

# Fair Opportunity Project School Boost Program Empowers Underserved Learners with Critical College, Career Prep Support

*Local Students Receive Free College and Career Support!*

WI, UNITED STATES, October 8, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the demand for workers with postsecondary education or workforce training experience continues to grow, the nonprofit organization [Fair Opportunity Project](#) (Fair Opp) is stepping up to ensure that all learners, particularly those from first-generation and low-income backgrounds, have the tools they need to succeed — whether they choose college, a skilled trade, or other pathways to work after high school.

By 2031, 72% of jobs in the U.S. will require a college degree or some form of postsecondary training (Source: Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce). However, the path to postsecondary education and workforce training has become increasingly challenging, particularly for learners from low-income backgrounds. In response, Fair Opp is launching its School Boost program, a comprehensive initiative supported by [Ascendium](#), to help students overcome these challenges and secure the opportunities they



Ascendium Education Group Logo



MacKenzie Swanson leads a half-day college workshop during Fair Opportunity Project's Summer Boost program at La Follette High School in Madison, Wis., this August.



Fair Opportunity Project

deserve.

Applying for college and accessing workforce training has always been daunting, but recent changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) have made it even more challenging. Completing the FAFSA is crucial for determining students' eligibility for financial aid, including grants, loans, work-study funds, and scholarships. Despite efforts to streamline the process, the recent overhaul of the FAFSA has been plagued by technical issues, leading to delays, errors, and widespread frustration. This has had a particularly negative impact on learners from low-income backgrounds who rely on financial aid to make postsecondary education and training a reality.

In Wisconsin, the repercussions have been severe. As of May 2024, only 33.9% of the 2024 high school class had completed their FAFSA, a significant drop from the previous year (Source: Wisconsin Policy Forum). This decline threatens to derail thousands of students' educational and career aspirations. Recognizing this crisis, Fair Opp, with support from Ascendium, launched an emergency initiative to provide free, one-on-one FAFSA assistance to students, helping them overcome these obstacles and secure the financial aid they need.

Building on the success of its emergency FAFSA support, Fair Opp is now expanding its impact with the introduction of the School Boost program. This fall, the School Boost program will pilot in select schools, offering a school-wide solution that combines Fair Opp's proven student services with essential tools and resources to support school counselors. The goal is to enhance academic and career planning for students, ensuring they are well-prepared to pursue postsecondary education and workforce training and achieve their career goals.

Through the School Boost program, students will have unlimited access to three key services.

**Essay Reviews:** Trained college essay reviewers will provide detailed written feedback on students' essays and offer personalized guidance in one-on-one debrief calls. This service helps students craft compelling essays that stand out in the competitive college admissions process and in applying for scholarships or workforce training programs.

**On-Demand Mentoring:** Students can connect with mentors to explore career paths, postsecondary education opportunities, and the financial aid process. Fair Opp's extensive mentor network makes it easy for students to get their questions answered through one-on-one virtual sessions, offering invaluable support at a critical time in their educational journey.

**Personalized FAFSA Help:** Students can schedule one-on-one virtual meetings with a trained Fair Opp financial aid coach, who will guide them step-by-step through the FAFSA application process.

School Boost is being offered for free to pilot schools, though costs may be introduced later.

One school participating in the School Boost program pilot is Osseo-Fairchild High School,

located in the rural town of Osseo, Wisconsin. With over a third of its students from low-income backgrounds and below-average scores in key college and career readiness measures like the four-year graduation rate and average ACT score, the need for comprehensive college prep support is evident (Source: GreatSchools). The School Boost program aims to equip these students with the guidance and resources necessary to successfully navigate their postsecondary education and training paths and achieve their educational and career goals.

Students have already begun to feel the positive impact of these services.

"Whether it was my counselor, the mentors, or the essay reviewers, I love that I was able to connect with wonderful individuals who all contributed to my application journey by sharing their experiences and knowledge. I find this advising aspect very meaningful because it motivates you not to give up. This program has made the college application season a little less stressful for me than it tends to be, and that's something I'll always appreciate since not many other seniors can say the same," Daffne, a member of the Class of 2025 at Notre Dame Academy in Green Bay, said.

The work of Fair Opp aligns closely with Ascendium's philanthropic mission to elevate opportunities for learners from low-income backgrounds. Ascendium believes that learning after high school — whether through a college degree or workforce training program — is the surest path to a well-paying job and a stable, fulfilling career. By supporting initiatives like the School Boost program, Ascendium aims to ensure that economic circumstances do not hinder upward mobility for learners across the country.

"Student-centered programs such as School Boost have the potential to increase and expand the population of learners who move on to postsecondary education and training," says Brett Lindquist, Ascendium's vice president of communications and community engagement. "By providing the necessary support and resources, we can open up a world of opportunities for learners who might otherwise be left behind."

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