

SCHOLARS SLI Latino INITIATIVE

“Not only did [SLI] equip me with a wealth of knowledge about higher education, but it also instilled a sense of belonging within me. Often, students from underrepresented backgrounds experience feelings of displacement or inadequacy. I would say SLI encouraged me to apply for other Hispanic college programs, volunteer opportunities, and colleges because it made me feel worthy of these opportunities.”

–Jennifer, William & Mary '25



PO Box 1245, Harrisonburg, VA 22803 | EIN: 45-5560300 | vasli.org

MISSION:

With programs in Harrisonburg, Richmond, and Winchester, Virginia, Shenandoah Valley Scholars Latino Initiative (SLI) is a 501c3 nonprofit whose mission is to support Latino/a/x high school students with college access through rigorous academic challenge, leadership development, scholarships, and supportive mentorships.

APPROACH:

Through collaborations with university and high school staff, faculty, and students, SLI offers college access opportunities throughout high school. It also provides its scholars with college dual enrollment and AP course tuition assistance while in high school, and scholarships and technology grants for college success.

CONTEXT:

SLI scholars experience unique circumstances as in many cases first-generation college students; as talented but often invisible individuals; as children from families that are disproportionately under-resourced and disenfranchised; and as members of a growing population in Virginia and the U.S. that is underrepresented on college campuses.



“When you’re a high school senior who is starting to apply for college, and when you start coming across things that you have never had to deal with before, it is terrifying. You feel as if at any point you can sink and not end up preparing for that transition from high school to college. Through SLI, I was able to have access to many resources that allowed for that smooth transition. I am forever grateful for that.”

–Everth, Shenandoah University '25



IMPACT SINCE 2012

- **200 scholars** (70 current, 130 alumni)
- **25 colleges and universities** attended by SLI alumni
- Nearly **\$700,000 in financial support** for students, including:
 - **\$561,977 in college scholarships** to attend two- and four-year institutions
 - **\$106,945 in technology grants** to help SLI scholars purchase the technology needed to start college
 - **\$28,630 in tuition assistance for scholars taking college dual enrollment and AP courses** while in high school. These improve college readiness, enhance academic portfolios, and may reduce the number of credit hours needed in college

2025 BUDGET (anticipated)

- **Financial supports for students...\$256,500**
 - College scholarships
 - Technology grants
 - Dual enrollment/AP tuition assistance
- **Programming.....\$72,000**
 - Academic challenge
 - Supportive mentorships
 - Community Service
- **Development\$71,235**
- **Administration\$5,135**
- TOTAL: \$404,870**

SCHOLARS

- Historically 71% female and 29% male
- Criteria can include: self-identifying Latino/a/x | first- or second-generation immigrant status | first-generation college status | limiting family economic situation | good character | academic and leadership potential | commitment to higher ed | limited access to support systems

COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT FUNDING FOR SLI IN 2023

- Corporations: 17%
- Foundations: 30%
- Individuals: 49%
- Organizations and government: 4%

HISTORY

- The original SLI was founded by Peter Iver Kaufman and others in 2001 at UNC Chapel Hill.
- In 2008 Kaufman brought SLI to the University of Richmond, Virginia, and later to the Shenandoah Valley, where this organization was incorporated in 2012.

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Somos SLI

vasli.org/somos

“Many times people don’t look for help because they’re afraid. They think that there’s no hope. My younger self used to think that, that there was no hope, because when I came to the U.S. college wasn’t a dream anymore, and I met [SLI founder] Dr. Kaufman and I knew that there was hope.”

Irais, Eastern Mennonite University '25



“SLI taught me how to face the reality of becoming a first generation immigrant college student and how to succeed in such a journey. I have been able to work with different people who allowed me to have new experiences, ideas, and perspectives which helped me find the path I wanted to follow.”

Abygail, Blue Ridge Community College '26

“SLI prepared me for college through its Early College lectures which helped me gain the necessary discussion skills for my discussion sections in college. Additionally, SLI’s volunteering opportunities ... helped me gain the necessary team building skills to succeed in college projects and the necessary note taking skills to thrive in my classes.”

Noel, University of Virginia '25

