



ACE

African Community Education

embracing culture | building community | creating change

FY 2020 Annual Report



A Letter from ACE Leadership



Dear Friends of ACE,

Thank you for making FY2020 yet another remarkable year for African Community Education. We are excited to share with you all that we have accomplished over the past year in the following pages.

This year was unlike any other. The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges for ACE students and families. In March, we quickly shifted all of our programs to a remote learning model. During the spring, we provided nearly 2,000 hours of video and phone support to ACE students, distributed 50 laptops to ensure access to remote learning, provided nearly 100 remote enrichment activities for students, and distributed over 600 masks to students and families.

In response to the pandemic, we also launched the ACE Family Fund. We wanted to be able to provide direct cash assistance to families in need of food, cleaning supplies, utilities, healthcare, and more. Our original goal was to raise \$5,000, but the ACE community rallied around the cause and to-date has raised just under \$10,000. \$6,000 of this has been distributed to dozens of families in need of immediate assistance.

We cannot say enough about how all members of the ACE community - staff, volunteers, students, and supporters - went the extra mile to help make these necessary adjustments. All of the credit in the world goes to the students, who continued to answer their phones and participate in video calls day after day so they could successfully continue their education.

This year, we enrolled 100 youth across our After School, Saturday, Mentoring, and Summer Programs. Including our Family Education Program and Outreach Department, we directly served 635 individuals, the most we have ever served in one year.

We are proud that 14 students who attended ACE during their academic careers graduated this year, bringing our total number of graduates to 261 since our founding in 2006.

These accomplishments would not be possible without the dedication of our hundreds of volunteers, the generosity of our donors and funders, the talents of our partners, the tireless work of our staff and board, and, most importantly, the passion, resilience, and determination of our students and their families.

Every sign of support we receive shows that more and more people believe in the work we do and in what we are building at ACE. We cannot thank you enough for that belief.

With deepest gratitude,

Kaska Yawo

Executive Director & Co-Founder

Siko Sikochi

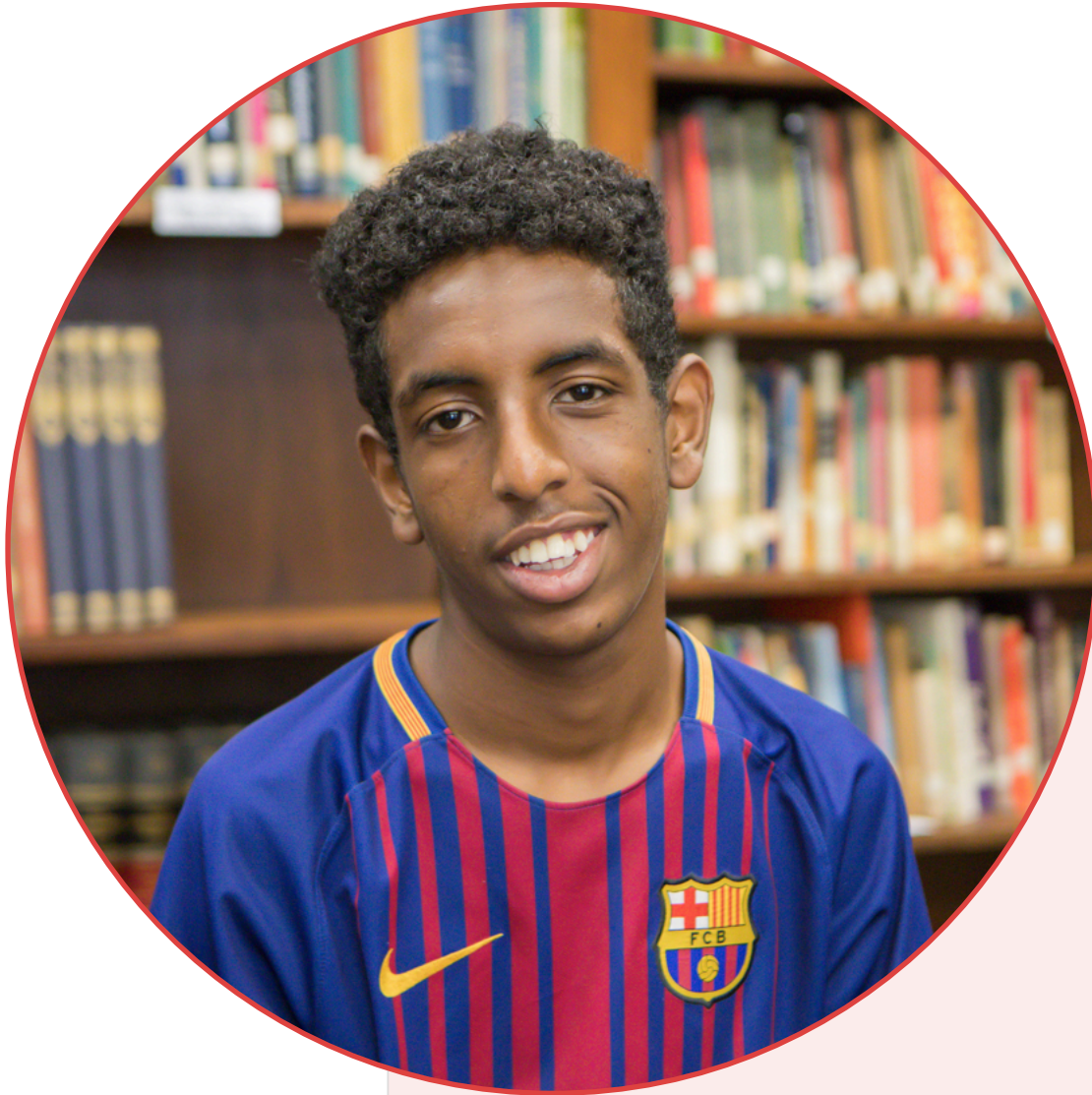
President, ACE Board of Directors

Our Mission & Vision

The mission of African Community Education is to assist African refugee and immigrant youth and families in achieving educational and social stability through access to academic support, leadership development, cultural expression, and community outreach.

Our vision is a community where African refugees and immigrant youth and families are empowered, self-sufficient, and secure.





PROGRAMMING

Programming Fast Facts

For youth ages 10 and up, ACE hosts After School, Saturday, Mentoring, Summer Reading, and Workforce Development Programs. Through these programs, ACE provides access to tutoring, supplemental classroom time, experiential learning activities, and one-on-one mentoring which help students succeed academically. ACE also serves as a liaison between the student, family, and local public schools to ensure each student's home and school lives provide environments for success.

For parents of our students, ACE provides English as Second Language and Citizenship classes as part of our Family Education Program along with wraparound outreach services to help families access needed services and benefits.



112

Students attended ACE Youth Programs

34

Adults attended ACE ESOL classes

37

Children attended ACE's Early Literacy Playgroup

635

Individuals served through programming and outreach

Programming Fast Facts



86% of students are ELL's and 100% are low income



24 languages spoken at home



142 Program Sessions



811 Program Hours



239 Home Visits



13 Countries of Origin

Volunteer Spotlight

This year, **182 volunteers** contributed **2,521 hours** of service to help ACE students and families.

CHANTAL UMUHOZA

Chantal Umuhoza graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in the spring, and has served as a volunteer at ACE since her freshman year.

Chantal joined ACE in 2016 as a volunteer in the After School Program. Being an international student from Rwanda, she easily adapted to the environment at ACE and instantly built connections with the students. In 2017, she transitioned from a volunteer to mentor for a year. Before graduation, Chantal worked as the Program Director for the SPUD group at Holy Cross and helped recruit volunteers to ACE. Says ACE Volunteer & Mentor Coordinator, Ayman Abdelgadir of Chantal, “Chantal is the perfect example of an outstanding volunteer and has impacted ACE more than she knows. I personally admire her passion and effort. Even with the pandemic and finishing up her Bachelor’s degree, Chantal still managed to stay involved remotely and offer academic and social support to ACE students. We are grateful for Chantal’s time at ACE.



Mentoring Spotlight



This year, **27 mentor-mentee matches** participated in our Mentoring for Empowerment & Exchange Program.

DOREEN & ESTHER as told by Skyleer Hesch

Laughter filled an upstairs room at the After School Program as mentor Doreen Dorma and mentee Esther Businge realized they were wearing very similar outfits. Both wore dark wash jeans, boots, and hunter green cargo jackets. This simple moment of laughter paved the way for their future relationship. After many moments of joy between Esther and Doreen in the After School Program, they found themselves paired up through the ACE Mentoring Program.

Esther felt excited about the possibility of a mentoring relationship, but she admits that did not know what to expect. She recalls her reaction to the staff member who wanted to match the two as a mentor-mentee pair. "I said, 'What? I don't even know what that means,'" giggled Esther.

Esther first joined ACE in 2018, one month after arriving in the United States from Uganda. She learned that a mentor could help her succeed in school and acclimate to the culture — all while gaining a great friend. After volunteering at ACE's 2018 Gala, Doreen immediately knew she wanted to become a long-term volunteer at ACE. However, Kwame Yeboah, ACE's Program Director at the time, had bigger plans for her. "I came in here thinking I was just a volunteer." Then, after a week of volunteering, Kwame suggested she pursue mentoring. "I thought, 'Wow, I would love to mentor her.' Now, we are here."

Doreen first noticed that Esther was shy and very bright. She knew that with some encouragement and help, Esther would blossom into the hard-working and extroverted 15-year-old she is today. When Doreen first met Esther, ACE was about to hold elections for President of the Youth Leadership Council. Doreen recalled how Esther had great ideas but was too afraid to run for the position. "Now, I feel like she would be the first one up there, like 'I'm the president.'"

Since their first moment meeting, Doreen has loved watching Esther grow as a person and academically. Esther is no longer afraid to speak her mind and is doing much better in her classes, especially in math. They recently celebrated Esther getting a 94 on her math test. "I went to East Middle School, which gave me an opportunity to apply for Worcester Technical School. I got accepted thanks to my mentor's help," says Esther.

Esther recognizes Doreen as someone very "understanding" of kids her age, as well as a "beautiful and kind" individual. While their mentorship mainly focuses on academics, Esther said that Doreen is also great at giving life advice. They communicate openly and often, typically texting throughout the week.

Their success as a mentoring pair does not go unnoticed. Ayman Abdelgadir, ACE's Volunteer and Mentor Coordinator, said, "Doreen is very consistent and committed to her role as a mentor and spends more time with Esther than required. Esther is always asking about Doreen and looks forward to the days they are scheduled to meet. That's the type of relationship we envision for all of our mentoring matches at ACE."

ACE Graduates

This year, **14 students** who attended ACE during their academic careers graduated high school.

HELENE

Helene was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She lived in Rwanda and then Kenya before coming to the United States six years ago with her family, including her sister, Grace, who also graduated this year. Helene remembers flying to New York City with her family and feeling both nervous and excited as it was her first time on an airplane.

Upon moving to Worcester, Helene began attending school and found a mix of successes and challenges. "I did well in school to start because I already knew how to do the math they were teaching. But the hard part was writing paragraphs and essays because I was not used to doing that in English."

Helene began attending ACE about five months after moving to Worcester. She quickly began to improve her writing skills and excel in school. Helene attended the ACE After School and Saturday Programs throughout her middle and high school careers, becoming a standout student and someone younger students looked up to.

"ACE not only helped me be successful in school but also helped me to appreciate life. ACE shaped me to become the person I am right now," says Helene.

Helene attended high school at University Park Campus School where she was an honor student and member of the track and field team and community service organization. She also completed an internship with Worcester City Councilor Dr. Sarai Rivera.

During her internship, Helene helped Councilor Rivera with local environmental initiatives. "I worked on campaigns for improving water quality in the city. The experience made me more interested in learning how to solve environmental problems like climate change."

The internship was part of the reason Helene applied to Worcester State University where she will study environmental science in the fall. Of starting her college career, Helene says, "I'm excited but also nervous. I know it is going to be hard, but I am excited because I can learn anything I want to and have the opportunity to study my passion."

Helene thanks her parents and siblings, everyone at University Park Campus School, and all of those at ACE: "I would not have succeeded without them. I never thought this day would come, and I feel great."



ACE Graduates

GRACE

Grace was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She lived in Rwanda and then Kenya before coming to the United States in June of 2014 with her family, including her sister, Helene, who also graduated this year.

Grace recalls how her curiosity peaked when coming to the United States for the first time. "Everything here was new. There was so much to see. I was excited to be in a new environment and meet new people."

Grace began school at the New Citizen's Center (NCC) that fall. She remembers, "I was scared and nervous because I did not know that much English, even though we studied it a bit in Kenya. I needed to get used to the new environment, surroundings, and style of teaching. It was hard at first but I got used to it as the years went on."

Grace began attending ACE at the beginning of 2015 while still in school at NCC. She cherishes the connections she was able to build with ACE tutors who spoke the same languages as her, Swahili and Kinyarwanda.

"ACE really was so helpful," says Grace. "I was new and would struggle with homework but the ACE volunteers and tutors helped me. It was really easy to talk to and learn from someone who understood me, and I understood them as well."

After a year at NCC, Grace began 8th grade at University Park Campus School. She quickly excelled, becoming a recurring honor student during her five years there. She is proud of being able to balance and navigate an abnormal senior year.

"It was difficult balancing applying to colleges with work and everything else, but it was not as hard as I thought it was going to be. I really did my best work."

Grace's best work paid off as she was accepted to attend Clark University in the fall and selected as a recipient of the University Park Partnership Scholarship. The scholarship, which is open to residents of Worcester who have lived in the University Park neighborhood for at least five years prior to enrolling at Clark, provides free tuition for four years.

Grace has not yet decided on a major at Clark but is especially excited about the study of languages. She plans to add French to her list of fluent languages, which already include English, Swahili, and Kinyarwanda.

Grace is thrilled to have reached the milestone of graduating high school and thankful for the help she has received during her journey. "I want to thank ACE, my parents, my family, and everyone else who has helped me all of these years. It's great to know I have come this far."



Student Spotlight

AIMABLE

Aimable, a rising junior at Worcester Technical High School, was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and grew up in Uganda. Aimable came to the United States in 2015. He first arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, then ventured to Worcester one year later. Aimable speaks English, Luganda, and Swahili.



Soon after arriving in the United States, Aimable found ACE through a family friend. He started off seeking homework help but now provides help to many ACE students. ACE's Volunteer and Mentor Coordinator Ayman Abdelgadir noticed Aimable's leadership among ACE students and invited him to apply for the YouthWorks internship. He helped ACE staff and students adjust to the pandemic's circumstances by calling families to provide support, teaching students how to use computers, and coordinating plans and ideas with staff.

While in St. Louis, Aimable befriended a pilot and now aspires to become a pilot, too. He spends his free time learning about airplanes with plans to go to pilot school.

BELISE

Belise was born in Tanzania and spent time in Uganda. She speaks Kirundi, Swahili, and English. Belise's parents and sister left for the United States first while Belise traveled to live with her family in Uganda. While her parents and sister set up their new life in the U.S.,



Belise prepared for the transition by practicing English and cherishing time with her family before leaving for the U.S. At 16 years old, and after one and a half years in Uganda, Belise ventured on her own to join her family.

Belise soon discovered ACE through her sister. Belise was attracted to the opportunity to learn English and receive homework help while transitioning into the Worcester Public Schools system. She soon joined the ACE Dance Team, too. Belise loves ACE because she has seen herself and her peers grow quickly in their knowledge of English and the U.S. together.

Belise continues to overcome the linguistic and cultural challenges that come with moving to the U.S. She worked a summer job to gain experience and support her family. This year, she will transition from New Citizen's Center to Gerald Creamer Center. Belise envisions herself as a future leader either in the business world or medical field.

Programming Highlights



Traka Workshop with Jean Appolon Expressions

In October, Jean Appolon Expressions (JAE) visited our Saturday Program to work with ACE students. JAE is a Boston-based Haitian contemporary non-profit dance company. The group led a dance workshop for over 40 ACE students and staff that explored "Traka" - "Troubles" in Haitian Kreyol - how dance, culture, and community are pathways to healing for victims of traumatic events. Jean Appolon, Meghan McGrath, and Mcebisi Xotyeni had all of our students up, moving and exploring their inner selves through dance.

Simon Says Give Birthday Bash

On January 4, the team at Simon Says Give - Worcester hosted a Birthday Bash at the ACE program. With decorations, games, and all the trimmings, we were all able to celebrate birthdays in American style. In particular, we celebrated four of our youngest students, Sadia, Mapendo, Rajabu, and Raymond who received birthday cards and gifts, were bedecked with streamers, and serenaded with "Happy Birthday!" The entire group enjoyed a custom-made cake from our friends at The Queen's Cups.



Workforce Development Program Unum Visit

As part of our Workforce Development Program, Unum Insurance Company hosted our high school students at their offices last August. The group was treated to a tour of the offices and had the pleasure of meeting Senior Vice President Steve Joseph. Joseph grew up in Worcester and attended South High School. Our own South High students, Principe and Kobe were especially thrilled to meet him. Students learned about what to expect in a professional workplace and the job market in Worcester.

Programming Highlights



Teambuilding Workshop with Reverend Dr. Debora Jackson

In November, we welcomed the Reverend Dr. Debora Jackson to our Saturday Program. Rev. Jackson led a team-building experiential learning activity with our high school students as part of our Express Yourself program. Students learned the importance of communication skills, leadership development, and working successfully in teams. Working with dynamic facilitators like Rev. Jackson helps ACE students to build soft skills necessary for success both in and out of the classroom.

Mirick O'Connell Career Panel

As part of United Way of Central Massachusetts' Day of Caring, members of the staff at Mirick O'Connell came to our offices to put on a career and advice panel for our students and alumni. Rachel, Sara, John, and Gary shared stories of their successes and failures with our students and the lessons they have learned along the way. They were incredibly candid, telling students about their own personal journeys and answering questions about education, work, passion, and life.



Mentor-Mentee Day at the Worcester Railers Game

In January, our Mentoring for Empowerment & Exchange Program shared a group outing at a Worcester Railers game. Mentors and mentees shared a meal and played a game of ACE-themed trivia at the ACE officer before going to the game at the DCU Center. Winners of the trivia game received special tickets to sit rink-side. Fidele was lucky enough to snag a picture with the Worcester Railers mascot, Trax!

ACE's response to the pandemic



\$6,000 in direct cash assistance to ACE families



37 staff and volunteers making daily calls



49 students given access to laptops at home



660 masks distributed to ACE families



1,705 hours of video and phone support



92 enrichment activities on Google Classroom



ACE's remote learning program

64

Students included in the remote program

50

Students reached an average of once a week

44

Students joined the ACE Google Classroom

31

Students reached each day on average

43

Additional volunteers to assist with remote learning

DEVELOPMENT



Key Facts & Figures

30

Grant funders

\$530K

In grants awarded

30

Corporate & event sponsors

475

Individual donors

\$85K

Raised from individuals & events

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Thank you to all of our donors. Whether it's \$1 or \$1,000, each gift lets ACE kids and families know there is one more person in their corner.

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Kupanda: ACE's Monthly Giving Community

In 2018, ACE launched **Kupanda**, our new monthly giving community. To date, **89 Kupanda members** have made **1,123 individual contributions**, raising **\$18,342** for ACE programs.

Thank you to our Kupanda Members!

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Koki Hayashi
Rachael Heard
Laurel Hemmer

Nozomi Holbert
Maureen Kenefick
Cecilia Lafontaine
Samuel Lamptey
Mike Land
Dan Larrivee
Katherine Larrivee
David LeBoeuf
Rees Linville
Sheeba Mathew
Katie Mazzeo
Kimberly McCullen
Taylor McNally
Nicholas Medeiros
Sarah Monteith
Kari Mruz
Timothy O'Neil
Deborah O'Neil
John Perkins
Bonham Pierce
Joshua Plisinski
Deanna Poirier
Lila Pope

LeNola Potami
Timothy Randall
Charlotte Rosen
Adja Sackor
Ebenezer Sartiah
Joshua Jackson Selly
Kathleen Sheehan
Anywhere Sikochi
Alex Swenson
Luladay Tekalegn
Waitta Vainga
Christopher Van Atten
Janet Vignaly
Bonnie Walker
Hannah Weinsaft
Natalie Wellen
Janet Wine
Rose Wine
Kaska Yawo
Kwame Yeboah

Fundraising Spotlight

Several local businesses and student organizations held fundraising campaigns on our behalf throughout the year. Thank you to

Beta Theta Pi Fraternity, WPI Chapter
Redemption Rock Brewing Co.
Shrewsbury High School Class of 2017
WPI African Student Association
WPI Black Student Union
WPI National Society of Black Engineers

for collectively raising
\$9,221.25 for ACE!



The Journey: The 13th Annual ACE Gala

The 13th Annual ACE Gala took place on November 7 and was a night we will never forget. We welcomed over 300 people to Mechanics Hall, held our first-ever ACE Fashion Show, and raised over \$62,000 for ACE programs and families!

The highlight of the evening was without a doubt the first-ever ACE Fashion Show, made possible by our Title Sponsor, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). ACE students partnered with WPI Black Student Union students to model African designs created by Eldior Sodeck Design. In keeping with our event theme of The Journey, we shared stories of ACE students' past, present, and futures.

For ACE students, nights like the Gala—when all eyes are on them, when they are being cheered, when they feel the support of every person in the room—are invaluable.

Thank you for helping to make the 13th Annual ACE Gala the best yet!





FINANCIALS

Financial Overview

FY 2020*

REVENUE

Foundation Grants	\$328,075
Government Grants & Contracts	\$194,150
Corporate Grants	\$7,500
Nonprofit Grants	\$1,080
Fundraising Events	\$57,117
Individual Donations	\$28,628
Interest Income	\$2,237
TOTAL REVENUE	\$618,787

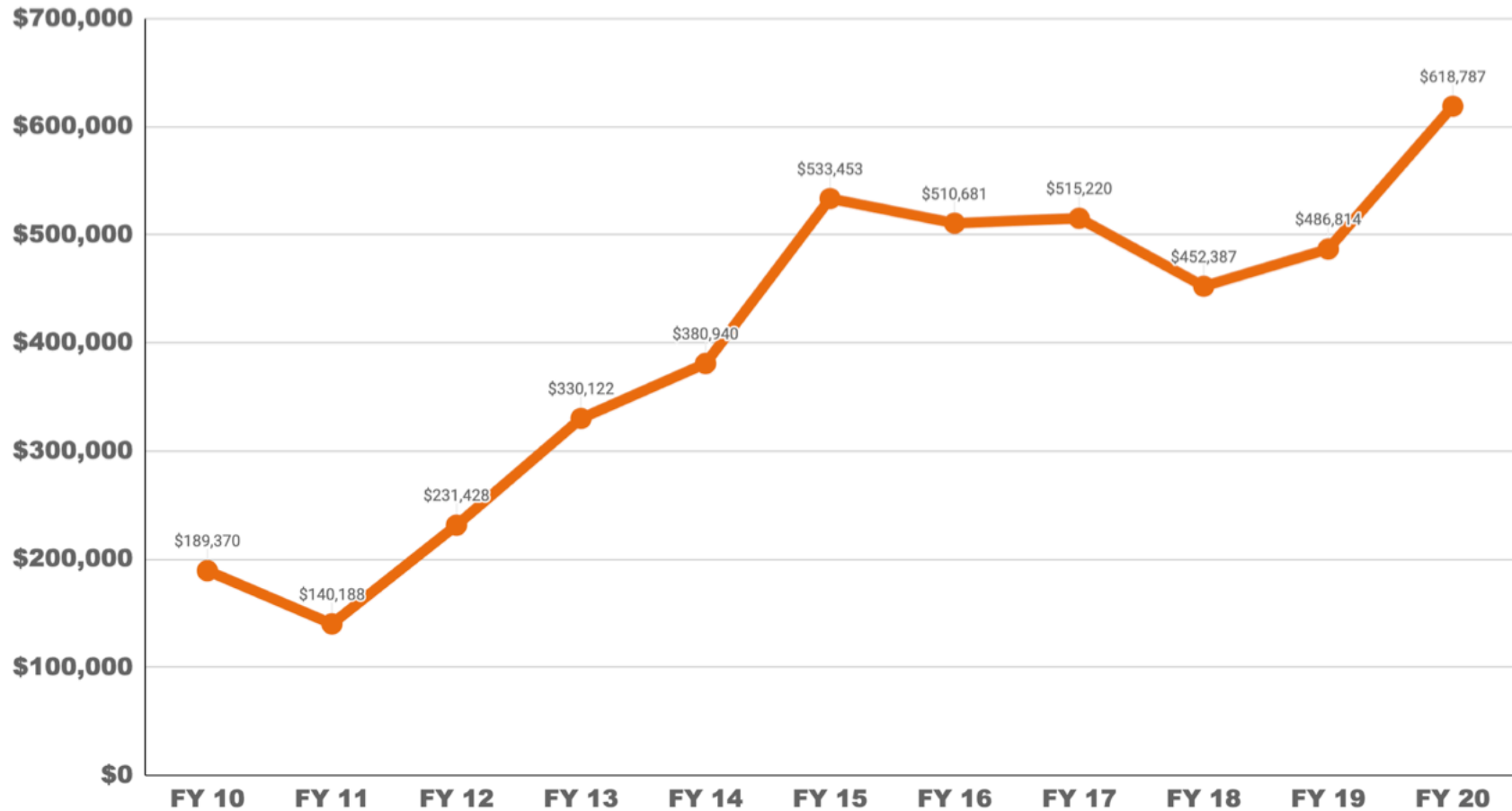
EXPENSES

Management/Admin	\$133,401
Development Staff	\$75,972
Outreach Staff	\$75,059
Program Staff	\$172,425
Payroll Taxes	\$44,558
Program Expenses	\$38,824
Administrative Expenses	\$35,260
Fundraising Expenses	\$25,692
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$601,191

*Financial estimates—audited financial statements will be available in November 2020

Financial History

African Community Education Revenue vs. Time



OUR FUTURE



Future Focus Areas

As African Community Education continues to grow and thrive, we have identified **9 Focus Areas** as part of our strategic plan to take us through FY 2022.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

ACE will ensure our programs and services meet the needs of our community. We will improve existing programs and services and provide additional services that help students and families achieve academic and socio-economic success as we continue to carry out ACE's mission.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

ACE seeks to identify new partnerships and expand current partnerships in order to provide improved services to our constituents and grow our impact in the most efficient ways possible.

ALUMNI RELATIONS

ACE will reestablish relationships with its alumni members through the founding of a formal Alumni Association, provide better alumni support through additional programming, and share alumni success stories to enhance marketing and outreach efforts.

EVALUATION & MONITORING

It is essential for ACE to better evaluate and monitor key indicators of organizational performance and program outcomes in order to improve performance over time. ACE will enhance existing evaluation and monitoring systems and implement new ones to fill current gaps in information.

Future Focus Areas

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

It is essential for the organization to be financially stable and viable. Despite annual growth, ACE continues to have additional needs for funding diversification and further growth of funding streams. In particular, ACE aims to increase unrestricted funding to fund operational needs, especially staff sustainability initiatives.

STAFF SUSTAINABILITY

Retaining talented and knowledgeable staff is essential for ACE to grow as an organization, execute a successful strategic plan, and better serve our students and families. ACE will take impactful steps to increase employee happiness and their sense of value to the organization and will improve financial compensation for its employees.

LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

ACE will improve its leadership and governance to ensure a lean and effective organization with strong leadership possessing the tools and resources necessary to carry out the organization's mission.

CULTURAL BRANDING

ACE will better define its brand and values, build its organizational culture, and work to incorporate each of these elements throughout everything we do.

INFRASTRUCTURE

ACE will evaluate facilities, transportation, systems, and technology to determine where improvements and efficiencies are needed to carry out the strategic plan. ACE will take the necessary steps to explore and, if appropriate, execute a capital campaign to improve infrastructure as needed.

Our Team

OUR STAFF

KASKA YAWO, Executive Director & Co-Founder
AYMAN ABDELGADIR, Volunteer & Mentor Coordinator
AMY CORNELIUSSEN, Grants Manager
WINNIE DOE, Worcester Public Schools Liaison
REGINA ENGEL, Director of Finance & Operations
SAKINA FUNDI, Outreach Worker
TIMON GRODYA, Family Education Program Coordinator
VAUGHN HATHAWAY, Information Technology Specialist
BENJAMIN KAGIGI, Outreach Manager
CECILIA LAFONTAINE, Finance and HR Coordinator
TIM O'NEIL, Marketing & Fundraising Manager
JP PERKINS, Saturday Program Coordinator
DONOVAN SNYDER, After School Program Coordinator
ROSE WINE, Marketing & Development Coordinator

OUR BOARD, FY 2020

ANYWHERE "SIKO" SIKOCHI, Chair
BIODUN "MR. B" AKANDE, Vice Chair
LILA POPE, Treasurer
JOANNE GRAVELL, Secretary
ELIZABETH AHMADI
BOB BUREAU
KWAME GAYLE
OLGA VALDMAN, Co-Founder
BONNIE WALKER



Thank you from the ACE family!



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