

# Bridging the Gaps



## Helping Underserved Students Achieve Post-Secondary Education Goals

**Student Intern:** Jeffrey Zhou, Drexel University College of Medicine  
**Academic Preceptor:** Kristen Ryczak, MD, Drexel University College of Medicine  
**Community Preceptor:** AJ Ballard, 12Plus

### COMMUNITY PARTNER



12Plus is a nonprofit organization that provides support throughout and after high school to help students and alumni achieve their academic and career goals.

<https://www.12plus.org/>

### BACKGROUND

**Only 10% of Philadelphia Students go on to earn a college degree**

*but with 12Plus...*

- 97%** 12+ Primary Support Seniors have a dedicated **post-graduate pathway**
- 95%** 12+ Primary Support Seniors are accepted to a **2 or 4 year college**
- 83%** 12+ Primary Support Seniors complete the **FAFSA/PHEAA**

### TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The intern worked with the 12Plus Alumni Team to assist with alumni outreach and to help alumni take steps to pursue designated pathways. For alumni interested in attending college, the intern worked with individuals to determine an action plan and helped guide them through financial aid or class enrollment.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**508/581** Successfully outreached students  
**232** Fully responsive students

*12Plus alumni have learned...*

"To not put too much pressure on myself because it's only just the beginning."  
"Failure is not the end."  
"It doesn't matter where you are heading in life. As long as you are brave enough to take that first step, and stay on track, you can achieve your goals."

### REFLECTION

"My time at 12Plus was one of the most fulfilling experiences I've had. Interacting with underserved alumni opened my eyes to the challenges that they face as first-generation high school graduates, and also revealed a lot of issues of accessibility in the college application process. It also showed me the impact that organizations such as 12Plus have on the community, and the importance of building trust and rapport in order to have a true effect on the people you serve. I truly believe that investing in education is integral for progress as a nation, and I'm privileged to have had an opportunity to work with people who believe the same."