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# MONEY'S WORTH

Though not often talked about, financial aid is a major force on campus. Millions of dollars go into it and scores of students benefit from it. It's important, and Goals IV makes it even more so.



**E**very year he gives back. Gives back to the fund that gave him the opportunity to come here. Gives back to pay it forward.

Gives back to the school, so it can enroll students who are in the same shoes he was in many years ago.

Every year, Admission Officer Korey Mack '00 gives back to the St. Mark's Fund.

Not because he feels obligated, but because he recognizes and appreciates the doors that financial aid opened for him.

Mack's tale of going through the school on financial aid isn't a unique one: nearly 15 percent of the student body receives some form of aid during their time here. Just last year, \$2.3 million of financial aid was awarded to 125 boys attending the school.

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"I feel very fortunate having started at St. Mark's in 1989 as a financial aid student myself," Mack said. "And as an alum it has really not only inspired me to want to join St. Mark's in this role in admission, but it's also inspiring when the development office asks for contributions to the St. Mark's Fund. I feel it is incumbent on me to make a contribution every year because I know that others kind of paved the way so that I had the opportunity to go to St. Mark's."

Mack's contributions are paving the way for scores of Marksmen to attend the school. One of those Marksmen who benefits from the financial aid is sophomore Ricky Rodriguez, who lives with seven brothers and a sister.

## Financial aid brings in \$2.3 million for almost 130 students every year. And according to some, there's still work to be done.

"Financial aid has benefited me in a way that really helps because I have a lot of brothers and sisters and it's kind of hard for us to manage every single kid," Rodriguez said. "So by us having financial aid, it's easier on my parents not having to pay the full tuition."

Rodriguez's story is what the financial aid program represents. Headmaster David Dini suggests it's about giving qualified boys who might not otherwise have the opportunity to come here a chance to be a part of the community.

"Our goal is really to provide more future accessibility and expanded funding so that if a really talented boy comes here, but his family is in a position where they might not otherwise be able to send their son here," Dini said, "we want to make sure we have the resources to say yes to that family."

And though financial aid might not be a visible force on campus, it is one of the core objectives de-

**MORE THAN A NUMBER** Three Marksmen — Korey Mack '00, John Loza '81 and sophomore Ricky Rodriguez were given the opportunity to attend the school through assistance from others in the community.

scribed in Goals for St. Mark's IV, the set of resolutions meant to guide the next era of the school's development. For many, it's the silent force at the heart of it all.

"Dating back to the school's very early history, there was a focus on building the endowment and providing resources to ensure that St. Mark's would be able to attract the strongest student body imaginable," Dini said, "and to the extent possible, remove financial barriers for students and families who otherwise might not be able to attend the school."

Outlined in Goals for St. Mark's IV as "Enrollment, Access and Affordability," the approach to enrollment is being refined and expanded. Using Goals IV as a platform, the administrators are beginning to create a plan to address the topics.

"The core objective of this year is formulating a really intentional and deliberate strategic plan for these topics," Dini said. "We want to make sure in the future that we have an expanded resource base to address enrollment."

Before the administration put a heavy emphasis on making the school more accessible, it was viewed by many as a school only for the rich. However, established lawyer Adelfa Callejo, who passed away in 2014, took the initiative into her own hands: she provided financial assistance for Mexican-American students to attend private schools all over Dallas.

One of those students was John Loza '81, who went on to Harvard and SMU School of Law. At 33, he was elected to the Dallas City Council. Now, almost four years after Callejo's death, Loza stresses the impact she made on his family and the families of so many others in the community was paramount.

"Mrs. Callejo is a perfect example of someone

who changed things because of the opportunities with which she was presented," Loza said. "She was a very inspiring person, instrumental in trying to get more educational opportunities for young Mexican-American students."

Loza remembers not only the importance of what Callejo did for the Mexican-American community, but also the importance socio-economic diversity holds at the school.

"Having been born and raised here in Dallas," Loza said, "I know that it's important that we have a lot of bright, young kids from lower economic backgrounds that really have a great deal of potential for learning and for advancement. They have a great deal to contribute to the city. It's important that St. Mark's be reflective of that."

Director of Admission and Financial Aid David Baker has watched the development of the school's financial aid program grow, and he says the advancements in the program are positively affecting the community.

"I think we are on the verge of some very exciting and forward thinking times at St. Mark's related to finance tuition assistance," Baker said. "[Tuition assistance] is not just a benefit for them, it benefits everybody. They are important contributors to the conversation and that conversation is campus wide."

Loza hopes these advancements the school is making will inspire others in the community to advocate for education like Callejo did.

"Education was always one of her priorities," Loza said. "I'm hoping there are other Adelfa Callejos that come forward from all kinds of communities to give kids the chance to take advantage of the education that St. Mark's has to offer."

▪ **Story** Rett Daugbjerg, Kamal Mamdani, Christopher Wang **Photos** Riley Sanders.

**The breakdown** of financial aid, both on campus and around the nation

**\$16,900.00**

national average financial aid grant per independent school student

**\$2.3 Million**

of tuition assistance awarded by the school last year

**130 students**

average number of students who receive tuition assistance each year

**15 percent**

vs.

**24 percent**

of students are on financial aid at St. Mark's

of students at independent schools who are on financial aid around the country

**The future** of financial aid, as stated by Goals IV

**Objective:** Assemble the most qualified student body from a broadly diverse pool of applicants who exhibit intellectual curiosity, strong character and a desire to contribute to St. Mark's in meaningful ways.

**1.** Evaluate and strengthen our admission practices to attract, enroll and retain the most qualified students.

**2.** Increase the availability of financial support at St. Mark's in order to enroll the most qualified students, regardless of financial need.

**3.** Develop a long-term strategy to slow tuition escalation and improve access and affordability.

As we look to the future and in Goals IV, we wanted to make sure that the continuing goal and objective is really highlighted and elevated in many ways."  
— Headmaster David Dini