

2024 IMPACT REPORT

SUMMER SEARCH NEW YORK



A NOTE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Each year, our Summer Searchers inspire me to reach for new heights. These remarkable young individuals have ventured across diverse terrains—both near and far—gathering experiences that will forever expand their worldview. Their courage to explore, learn, and grow encourages us all to embrace the unknown and strive for greater understanding.

At the beginning of 2024, we set out to find a dynamic leader to help Summer Search NYC reach new heights. After a robust search, we welcomed Yesenia Garcia-Fortuna as our new Executive Director. The Board and I have full confidence in her leadership, and we are excited about the future of Summer Search NYC under her direction.

I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our supporters who have contributed their time, talent, and financial resources to Summer Search this year. Your generosity makes this work possible, and we could not do it without you.

I am truly honored to serve as the Executive Director of Summer Search NYC. With over 15 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, I have dedicated my career to building programs and organizations that work to provide greater access to holistic educational experiences for underrepresented students.

As a second-generation immigrant to Colombian parents and a first-generation college graduate, I understand firsthand the transformative power of exploration and mentorship in helping young people dream big and reach their fullest potential.

In our latest Impact Report, we are excited to share the highlights from this year—moments of success, joy, and a deep sense of community. I look forward to continuing our work together and am excited to welcome those who are new to our network. I am eager to find new ways to expand our reach and deepen the impact of the service we provide. The opportunities ahead are inspiring, and I can't wait to see what we will achieve together. Thank you!



Graves Tompkins

Board Chair,
Summer Search NYC



Yesenia Garcia-Fortuna

Executive Director,
Summer Search NYC

AN UNSTOPPABLE YEAR

Click on the photos to see Summer Searchers experience
Shenandoah National Park!



341

High School Students

478

Post-Secondary Participants

637

NYC Alumni

1456

UNSTOPPABLE SUMMER SEARCHERS



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: STUDENT AMBASSADORS

We are thrilled to highlight our Student Ambassadors for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. Our Student Ambassadors are Summer Searchers in their high school junior and senior year who encourage prospective students to apply. Ambassadors share their experiences, build the Summer Search community in their schools, and connect with their peers to learn more about them and their interests.

In partnership with Student Ambassadors, our Outreach and Recruitment Team recruited the highest number of sophomores in Summer Search NYC history. We were so happy to enroll 155 sophomores into our program!



14

Student Ambassadors

23

Partner High Schools

4

Boroughs represented by
students

HIGH SCHOOL & MENTORING

Mentoring is the cornerstone of Summer Search. It permeates every program that we offer. Each Summer Searcher is matched with a paid full-time Mentor who meets students twice a month in their sophomore and junior year. Mentors also meet with seniors once a month. While building a connection with a Mentor may feel challenging at first, over time, students come to value the relationship and look forward to the support and reflections it brings.

Additionally, Summer Searchers participate in Group Mentoring sessions once per month for one hour. In these sessions, students have the guidance of their trusted Mentor and co-facilitators who are trained to help students think critically. Students also benefit from the support of their peers who bring their own experiences and perspectives into the conversation.



148

high school sophomores
persisted in our program

104

high school juniors persisted
in our program

88

seniors graduated in the
HS class of 2024

EVENT HIGHLIGHT: COMMUNITY FUN NIGHTS

We hosted two Community Fun Nights in our Manhattan and our Bronx offices. These events gave Summer Searchers a safe space to connect with their friends as they engaged in activities such as painting, creating mocktails, chess and checkers, and karaoke. We want to continue these nights to foster relationships with all our Summer Searchers from different schools and communities.



SUMMER EXPERIENCES

This summer, we were able to send 161 students on their Summer Experience trips. Our rising sophomore students mainly participated in wilderness experiences while our rising juniors participated in international trips, academic experiences, and internships. We offered 18 total Summer Experiences which ranged from canoeing trips in St. Croix to climbing the Himalayan Peaks in Nepal, from hiking the Appalachian Trail in West Virginia to volunteering with a Pre-Med program in Costa Rica.

Each program partner hosted an orientation for all participants and students were prepared by their Mentor by talking through expectations, managing challenges, and setting goals.



88%

of students reported that their Summer Experience was a positive turning point in their lives

93%

of students reported trying something new during their Summer Experience

92%

of students would recommend Summer Experiences to a friend

"I got to meet very amazing people in the village and at camp and got to be completely immersed in their community, culture, and way of life authentically. Even though it was short, I enjoyed my experience." – Steven, High School senior reflecting on his trip to Nepal.



Kelly, High School junior

Reflecting on her summer wilderness
experience with NOLS

"The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) taught me that...relying on people for help is just as important as being independent, learning how to balance these things sets you up for a bright future, in and out of the wilderness."

SUMMER EXPERIENCES



POST-SECONDARY PROGRAM

Highlights From the Year!

- We hosted a writing workshop where Summer Searchers from Stonehill College helped our high school seniors write their personal statements and college essays. The post-secondary students discussed their experiences as college students at Stonehill and shared details about the full scholarship that would be awarded to one Summer Searcher in the fall. We are happy to report that Summer Searcher Zulaiya received a full scholarship to Stonehill College!
- We launched our first ever "Post-Secondary Hangout" where high school students and post-secondary students could participate in game nights, build community with each other, and share their college experiences with our high school students.
- Our Summer Searchers have matriculated into college/universities all over the country including: Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, St. Joseph's University, Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, Georgia Institute of Technology, NYU, Fordham University, University of Central Florida, SUNY New Paltz, Hunter College, Bernard M. Baruch College, UPenn, and many others.



100%

of seniors graduated from high school

94%

of seniors were accepted into a 2- or 4-year college.

93%

of seniors matriculated into a 2- or 4-year college

"Even after high school, Summer Search is still open for us post-secondary students, they are always there for us when we need them, which is what I love the most."

– Jathziry, Freshman at St. Joseph's University

CAREER PROGRAM

Aspects of Career Programming

1:1 Career Navigator Support

- Provide individualized support and follow up with Summer Searchers exploring internships and job opportunities
- Connect Summer Searchers with a vast network of alumni, board members, volunteers, and supporters
- Facilitate workshops that deepen the technical skills of Summer Searchers to handle their finances, explore career interests, and make informed decisions about their post-secondary pathway

Career Fair

- Summer Searchers meet with representatives of companies to discuss entry level positions
- Representatives share their career journeys and give Summer Searchers insight into the different pathways that can lead to a desired role

Career Coaching Program

- 3-month mentorship which matches Summer Searchers with a coach in their career field of interest

70%

of surveyed NYC alumni were employed six months after college graduation compared to 54% of their peers

76%

of surveyed NYC alumni shared that their individual income was higher than the NYC poverty threshold

Snapshots from our 2024 Career Fair!



EVENT HIGHLIGHT: CAREER COACHING CELEBRATION

On April 24, 2024, we celebrated the successful completion of our 3-month Career Coaching Program, which connected 15 Summer Searchers with industry professionals. These coaches provided invaluable insights into navigating the professional world and offered guidance on how to align career goals with actionable steps.

One participant, Lisbeth (top left), shared how her coach, Thalia (top right), resonated with her on a personal level due to their similar backgrounds. Lisbeth reflected on the “different challenges Thalia faced and how she overcame them gives me hope for my own challenges. It helps me feel that I’m not alone in my experiences as a first-generation college student.” This program is a testament to the power of mentorship, shared experiences, and the collective strength of overcoming barriers to achieve success.



A huge thank you to

SHAWMUT

for hosting us and volunteering!

EVENT HIGHLIGHT: SUMMER SEARCH NYC GALA

On March 5, 2024 we celebrated Summer Search NYC with more than 450 students, alumni, and members of the Summer Search community! Mya, Dani, and Daniel (top left), our brilliant student hosts for the night, created a lively atmosphere and shared about their own journeys as Summer Searchers. They returned to the stage throughout the event and kept the program fun and student centric.

We were delighted to honor Wilma Wallace (bottom left), who served REI for six years and recently stepped down in her role as Senior Vice President, Chief Diversity & Social Impact Officer, Chief Legal Officer. Wilma's leadership and commitment to diversity and social impact has left a lasting legacy.

Our CEO, Ursulina Ramirez shared that "we don't have to be rock climbers, traverse Patagonia, or free solo the half dome in Yosemite to be considered 'outdoorsy'. Being outside is my liberation, and I hope that this becomes true for all Summer Searchers."

"Let us remember that the most profound adventures often begin with a risk — a risk that has the power to change lives and communities for the better."

- George Nunez (bottom right), Summer Search NYC Class of 2013 Alumni Speaker



SAVE THE DATE!
Summer Search NYC Leadership Gala
will be held at Cipriani 42nd Street
on Tuesday, March 4th, 2025

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Summer Search alumni remain deeply connected to our mission, giving back in meaningful ways to support the next generation of Summer Searchers. Many serve as speakers at our events, sharing the impact our program had on their lives with our supporters. Some alumni mentor current participants through our Career Coaching Program, helping them map out career paths, while others help our students secure internship opportunities with organizations like Equinix and L&K Partners. Additionally, alumni serve on our Alumni Board, Associate Board, and Board of Directors, playing an integral role in shaping the future of Summer Search.



637

individuals are part of our
expanding alumni network!

12

alumni members are either staff, Associate
Board Members or on the NYC Board of Directors

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

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VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP





THANK
you



FOR YOUR SUPPORT