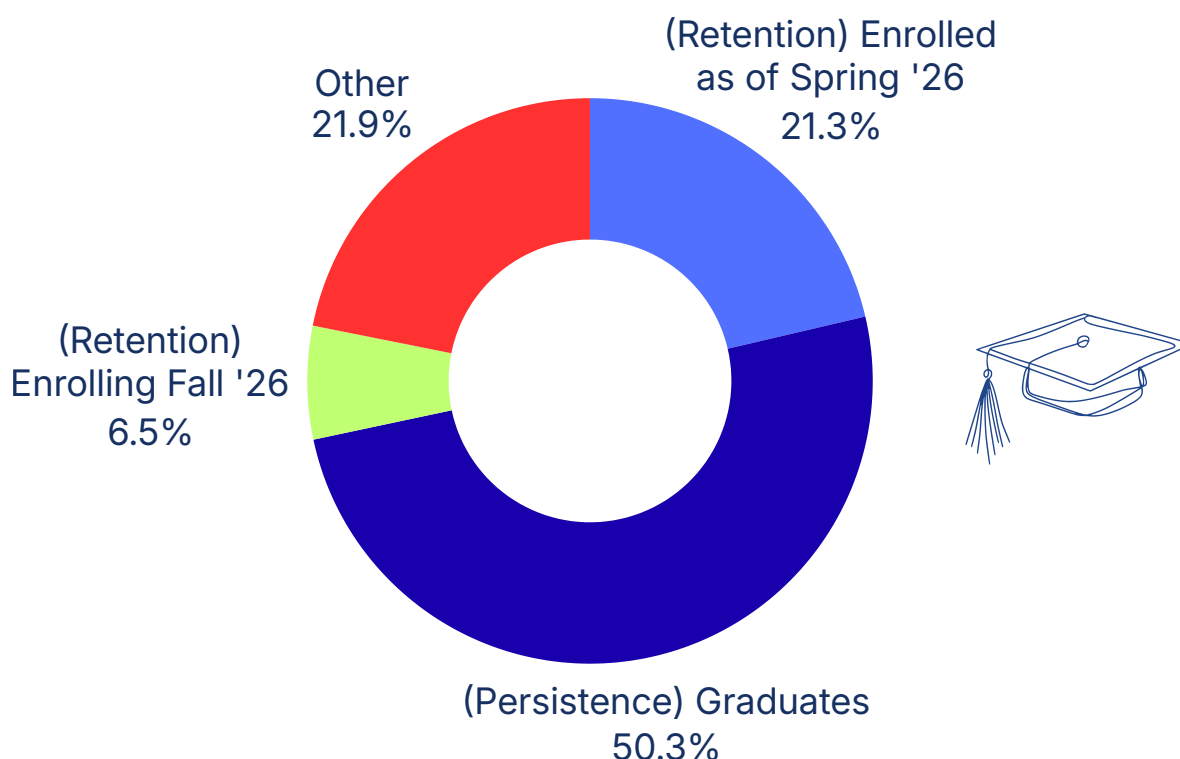
School Year
2025-2026

Our first-year college student persistence rates exceeded the national average by >13%



SCHOLAR *Outcomes*

Overall Persistence/Retention Rates

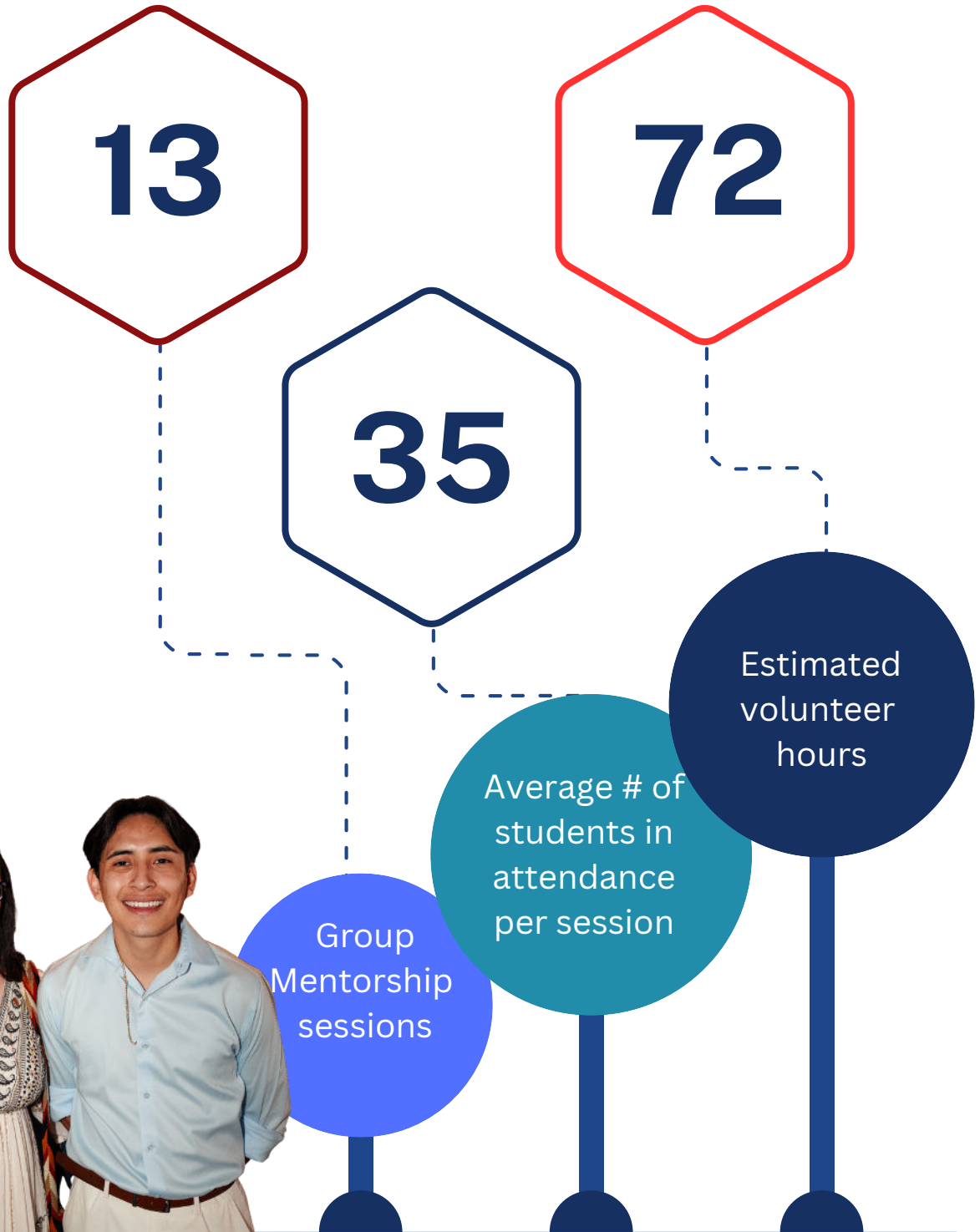


Our total persistence and retention rate is **78.1%**.

Our 12-year history reveals:
Of the **730** scholarships awarded, **389** scholars have earned degrees, and **215** remain on the path to graduation.

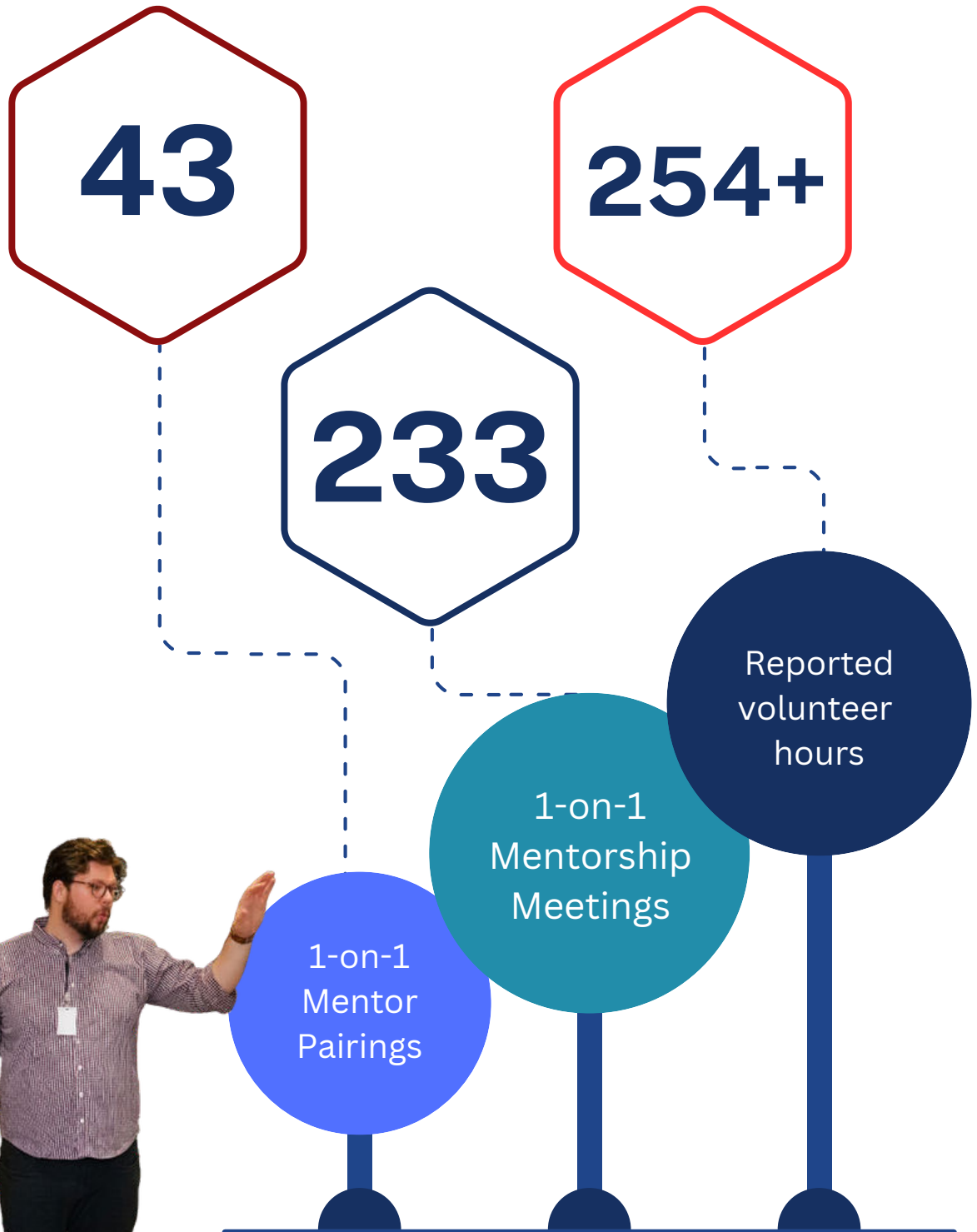
GROUP MENTORSHIP

Aug. 2025 - May 2026



1-ON-1 MENTORSHIP

Aug. 2025 - May 2026



SUMMER MENTORSHIP



We thank each volunteer and organization who made this Summer Mentoring Series the most successful in our organization's history.



SUMMER MENTORSHIP

June 2026

7

65

64+

Unique
Scholars
in
Attendance

Dedicated
Volunteer
Hours

Sessions
3 In-person
4 Virtual



OUR ALUMNI REFLECT

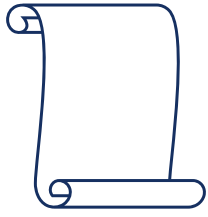
"How has Equal Chance for Education and your college degree impacted your life?"



"I would not be the person I am today without ECE. Thanks to my degree I was able to get a job in the international trade world. It's been fun learning how countries trade with each other on a large scale. Thanks to this job, I was able to buy my first house two years ago. Everything I have built so far has been because ECE took a chance on me 10 years ago."

- Graduate of Lipscomb (not pictured)





"My dream of becoming an architect at a university that offers a rigorous five-year program began to feel real rather than distant. The support I received at such a critical moment changed the trajectory of my life. Every step toward achieving this goal felt surreal, and I remain deeply grateful. I carry that gratitude with me, and I look forward to one day giving back in the same way I was helped."

- Graduate of UT Knoxville

"ECE has been that bridge of hope in my life to provide me with an opportunity to work on my dream to one day owning my own business. My college degree has provided me with the right tools to prepare myself and open new doors that will help me grow as a future business owner."



- Graduate of Lipscomb



"This is a very special group of young people. They don't have a government for support. They don't even have in-state tuition. What they have is **you**."

Don Graham, former publisher of the Washington Post and co-founder of the scholarship fund TheDream.US.

LEARN MORE ABOUT
OUR WORK AND
PLAN YOUR GIVING!

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or visit

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BECOME A MENTOR OR
STRATEGIC PARTNER!

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GET INVOLVED

FOR COMMS
SUPPORT

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