



## ***A letter from our Founder & CEO, Shirley Acevedo Buontempo, MPA***

April 17, 2020

Dear LUCA *familia* and supporters,

I hope that you and your families are safe and well. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone in our community, especially and disproportionately those who lack financial and medical resources. Our Scholars – who are first-generation to college and come from low income, immigrant families – are facing significant challenges and threats to their futures. They had to address immediate needs and fears that are confronting them and their families such as unemployment, food insecurity, healthcare, illness, and adapting to distance learning. ***This crisis can very easily derail or delay their plans, hopes, and dreams for a college education and a brighter future.***

The LUCA team has responded with care and concern to address the needs of our community, Scholars, staff, and incredible volunteers. We have united and galvanized to ensure that we can continue to support our Scholars, their parents, and our dedicated school partners, who continue to serve and educate students in our community.

### **What We Are Doing**

Our critical work continues as we assist high school and college Scholars through video chats and phone/text providing guidance and support during this challenging period in their lives.

We immediately launched the [Scholar Support Fund](#) to provide financial assistance for unexpected academic expenses to transition to virtual learning or move home from college.

We have adapted our work to:

- **Convert all programming from in-person to virtual delivery until further notice**
- **Focus on assisting students with the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and verification process**
- **Help students and families review financial aid offers, prepare appeals, and compare costs**
- **Advise and help navigate college decision deadlines**

Simultaneously, we are **planning for the future** - creating and revising the curriculum to be delivered virtually to our new cohort of Latino U Scholars in the Class of 2021. Our **volunteer College Coaches** remain engaged and are ready to begin working with students. We are grateful for their dedication to the Scholars and our mission, especially during this crisis.

To ensure our Scholars are still able to begin or return to college, we intend to:

- **Prepare students for a successful transition to college this summer by providing guidance and support to ensure they remain on track to graduate on-time and career-ready.**
- **Build a community of support by providing access to critical resources and connecting students to appropriate wellness and mental health resources.**

### **How You Can Help**

We invite you, our community of supporters and partners, to join with us to ensure that our Scholars can continue their path to a brighter future and navigate the challenges ahead. Your support and commitment to our youth would make a significant difference in the lives of the students and families we serve.

**Despite the additional challenges we all now face, LUCA will continue to deliver on its mission. We are powered by our commitment to provide access and educational opportunity to all and [invite you to make a gift](#) in support of our Scholars at this time.**

We are grateful to each of you for your incredible dedication to our Scholars and mission to make college dreams a reality. We cannot let this crisis prevent students, who have worked so hard to reach this milestone, from continuing forward with their dreams. The success of our Scholars will ensure that our communities and our nation will benefit from their incredible talent and potential.

We thank you for being a part of our *familia*, and I know that together we will stand strong and come through this united with a greater commitment to making a difference in the lives of others.

Yours in peace and health,

Shirley Acevedo Buontempo, MPA  
*Founder & CEO*  
Latino U College Access (LUCA)