



## **ASCEND EDUCATIONAL FUND**

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Elevating Our Community Through Higher Education

### 2013 ANNUAL REVIEW



## THE FACTS

- 60% of New York City students are immigrants or children of immigrants.
- Immigrants account for 43% of city residents in the labor force, however they occupy lower wage jobs in manufacturing, construction, and service industries.
- Lack of English proficiency and education directly correlate with the percentage of immigrant New Yorkers who live in poverty.
- Only 5-10% of undocumented students who graduate from high school go onto college, versus approximately 75% of their peers

## OUR MISSION

To enable and encourage higher education and professional achievement for the immigrant community.

## WHAT DIFFERENTIATES US

1. **We make a time and capital intensive commitment to our scholars:** Our awards are between \$2,500 and \$20,000, and we enroll all Ascend Educational Fund Scholars in an intensive academic and professional Mentorship Program.
2. **We serve all immigrant students regardless of national origin, ethnicity and immigration status:** Most college scholarships limit their awards on the basis of ethnicity and immigration status. We target and serve all immigrants, from Bolivian to Japanese, from citizen to non-citizen.



## Letter from our chairman

Dear AEF Friends & Supporters,

Happy New Year from all of us at the Ascend Educational Fund! As our first AEF Scholars begin their second semester in college, thanks to your generous support, I want to take this opportunity to review AEF's amazing inaugural year, and to share where we are headed for the 2014 scholarship season.

New York City has one of the most diverse immigrant populations in the nation, and while immigrant students graduate high school at a higher rate than their native-born peers, immigrants occupy lower wage jobs. A lack of education directly correlates with the percentage of immigrant New Yorkers who live in poverty.

AEF was officially founded a little more than a year ago on October 4, 2012 with a straightforward mission—to enable and encourage higher education and professional achievement for the immigrant community. Regardless of ethnicity, national origin or immigration status, we envision every exceptional student in New York City as having the same educational and professional opportunities.

Our inaugural year surpassed our expectations; with over 200 supporters attending our launch event in February, AEF being selected to participate in Cocktails for Causes (which raised funds for an additional scholarship), and raising over \$9,000 during our gift-matching drive in May.

We received over 325 applications, and over 40 selection committee members helped select our 2013 Scholars. We awarded \$32,000 in Scholarships, 60% more than our initial \$20,000 goal.

Our proudest achievement, however, is our inaugural class of AEF Scholars, who embody the diversity and perseverance of our immigrant community. Our seven AEF Scholars were awarded a total of \$32,000, or 81% of raised funds.<sup>a</sup> They are citizens and non-citizens, some attending Ivy League colleges, others starting at community colleges, and representing countries such as Bangladesh, China and Mexico.

Our Scholars were paired with committed mentors who will provide advice and serve as a sounding board during their college years. Our mentors officially met their mentees at our first annual picnic, which was attended by our Advisory Council and the Scholars' families.

As I reflect on our inaugural year, it is not possible to imagine we would have come this far without the help of the Esperanza Educational Fund, our Advisory Council (Danny Chang, Arthur Li, & Raphael Zagury), and every single one of our volunteers.

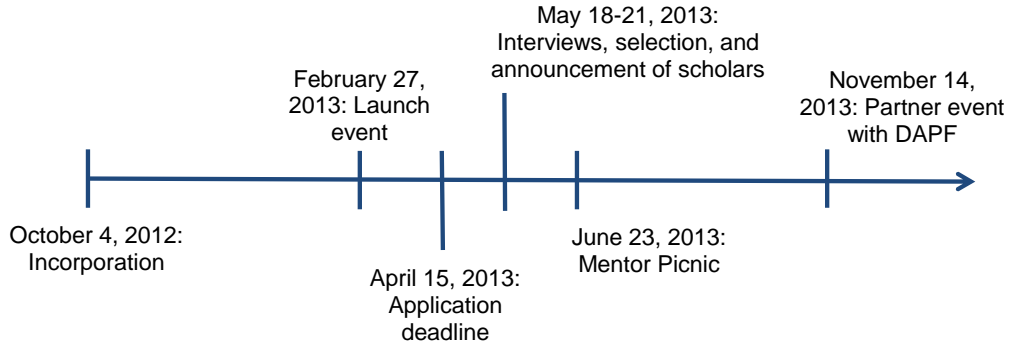
The 2013 scholarship season is just the start for AEF. As the plans for 2014 season begin to unfold, I am excited for the possibilities. We will host our first annual gala on February 8, 2014, and we intend to increase the number of applications and award amounts by 50% in 2014, among other goals. I invite you to browse our full 2013 Annual Review.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I thank you for your support in helping us to “Elevate our Community through Higher Education.”

Warmest Regards,  
Julissa Arce  
AEF Chairman of the Board

<sup>a</sup> We intended to award \$36,000 (90% of funds raised) and originally selected eight Scholars. However, one of the selected recipients became ineligible prior to entering college in Fall 2013. The funds from the withdrawn scholarship will be awarded in 2014.

## Timeline: Key 2013 events

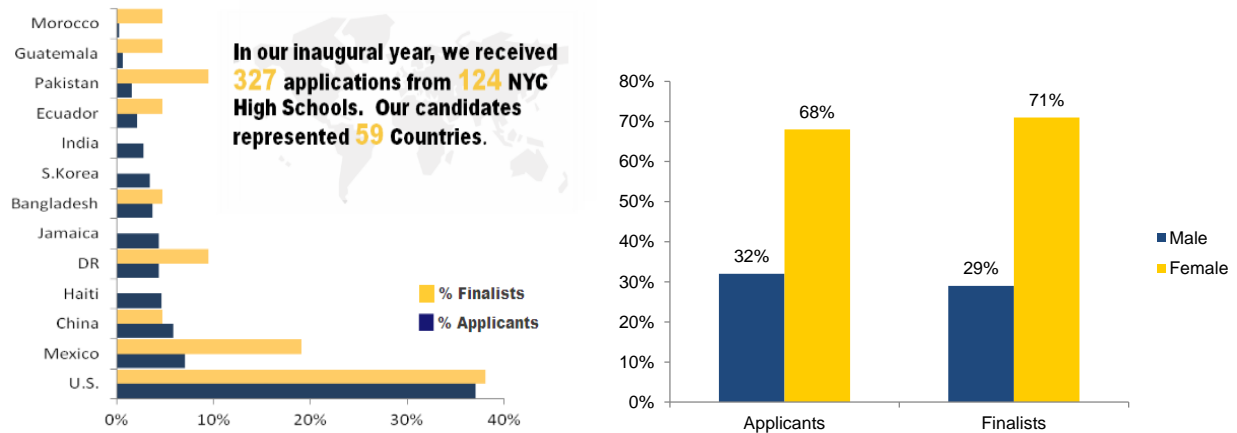


## The AEF selection process

AEF scholars were selected based on qualities traditionally valued and demonstrated by the immigrant community: hard work, resourcefulness, perseverance in the face of adversity, academic achievement, leadership, and commitment to one's community. All candidates submitted an application including two required essays on (1) Describe your academic and career goals and how a scholarship from Ascend Educational Fund will help you achieve those goals, and (2) Describe how your experience as an immigrant or a child of immigrants has affected your life and how it will contribute to your future success.

Over 1,000 applications were opened online, and 327 completed applications were submitted. Our Selection Committee selected the top 20 candidates to interview in person, which were conducted in mid-May. In the end, 6% of applicants received an interview, and we selected eight scholars representing Mexico, Bangladesh, China, Guyana and the West Indies.<sup>a</sup>

## Statistics on applicants and scholars



Our finalists represented all five boroughs of Manhattan:

- 33% Bronx
- 29% Manhattan
- 14% Brooklyn
- 14% Staten Island
- 10% Queens

<sup>a</sup> One selected Scholar became ineligible prior to entering college in the Fall of 2013.

## Meet our inaugural 2013 AEF Scholars



A civil rights activist whose parents emigrated from **Bangladesh** and attends Princeton University. This **Danaus Awesome Achievement Award** recipient has spent her teenage years supporting the struggle for human rights and social activism throughout the world by organizing hate-crime rallies, promoting voter rights, and starting a tutorial center in her house for free. Not only did she maintain a 4.0 GPA in high school and is a true leader in her community, she also contributes her earnings from the summer employment program to her parents to assist her family with their basic needs.

An immigrant from **Mexico** who is a founding member of a diversity group that promotes tolerance and anti-bullying at her school, and attends Hunter College with plans to study Psychology and Education. This **El Aguila Perseverance Award** recipient dedicates herself to her schoolwork as an International Baccalaureate diploma candidate with a 100 average, while continuing to help her guardians pay the bills by selling ices and cupcakes.

A young research scientist whose parents emigrated from **China** and who attends The University of California, Davis. His accomplishments include performing at Carnegie Hall, a national ranking in Chess the last three years, and being a member of his high school's varsity fencing team since his freshman year. Despite his demanding academic and extracurricular schedule, he also plays the role of homemaker in his household: purchasing groceries, making dinners and taking care of his siblings.

A student devoted to women's rights and gender equality whose parents emigrated from **Guyana**, and attends Wellesley College. Despite her economic and personal struggles, she maintained an A average at one of the country's most rigorous high schools. She was a head counselor at Project HAPPY, a sports and recreational program for individuals with disabilities, as well as an advocate for the Asian American youth community with the Coalition for Asian American Children & Families.

A young woman who immigrated to the U.S. from **Mexico** five years ago, and graduated in the top 10% of her class, and earned a 4 on the Advanced Placement English Language & Composition exam, despite being enrolled in ESL classes her freshman year. This **Arthur Li Distinguished Rising Star Award** was a member of a rigorous college-preparatory program, an alto sax player, and a committed volunteer at her church. She attends CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice and is passionately seeking a career as a criminal detective.



ASCEND EDUCATIONAL FUND

Elevating Our Community Through Higher Education

A women rights advocate whose parents emigrated from **St. Kitts and Nevis** and attends Bryn Mawr College. She founded a women's empowerment group in her school to discuss race, body image, and women's rights. A member of the Sadie Nash Leadership Project, she maintained an A average and ranked in the top 12% of her graduating class. She is described by her teachers as "a more honest, generous, and determined individual than you will ever meet."

A young man who immigrated to the U.S from **Mexico**, and maintained a 3.7 GPA at one of New York City's most competitive high schools, and scored in the 83rd percentile on the SAT mathematics section, all while working as a cook's assistant, assistant super, and at McDonald's to help support his family. He is described by his teachers as "one of the most ambitious, giving, and thirsty for knowledge" students they have ever encountered. He attends City College of New York.



## Summary of key 2013 events

### Launch event- February 27, 2013

AEF hosted its official launch event on Wednesday, February 27, 2013 at the Ainsworth Park in Gramercy. The night was a huge success, with more than \$4,000 raised and over 160 participants gathered to learn about AEF and our efforts to enable and encourage higher education and professional achievement for the immigrant community in New York City.

Participants learned about the numerous opportunities to become involved in AEF including (1) joining the Board of Advisors and help set the fundraising strategy while having a scholarship named in their honor, while also being highly encouraged to raise or contribute \$2,500, (2) joining the Scholarship Committee and assist in selecting scholars by reading applications and conducting interviews, (3) joining the Mentorship Committee and set the programming for the mentorship effort, or (4) becoming a mentor.

AEF also recognized a few individuals who were instrumental in helping launch the fund: Lilian Jallagaes, Rebekka Bonner, and Amy Hundert, who provided countless hours of advice and support. A special thanks was given to the Esperanza Educational Fund, who has inspired the work of AEF.



### Cocktails for Causes- March 26, 2013

On Tuesday, March 26, 2013 AEF participated in a fundraising event, *Cocktails for Causes*, with four other non-profits supporting the NYC community, hosted by the Alchemy Club. The event took place at the Dream Downtown Hotel in Chelsea. The night was a huge success, with \$2,800 in funds raised for AEF.

### **AEF Mentor Picnic- June 23, 2013**

AEF hosted its first official Mentor Picnic on Sunday, June 23, 2013 at New York City's Central Park. Our first class of AEF Scholars were introduced to his/her mentor and the group spent the afternoon playing games and icebreakers to get to know each other in teams. Scholars were also invited to bring family members, and our Board of Directors and other supporters had the opportunity to speak with our scholars' family and friends in a fun and informal environment.

Julissa Arce, chairman of the Board, congratulated each of the scholars and reiterated the importance of mentorship throughout their college years and subsequent careers. Adrienne Serrato and Anna Liu, co-chairs of the Mentorship Committee, conducted an orientation for mentors prior to the picnic to introduce the mentors to each other and assist in the development and maintenance of the mentor/mentee relationship. The afternoon allowed AEF the chance to celebrate each of our scholars with their families, introduce the AEF mentors to their mentees, and establish a foundation for the scholars and mentors to develop a meaningful connection.

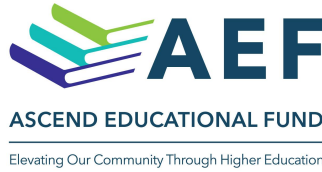


### **Partner event with the Dr. Antonia Pantoja Fellowship Inc. (DAPF) - November 14, 2013**

On Thursday, November 14, AEF hosted its first partner event with The Dr. Antonia Pantoja Fellowship, Inc. (DAPF) with a November Happy Hour at EVR Lounge in midtown Manhattan. The event gathered close to 100 DAPF and AEF supporters and raised \$2,700 toward academic scholarships, or \$1,350 for each organization for 2014 awards. During the event, AEF leadership highlighted the success in 2013 with an inaugural class of seven AEF scholars, and discussed plans for the first annual gala on February 8, 2014. DAPF discussed its focus on promoting the development of Puerto Rican and Latino/a leaders of integrity in the NYC community, and also highlighted plans for a Carnivale celebration on March 4, 2014. We look forward to continuing our success with other partner organization events in 2014 and beyond.







## Details on fundraising

### Supporter Circle

The commitment of the Supporter Circle is:

1. \$5,000+ donation

We recognize our Supporter Circle with:

1. Naming of a scholarship in their honor (or name of their choice)
2. Extending an invitation to meet our Scholars at our Annual Picnic
3. Offering admission to our Annual Gala as a VIP
4. Recognizing them in our Annual Gala program

### 2013 Supporter Circle

Arthur Li

### Advisory Council

The Advisory Council for the Ascend Educational Fund consists of thoughtful leaders who are instrumental in ensuring the longevity of our organization by providing advice and guidance to the Board of Directors.

The commitment of the Advisory Council is:

1. Advise the Board of Directors on AEF's fundraising strategy and contribute their expertise and thinking to the current and future work of Ascend Educational Fund
2. Attend two strategy sessions with the Board of Directors per year
3. Highly encouraged to raise or contribute \$2,500

We recognize our Advisory Council with:

1. Invitation to meet our Scholars at our Annual Picnic
2. Upgrade Gala Admission ticket to VIP
3. Acting on their advice and guidance
4. Naming a Scholarship in their honor (or name of their choice)

### Current AEF Advisory Council Members

*Danaus Chang* - Danaus Chang is the Senior Director for AnswerLab, a leading user experience research consultancy with offices in San Francisco and New York and Fortune 500 clients across the U.S. Danaus leads AnswerLab's New York office, where he brings more than a dozen years of consulting experience. AnswerLab's clients include PayPal, Genentech, FedEx, Amazon.com, Facebook, Walmart, Google, Citi, and Honda. In addition to his experience at AnswerLab, Danaus has led various external and internal consulting projects at Deloitte, a top global consulting firm, Pulte and Lennar Homes, national real estate developer/home builders. Danaus graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in Finance. He is an avid traveler of small towns and loves local food.

*Arthur Li* - Arthur Li currently serves as Head of Finance for Altamarea Group, a highly respected and industry recognized events and hospitality group that owns and operates restaurants in New York and New Jersey (including Marea, Ai Fiori, Osteria Morini, Nicoletta and Due Mari). Prior to joining Altamarea Group in January 2011, Arthur worked as an associate at Wasserstein & Co., a middle-market private equity firm, and as an analyst in the Consumer Retail Investment Banking group at J.P. Morgan. Arthur graduated from The University of Texas at Austin with Masters of Professional Accounting (MPA), Business Honors and Plan II Honors degrees. Arthur enjoys running and CrossFit and is currently training for his fourth New York City Marathon with Fred's Team, which is affiliated with Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.



ASCEND EDUCATIONAL FUND

Elevating Our Community Through Higher Education

**Raphael Zagury** - Raphael was born in Brazil and has been living in the U.S. since 2001. He attended the Yale School of Management. Starting in June he will be moving to a new position as Managing Director and Head of Deutsche Bank's Key Clients group for Latin America. Previously, he was the Head of Ultra High Net Worth Solutions group at Merrill Lynch. Before Merrill he worked at Goldman Sachs. Raphael lives in Hoboken, NJ with his wife and daughter. He is an avid runner and triathlete, having completed three Ironman distance races.

## Friends of AEF

*Friends of AEF* are recognized as supporters who contribute at least \$1,000 to our scholarship funds. Current *Friends of AEF* are Anne F. Brennan and Liam O'Neil.

## Donors

### \$2,500 +

Adrienne Serrato  
Arthur Li  
Celeste Everett  
Danaus Chang  
Diana Melencio  
Erika Zamora  
Julissa Arce-Aviles  
Raphael Zagury

### \$1,000- \$2,499

Anne Brennan  
Liam O'Neil

### \$500- \$999

Cherise Cornett  
Jessica Arcos

### \$250- \$499

Anna Liu  
Karen Haycox  
Kennie Blanco  
Rebecca Bonner  
Rhett Gano

### \$1- \$249

Laura Alejandra Sanchez de la Garza  
Laura K. Cornett  
Lenina Nadal  
Leslie Pesante Bonilla  
Leung Raymond  
Lilian Jalligas  
Lilo Rivera  
Linda Dao  
Luis Rodriguez  
Mallory Gibson  
Manuel Guerrero  
Marco Villegas  
Marcos Hidalgo  
Marcus Gallagher  
Margaret Eleazar-Smith  
Margaret Rothmann  
Mari Rosas  
Maria Weitzman  
Maria Yuan  
Maribel Cordero-Garica  
Elizabeth Mateo  
Michael Soss  
Michael Breslin  
Michael Infante

### \$1- \$249

Adam Ross  
Aileen Ma  
Aisha Jaleel  
Albert Kwasnik  
Alex Dorn  
Alex Kayvanfar  
Alexander Almonte  
Alice Cavalcante  
Alina Vrejou  
Ama Rodgers  
Amanda Lynam  
Amanda Smith  
Anais Lempereur  
Andrew Boccio  
Andrew Falton  
Andrew Jang  
Andrew Kayvanfar  
Angela Papaioannou  
Anna Rosales  
Annaise Bloomfield  
Anthony Santiago  
Antonia Bernal  
Anuj Jain  
Armand Aponte

Asha Abraham  
Blair Tuross  
Brian Curtin  
Brian Hernandez  
Carlos Moscoso  
Carmen Flores  
Carol Rannie  
Carolina Dominguez  
Caroline Kitidis  
Carolyn Chardon  
Chelsea Rodriguez  
Chloe Markowitz  
Chris Rodriguez  
Christina Strack  
Christina vanBeelen  
Christopher Saucedo  
Cindy Guan  
Cindy Lone  
Kevin Coyne  
Cecencia Morales  
Daisy Pitre  
Daman Pope  
Dan Melnick  
Dan Pellegrinelli

Daniel Sherman  
David Won  
Davina Wilner  
Dianna D'Amore  
Digna Sanchez  
Domingo Belliard  
Dorothy Botnick  
Jean-Michel Eder  
Edgar Landas  
Edison Castaneda  
Edward Riley  
Efrain Gonzalez  
Elizabeth Sutton  
Ella Gendel  
Emilio Zamora  
Emily Chen  
Enid Cabrera  
Eric Vaughn  
Erin Blum  
Erin Fu  
Ernesto Malave  
Esther Antonio  
Ethan Shen  
Eva Chao

Evelyn Riquelmie  
Fariha Mahmud  
Frank Amato  
Frank Robinson  
Gary Groszyna  
George Rzepecki  
Gloria Cavallaro  
Greg Welliver  
Hector Perez  
Helen Lopez  
Irene Crocker  
Ivonne Terrero  
James Kitchell  
James Stoner  
Jane Xiao  
Jared Forth  
Jarrod Kaplan  
Jasmine Blakely  
Jazil Ghias  
Jennifer Galia  
Jennifer Hamilton  
Jessica Coffin-St. Julien  
Jessu Fernandez  
Jethro Sorra

John Eisenberg  
Jomy Alappattu  
Jonathan Hong  
Jonathan Jolley  
Jonathan Tso  
Jordan Hughes  
Jose Eduardo Vazquez  
Joshua McMinn  
Joshua Moskow  
Juliana Merola  
Julie Park  
Justin Choi  
Justine Fisher  
Justine Wu  
Karl Fingegan  
Kate Peachway  
Kathleen Brenneck  
Keira Berger  
Kelly Bruce  
Kevin Garcia  
Konrad Bieniek  
Kristi Reitnauer  
Kyle Barrios  
Lara Say

### \$1- \$249

Michael Kalnicki  
Michael Moran  
Michael Sutton  
Michelle Lee  
Monica Mantilla  
Monica Quintero  
Monica Torres  
Natalia Larson  
Nathan Meeks  
Nichola Watkins  
Nick Tiligadas  
Nii Ato Bentis-Enchill  
Nikos Tiligadas  
Nira Desai  
Noah Simon  
Olga Boyko  
Omar Siddiqi  
Orlando Morales  
Oyinade Ogunbekun  
Pablo Ismael  
Patricia Colombo  
Paula Boone  
Pearl Chan  
Pete Terrenze

Poomima Aradhya  
Priyanka Mathew  
Rachel Kroner  
Rachel Siu  
Rafael Hernandez  
Ramandeep Singh  
Ramon Melencio  
Randy Gordon  
Raquel Morales  
Raquel Polanco  
Raz Galano  
Richard Cresswell  
Richard Vong  
Rick Mansouri  
Robert Gomez  
Robert J. Stenz  
Robert Kriebel-Wolin  
Rosa da Silva  
Roxana McKinney  
Ruolin Lin Lin  
Ryan Samson  
Sam Orpol  
Samantha Viglienghi  
Satya Tagat

Scott Freemon  
Scott Smith  
Sharon Burke  
Simon Boutros  
Sinohe Terrero  
Sonya Pat  
Stephanie Roberts  
Suzanne Gauron  
Sydney Valerio  
Sylvia Pereira  
Talia Metz  
Tanya Schuessler  
Tariq Chaudhri  
Tariq Omar  
Taufna Young  
Tejvi Rai  
Theresa O'Neill  
Timur Kocaoglu  
Trevor Goering  
Tyler Scriven  
Valentin Dhima  
Vanessa Sanchez  
Victor Herrera  
Whitney Falk

Yian Dai  
Yudi Rodriguez  
Zach Roberts

## AEF Committee descriptions and chairs

The **Development Committee** is responsible for establishing and executing the organization's fundraising strategy. It also has responsibility to source corporate partnerships, plan fundraising events and attain grants. (Diana Melencio & Julissa Arce)

The **External Affairs Committee** is responsible for managing and developing all external communications and relationships with the community. (Celeste Everett)

The **Mentorship Committee** is responsible for all aspects of the mentorship program, including the recruitment and selection of mentors, organization of mentorship events, and tracking of mentorship progress. (Adrienne Serrato & Robert Stenz)



The **Scholarship Committee** is responsible for all aspects of the scholarship application process including the creation of the application form, outreach to students, and selecting the AEF Scholars. (Erika Zamora)

The **Technology Committee** is responsible for setting and meeting the organization's technology strategy. (Robert Stenz)

## AEF Board of Directors

Julissa Arce, Chairman

Celeste Everett, Secretary

Diana Melencio

Adrienne Serrato

Robert Stenz

Erika Zamora, Treasurer

## Contact us

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