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Newport Beach, Calif. (September 16, 2019) – The Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF) has announced the culmination of a 14-month pilot program, Orange County Promise. The initiative aims to make the dream of college completion a reality for 50 OCCF scholarship recipients who are the first in their families to attend college. OC Promise was launched in partnership with Laguna Beach resident and OCCF donor Ranney Draper, together with two other OCCF donors.

In its first year, the program is designed to address the challenge of low college completion rates among disadvantaged and first-generation higher education students. The odds are historically stacked against this pool across the country: In total, 89 percent of low-income first-generation students leave college within six years without a degree; further, [the dropout rate of first-generation students is four times that of second-generation students](#).

These statistics prompted donors such as Draper—a steadfast supporter of higher education who strives to make college graduation a reality for underprivileged students—to partner with OCCF by providing an innovative type of support through OC Promise. The program is implemented in partnership with [InsideTrack](#)—a national student success organization dedicated to improving college student enrollment, completion and career readiness.

“At OCCF, our mission is to faithfully steward our donors’ intentions by addressing our community’s greatest challenges—such as barriers faced by disadvantaged college students—and designing strategies to tackle those challenges,” said Shelley Hoss, President and CEO, OCCF. “Enabling our donors to address areas of need with innovative approaches is a means to creating sustainable community impact. In this case, OC Promise is paving the way for first-generation college students to successfully complete a degree and change the future for themselves and their families for generations to come.”

Through this initiative, Draper, with the support of OCCF, sought to provide wraparound skills coaching for the vulnerable population of first-year college students. These students were typically the first in their families to attend college, faced extenuating circumstances that caused hardship, or had little access to financial and other supportive resources. To address these challenges, OC Promise contracted with InsideTrack, which provides skills coaching to ensure that students stay on top of financial aid deadlines, develop successful study habits, learn to create short- and long-term academic and professional goals and foster a social connection with their campus communities, among other essential components of college success. Self-reliance is the end result of the program, which better positions these students to earn a four-year degree.

Hugo Pastrana, a Santa Ana resident who is the first in his family to attend college, just completed his first year as a computer engineering major at California State University, Fullerton. Pastrana participated

in OC Promise's pilot program. InsideTrack tailored its coaching to Pastrana's needs, focusing on early academic challenges he faced and by connecting with him regularly throughout the school year to discuss his future plans, track his progress toward graduation and bolster his confidence within his new academic environment.

"I came into college with some idea of what to expect, but it's not the same as actually experiencing it. My coach helped me to stay focused and taught me how to spend my time better," said Pastrana. "I had to keep myself accountable because I told him I would. He really energizes me and the other students, and I am grateful he was a part of my journey."

With the OC Promise pilot program now complete for this inaugural cohort of 50 participants, its success is evident: more than 75% have notified the program of their plans to return to their respective schools for their sophomore year. Further, many are making long-term plans to enrich their remaining undergraduate years by exploring opportunities to study abroad or begin career-related internships. The second pool of 60 students commenced its participation in OC Promise in mid-August, with the first tasks at hand to discuss short- and long-term goals and identify any challenges that have arisen.

Building on the success of the OC Promise Program and its pioneering approach, OCCF recently launched a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) to provide support to nonprofit innovators and innovations that advance social and economic well-being in Orange County. Three other impactful concepts addressing topics ranging from homelessness to mental health will soon be unveiled, all of which aim to develop and deploy effective solutions to challenging and often systemic issues in support of social progress.

About Orange County Community Foundation

Founded in 1989, the Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF) works with donors, strengthens the local nonprofit sector and works to find solutions to community needs. Since its inception, OCCF has awarded \$630 million in grants and scholarships and ranks in the top one percent in grantmaking activity among more than 780 U.S. community foundations. For more information, visit oc-cf.org or call 949-553-4202. Be a part of our conversation on [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). View OCCF's 2018 annual report [here](#).

About InsideTrack

InsideTrack is passionate about student success. We partner with colleges and universities to improve enrollment, persistence, completion and career readiness. Our student support methodology uncovers firsthand feedback about student goals and challenges. Through strategic guidance, staff training and student coaching, we help institutions turn this feedback into actionable insights that drive better student outcomes. As a member of the nonprofit Strada Education Network, we offer partners access to a comprehensive range of student success solutions as well as the latest research and insights on student success. We've supported more than 2 million students since 2001 and currently serve over 4,000 programs. Visit us at www.insidetrack.com and follow us on Twitter [@InsideTrack](#).

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