

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



Welcome!

We're so happy you've decided to join us in the fight for education equity! With your help, we are making college possible for students in the San Francisco Bay Area and across the United States. As a volunteer, you are joining a community of dedicated professionals committed to supporting students to and through college.

Collectively, our volunteer community has an incredible wealth of experience and expertise around all topics related to the admissions process, and many other areas of education. Whether you're a seasoned professional in college access or coming to this work from another field, we're excited for you to join us!

ScholarMatch

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About ScholarMatch

ScholarMatch makes college possible for underserved youth, from the college application process all the way to college graduation. ScholarMatch's services span a seven-year continuum to support students throughout their entire college journey. Beginning in high school, we deliver targeted in-person and online support to students who are the first in their family to attend college. College students receive the critical combination of 1:1 advising by staff, strategic scholarship support, and career mentoring to support their path all the way to college graduation. Our services are free for students and available for contract by outside

community-based organizations and foundations.

Founded in 2010 by author Dave Eggers, ScholarMatch began as a San Francisco-based crowdfunding platform for scholarships and quickly evolved into a college access and persistence organization delivering hands-on support for the students who need it most. In 2015, we launched the ScholarMatcher, a groundbreaking college-list-building tool optimized for the needs of low-income students, and began to offer college advising services virtually to high school students outside of the Bay Area. In 2016, we expanded our college services to serve students in Los Angeles and launched our first virtual advising program. Today, ScholarMatch is a nimble 20-person organization that engages 500+ volunteers per year to serve over 1,000 students nationwide at every point of the college journey.

Our Vision

We envision a world where all students have access to higher education and the opportunity to succeed in a fulfilling career.

Our Mission

Our mission is to support first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds to earn a bachelor's degree within five years.

Our Contact Information

ScholarMatch is headquartered in San Francisco and our staff works remotely, primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles.



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About Our High School Program

Our Destined for College program works hands-on with high school students who are the first in their family to attend college.

- Students are matched 1:1 with a College Coach and work together for up to a year throughout the college application process.

Virtual College Coaching

ScholarMatch provides individualized college admission counseling virtually to **low-income, high-achieving** students nationwide. Students in this program are matched with a trained volunteer College Coach for their senior year in high school and receive 1:1 support on everything from building their college list, to polishing their essays, to completing financial aid paperwork, to planning their travel to school.

About Our College Programs

Students in ScholarMatch's Destined for College program are invited to **apply to our Scholars Program** – a support program through college graduation that includes advising, career mentoring, and financial support from one of our scholarship partners. To be eligible, students must be planning on attending a 4-year college, be the first in their family to attend college, complete ScholarMatch's College-Ready Milestones, and have an EFC of under \$20,000. Preference is given to students who are Pell Eligible. To work with students from the Scholars Program, volunteers can become [Career Coaches](#).

Opportunities Available for Volunteering with College Students

Career Community <i>All year anytime</i>	Fuel the social capital of our students and join our Career Community by adding your profile to our database. Volunteers can elect to support students as a one-off engagement or more consistently with career-building skills, such as resume reviews, interview prep, and informational interviews.
Matched Career Coaching <i>Sept-Apr 2 meetings/month</i>	Match 1:1 with a student for an eight-month term . Career coaches and students will virtually meet at least twice a month , adding up to 4-6 hours of service a month. Coaches will support scholars in completing ScholarMatch Career Milestones to aid in internship attainment.

Roles and Responsibilities of Volunteers

Qualifications for College Coaches

- Hold a bachelor's degree
- Complete our sequence of online trainings
- Pass a criminal background check
- Complete a mandatory sexual abuse training

Responsibilities for College Coaches

A **College Coach** provides critical guidance to high school students during the college application process. In your role, you will:

- Explore college options and help students find colleges that match their academic profile, financial fit, and general interests
- Guide students in developing and editing personal statements
- Support students with filling out financial aid applications
- Motivate students to stay organized during the application process
- Help students review financial aid award letters and make their final college decision
- Provide monthly detailed reports (Coach Reports) on your progress with each student. Failure to submit monthly Coach Reports may result in program dismissal

Qualifications for Career Coaches

- Have a bachelor's degree
- Have 3+ years of professional experience
- Complete our sequence of online trainings
- Pass a background check

Responsibilities for Career Coaches

As a Career Coach you have the opportunity to teach our students career-building skills to become competitive candidates and confident careerists. There are two ways to support our students: match 1:1 with a student for an eight-month term or join the Career Community to be available for one-off questions and support.

A matched Career Coach provides career support and guidance to college students during the school year. In your role, you will:

- Support scholars in gaining career-building skills like resume writing, cover letters, interviewing, internship application, and networking.
- Explore career paths and different opportunities within a scholar's chosen industry
- Assist scholars in completing [ScholarMatch's career milestones](#)
- Help students to feel confident applying for and attaining internship opportunities
- Provide coaching logs summarizing meetings with scholars
- Build scholars' career toolkit, and personal brand, and professional skills

A Career Community Coach provides one-off career support and guidance when a scholar submits a request:

- Respond to scholars' meeting requests within two weeks of receipt
- Provide requested support for scholars, including, but not limited to: Informational interviews, resume review, cover letter review, and mock interviews.
- Submit a coaching log to summarize the interactions with each individual scholar

Policies & Expectations

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to ScholarMatch, its staff, and its students. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated as equal co-workers, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition for work done. In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the mission and procedures of ScholarMatch.

Volunteer Not an Employee

A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the agency. A volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by ScholarMatch prior to the performance of the task. Unless specifically stated, volunteers shall not be considered employees of the ScholarMatch organization.

Service at the Discretion of the Agency

ScholarMatch accepts the services of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the organization. Volunteers agree that ScholarMatch may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the organization. The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the volunteer's relationship with ScholarMatch. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the Volunteer Manager.

Acceptance and Appointment

Service as a volunteer with ScholarMatch shall begin with an official notice of acceptance or appointment to a volunteer position. Notice may only be given by an authorized representative of the agency, who will normally be the Volunteer Manager. If you advance, you will receive an email confirming you are a College Coach and are ready to work with our students. No volunteer shall begin performance of any position until they have been officially accepted for that position and have completed all necessary screening and paperwork.

Length of Service

All volunteer positions shall have a set term of duration, with an option for renewal at the discretion of both parties. All volunteer assignments shall end at the conclusion of their set term,

without expectation or requirement of re-assignment of that position to the incumbent. Volunteers are neither expected nor required to accept further service in a position at the end of their set term, although they are welcome to do so in most cases, but may instead seek a different volunteer assignment within the agency, or may retire from volunteer service.

Standards of Conduct

By agreeing to volunteer with us, you have a responsibility to ScholarMatch students and staff, and to your fellow volunteers to adhere to certain guidelines for conduct.

- Adopt an equity-minded student-centered approach in my advising.
- Meet with my student at least once a month for the duration of the program year.
- Conduct meetings in a respectful and developmentally appropriate manner with my student.
- Keep ScholarMatch up to date with progress by completing and submitting our monthly Coach Reports by the 10th of each month.
- Communicate with my student in a timely manner by setting up manageable deadlines, communicating if I need to reschedule a meeting, and providing feedback if necessary.
- Communicate with ScholarMatch if any of the following apply: (1) volunteer experience and support are not adequate (2) I am no longer interested in participating in our program (3) I have questions or concerns about my experience in our program by emailing advising@scholarmatch.org.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a single staff member, volunteer, student, or other person or involves the overall ScholarMatch business. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the agency or other corrective action. Volunteer personnel records shall be accorded the same confidentiality as staff personnel records.

Security

Maintaining the security of our students is every volunteer's responsibility. Develop habits that ensure security as a matter of course. For example:

- Keep your personal computer system protected from activities that could compromise the confidentiality of your correspondence or meetings with your student (for example, use multi-factor authentication for your email; use password-protected video calls)
- Limit access to shared documents you are working on with your student
- Alert ScholarMatch to any security breaches or incidents that could affect your student

Resignation

If you anticipate having to resign your volunteer position with ScholarMatch before the end of the year, you are expected to notify our Volunteer Manager (advising@scholarmatch.org) in writing as far in advance as possible and make arrangements for an exit interview.

Termination Policy

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include but are not limited to

- Gross misconduct
- Reporting for a volunteer assignment under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Theft of property or misuse of agency funds, equipment, or materials
- Falsifying statements on the volunteer application or during the interview process
- Illegal, violent, or unsafe acts
- Abuse or mistreatment of students, volunteers, or staff
- Releasing confidential information
- Unwillingness to support and further the mission of the organization
- Failure to meet program expectations such as completing coach reports or other requests for data to support the program.

Background Check Procedure

Social security verification: validates the applicant's social security number, date of birth, and former addresses.

Educational verification: confirms the applicant's claimed educational institution, including the years attended and the degree/diploma received. To volunteer for ScholarMatch, coaches are required to have attained a bachelor's degree.

Criminal history: Includes review of criminal convictions and probation. The following factors will be considered for applicants with a criminal history:

- The nature of the crime and its relationship to the position.
- The time since the conviction.
- The number (if more than one) of convictions.
- Whether hiring, transferring, or promoting the applicant would pose an unreasonable risk to the business, its employees, or its customers and vendors.

Case-by-case scenarios

If a volunteer is unable to provide an SSN for reasons such as living internationally or immigration status, ScholarMatch will work with the individual on a case-by-case basis.

Personal and professional references: Volunteers will need to provide ScholarMatch with the email and phone number of two references who know the volunteer personally and/or professionally regarding their work with students. Calls may be placed to individuals listed as references by the applicant.

Coach selection policy (Background check)

Candidates who apply for volunteer College Coach positions must satisfy basic requirements in order to be considered for selection. College Coach aspirants must (i) hold a bachelor's degree from a college or university, (ii) commit to devoting approximately 4-6 hours per month to supporting two students for the period from July through June (one year), (iii) complete online training provided by ScholarMatch, and (iv) successfully pass a background check. These are minimum requirements. Final selection decisions will depend on other factors as well, including program needs and capacity, and are at the sole discretion of ScholarMatch. Prior infractions or convictions (for example, traffic-related offenses) that come to light through the background check process will not necessarily disqualify a candidate applying for a College Coach volunteer position. ScholarMatch management will assess each individual situation, taking into account such factors as the nature and gravity of the offense or conduct, the time that

has passed since the occurrence of the offense or conduct, and other relevant considerations. *[Volunteer College Coach candidates who are not selected, based solely or in part on information obtained during the background check process, will be advised that the background check contributed to the decision not to accept the candidate].*

Required Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

We are committed to creating a safe environment free from abuse of any kind. At ScholarMatch, we require all staff members and volunteers to complete Abuse Prevention Systems' Sexual Abuse Awareness Training before participating in our programs. Coaches will receive an email from Abuse Prevention Systems to complete their training as part of the ScholarMatch onboarding process and will need to watch all of the videos and pass the quiz to complete this requirement for the Coach onboarding process.

Working with your student

We covered this as part of our onboarding process and wanted to reiterate that ScholarMatch volunteers matched with students are required to support data tracking in three ways:

1. Submit Monthly Coach Reports

In order to understand trends in student behavior and outcomes, ScholarMatch tracks key data points throughout the college application process for our high school students and the career readiness process for our college students. Collecting this information is imperative for us to better understand the needs of our students and how we can improve our program to best serve them. Furthermore, we must collect and report this information to partners and funders to sustain support for this program.

We cannot stress enough how critically important your role is with this data collection, and we're grateful for your help with it. As a College or Career Coach, you will have a personal relationship with students and in the case of College Coaches will be your students' primary connection to ScholarMatch.

You'll receive reminders via email to complete your coach report. For multiple missing coach reports, click [here](#) to access our FAQ.

2. Remind & Help Students to Complete Milestones

In addition to the Monthly Coach reports you are required to submit, we expect you to remind and help students with completing their [College Ready Milestones](#) if you are a College Coach or [Career Ready Milestones](#) if you are Career Coach, along with occasional other check-ins we send (like completing a mid-year program survey, etc.)

3. Check your email and respond to occasional miscellaneous asks! 😊

We promise to keep additional reporting requests as light as possible, but additional program elements sometimes necessitate gathering further information or asking you to support students with particular tasks.

Directory

Questions related to the College Access Program

Email: advising@scholarmatch.org

Questions related to the Career Coaching Program

Email: careers@scholarmatch.org