



# 2018-19 Annual Report



College & Community Fellowship enables women with criminal convictions to earn their college degrees so that they, their families, and their communities can thrive. We advocate for equity and opportunity for the communities we serve.



# **Letter from the Executive Director**

Dear Friends,

It has been a dynamic and rewarding year for College and Community Fellowship. I've been the Executive Director since 2006, yet there are new things that amaze and revive my passion for this work each year.



Changes are emerging in the field of criminal justice reform. Chief among them is the growing consensus that a broad and deep focus on higher education must be part of the decarceration equation. There is unexpected momentum around policy campaigns to restore Pell grant eligibility to incarcerated students, provide oversight of the quality of education and ensure that educational opportunities continue post-release. As education access increases, opening the door to career opportunities, many employers are recognizing the value of treating all people (including those with criminal record histories) with dignity and fairness.

This wave of change demands that CCF continue to make sure that the voices of those directly impacted are not lost in the noise. Support must be given to those who have lived the devastation of criminalization so that they become a source of insight into the systemic and structural realities that contribute to cycles of crime, poverty, and undereducation in the United States. These voices are more than their traumas and burdens—they hold in their narratives and in their bodies solutions to persistent social dilemmas. We must treat our sisters and brothers as wells of knowledge, not just ask them to carry the water.

CCF has centered this value in every part of its work. College and career programs for women at CCF in New York City are designed to respond to the needs and experiences of students and alumni. Instead of prescriptive programs, CCF creates models that nurture the dreams and harness the essential strength of its students. CCF's THRIVE technical assistance program, continually improves upon its curriculum to ensure that each technical assistance recipient learns what their organization can do to help facilitate success for directly impacted students, clients, or employees. And CCF's advocacy work elevates leadership and builds social capital for those who need it most by centering education and training, that help women turn their life experience into expertise.

The work I have witnessed by the team of professionals, students, and graduates at CCF has touched me in deeply personal ways. Time after time I am reminded that education empowers freedom (bell hooks). In 2017, inspired by the CCF community, I freed myself from my own limitations and returned to graduate school. This May, I completed my Master's in Fine Arts at Columbia University. Soon I'll be taking a sabbatical to finish my thesis: a book that links stories about my early life, the devastation of illness, addiction and incarceration, the unforeseen triumph created by connecting to CCF, and the systems, policies and cultures that traverse these storylines. As an alumna of CCF, there has been nothing more gratifying than returning to the classroom.

While on sabbatical, I will be a Columbia School of the Arts Teaching Fellow, teaching one undergraduate writing course. As CCF continues to help women with criminal convictions reclaim their dreams through education, I continue to be one of those women. With great pride, I share the designation of CCF alumna with my sisters and I celebrate with each of them every triumph that moves them closer to their highest aspirations.

None of what CCF does is possible without a community of students, alumnae, board members, staff, volunteers, community partners, and donors. Thank you all for your support!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vivian Nixon".

**Vivian D. Nixon**  
**Executive Director**



# Transforming lives. Transforming systems.

CCF was founded in 2001 offering academic support to a handful of women who wanted to earn their degrees after incarceration. Since then, our mission has grown. It's not enough to only provide supports to individuals in the community - we know that to make lasting change, we need to address the problem at the institutional and systemic levels as well. Today, in addition to our direct services to women in NYC, we provide national programs in advocacy and technical assistance.

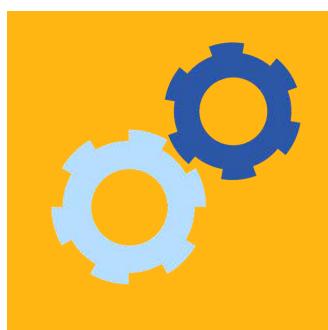
The rate of women's imprisonment grew by over 800% between 1980 and 2014. At the same time, investment in state and local corrections outpaced investment in K-12 education by almost 3:1.

And between 1990-2013, higher education funding on the state level decreased by 28%, while corrections funding grew by 44%.

**What do all these numbers mean?** They mean that the decisions we've made as a country show that we would prefer to treat the symptoms of problems, rather than the root causes. At CCF, we try to address the root causes of mass incarceration and social inequality: lack of opportunity in communities, lack of access to quality education, and policies that criminalize instead of humanize. We don't see our students as high-risk. They're high-potential.



Individual Change  
Direct Services



Institutional Change  
Technical Assistance



Systemic Change  
Policy & Advocacy



# Direct Services

Making change on the individual and community level through college and career programs

Women who aren't yet ready for college can join **Community Sisters**, where they can find assistance paying back old debts to schools and help taking the steps they need to enroll in college.

Those who are ready for college join our **Academic Support Program**, where we work with students one-one-one to apply to college, choose the right major, take control of their finances, and make sure they're succeeding until graduation.

Women can also earn a high-quality career certification as a stepping stone to a college degree, or to make themselves more employable after earning a degree, through our **Career Enhancement Education Program**.



Above: CCF Academic Counselor Angela Diaz (L) with 2018 graduate Jennel

**426**

Women who received a College Awareness Workshop from CCF

**72**

Women working toward their college degrees

**19**

Women working toward their career certifications

**10**

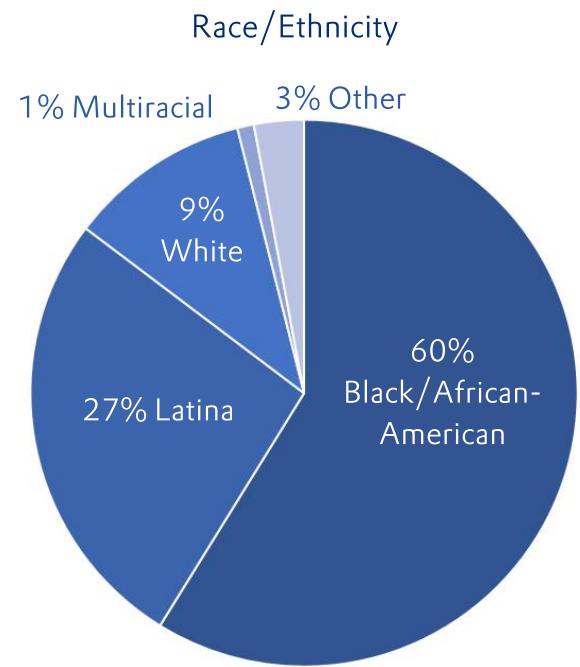
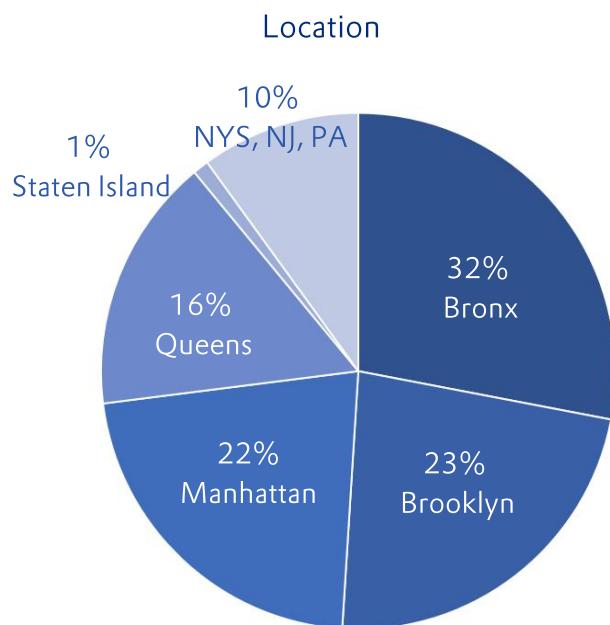
Women getting ready to apply to college

The college and career programs we run for women in New York City are based on our belief that our women are not high-risk – they're high-potential. Every woman who comes through our doors gets a college readiness consultation that helps us ensure she's set up for success in college and beyond. We ask women what they dreamed of being before they were ever impacted by the criminal justice system, and help them come up with a plan for their studies that draw on their skills, strengths, and goals.

*In 2019, we're re-launching our **Peer Mentoring Program**. Through this program, we will match CCF alumnae with women who will be released from prison within six months, helping them build higher education into their reentry plans. We'll also be launching our **Career Advancement Program**, which will help women with criminal justice histories -both those who have a degree and those who are working toward one- find meaningful employment reflective of their education levels.*



# CCF Student Demographics



Average Student Age

41



38%

Have children under 18

## Degrees Earned in 2019

- 5 Associate's
- 4 Bachelor's
- 3 Master's
- 3 Career Certificates

## Schools enrolling the most CCF students

- LaGuardia Community College
- Lehman College
- Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Hostos Community College
- Hunter College

## Most popular majors

- Social Work
- Liberal Arts
- Human Services
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Nursing

# **Student Spotlight: Starr**

Starr was already in college when she connected with CCF in 2014, but was struggling with her debt, finances, and taking care of her kids. She heard about CCF when she was working as a transitional planner for the Women's Prison Association (WPA) – our Recruitment Coordinator, Jackie, was delivering a College Awareness Workshop for WPA's clients, but Starr realized it would be a good fit for her too. "I wanted to get a college education because I knew I would have more opportunities," remembers Starr. "I knew I would need CCF's supports to succeed, like help with school books and the community workshops."



When Starr enrolled in our Academic Support Program, she had been running her own program informally: Starz Closet, which she started at WPA, and which provides clothing and hygiene materials to women first coming out of prison or jail. At CCF, Starr took advantage of the workshops to move her project forward. At our workshop on "Starting Your Own Nonprofit," she learned about how to find grants and connect with other services. Starz Closet soon got its 501(c)(3) designation, and today she partners with other reentry organizations, like the Osborne Association, to provide clothing and hygiene products to their clients.

Throughout all this, Starr was studying as a communications major and psychology minor, and she graduates in 2019 with her Bachelor's degree. She's already in the process of applying to John Jay College of Criminal Justice for her Master's in Criminal Justice. "I want to keep working in reentry services," Starr says. "I see issues that aren't touched on. For men coming home, jobs usually take precedence. But for women, we want our kids back right away, we need housing – we just have different needs. The disparities are definitely in place and most reentry programs are targeted to men's needs."

In 2019, Starr also joined CCF's advocacy training program, Women Influencing Systems & History (WISH). "I was already an advocate for reentry issues and for people with chronic diseases, but I felt like I wanted to be better equipped. Now I understand how the legislative system works on the city and state levels. I'm already using WISH in my work with Close Rikers, as a court advocate, and in public speaking." "CCF feels like home to me," says Starr. "The support isn't just about education. They've empowered me and strengthened me, and when I got sick with cancer they provided me a safe space to cry and express myself. The meditation workshops helped me refocus and manage my stress – and with school and Starr's closet and being sick, that's really helpful."

Moving forward, Starr hopes to get her Master's at John Jay, and provide Starz Closet services to more women who need it. She's proud to be the first in her family to graduate college, and to have supported her three children: "I got to see all of them graduate high school and all of them are living productive lives. They're not going to be statistics. I broke the cycle."

**“CCF accelerated my drive and motivation to attain my degree. CCF is a place where you don’t need to get stuck in the past – you can grow and become the woman you want to be.”**

# *Alumna Spotlight: Erica*

In 2011, Erica had just begun working toward her Bachelor's degree in liberal arts. "I'd gotten my Credentialled Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counseling certificate, but I knew I needed to be more marketable," Erica says. "But I didn't know a lot about school or what I was doing."

Soon, Erica heard about CCF from a fellow student. When she connected with us, Erica says everything changed. "My academic counselor at CCF helped give me direction. And the community support was wonderful. There were so many times where I felt like I didn't know if I could do it. I was trying to work, trying to pay bills – I didn't know if I had enough to get through it to graduation. But at every community meeting, each woman would say her name and what degree she was working on. It made me feel empowered – like I could make it too."

Erica graduated with her Bachelor's and continued working with CCF as she worked toward her Master's degree in Education from CUNY Hunter College. Throughout that time, she remembers CCF helping her in other ways. "When I was looking for employment, my past kept creeping up on me. CCF gave me resources to break down that barrier, like helping me get a certificate of relief."

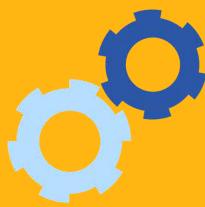
This spring, Erica graduates with her Master's degree. She's hoping to become licensed as a mental health counselor. "I work full-time as a substance abuse counselor now but I see the need to address mental health and substance use collaboratively. I've seen what raw, untreated mental health issues look like and how that manifests in other ways. I look back on the time before I was incarcerated – I don't think I was a criminal. I was suffering from addiction. I don't think I would have gotten caught up in half the things I did if I hadn't been addicted. Mental health issues relate to mass incarceration, but people would rather not talk about it. It's real, and it's happening."

Erica will be the first person in her family to earn a Master's degree. "I feel amazing!" she says. "I feel like I've worked so hard, and there were some days where I felt like I didn't know if I could do it anymore. But I would just replay in my mind how it would feel to graduate and now I've made it to the end."

Erica says that higher education has opened her mind tremendously, helping her develop critical thinking and teaching her to question the world. "Not only am I a lot more marketable in the labor force," she says "but I'm also not conforming anymore. I've found my own voice."

***“I want to become a mental health counselor. I've seen what raw, untreated mental health issues look like...mental health issues relate to mass incarceration, but people would rather not talk about it. It's real, and it's happening.***

# THRIVE Technical Assistance



Making change on the institutional level by investing in diverse potential

Our THRIVE Technical Assistance Program supports the successful reintegration of people with criminal justice histories into our society by teaching others the practices and procedures that have made CCF so successful in New York City. THRIVE is available to institutions that serve criminal justice-affected people (e.g., community-based organizations, colleges and universities, and corrections agencies) in addition to for-profit companies that want to hire people with criminal justice histories.

We will be working to turn THRIVE into a source of revenue for CCF, ultimately reducing our donor dependency and increasing our sustainability.

**282**

Total number of staff trained across our 2018-19 trainee sites

**8**

Sites trained - including colleges, nonprofits, employers, and corrections

**9**

Workshops on financial education, laws and regulations, and trauma awareness - organized by THRIVE sites for additional staff as they implement our training

**38**

People with CJ histories hired with New Jersey's Local 54 union after THRIVE training

## 2018-19 Trainee Sites

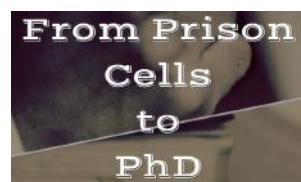


**MOTT** COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**N.C. DPS**  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
PREVENT • PROTECT • PREPARE



**LEHMAN**  
COLLEGE



**UNITE HERE!**  
LOCAL 54

**Hard Rock**  
HOTEL & CASINO  
ATLANTIC CITY



**Hostos**  
Community College

We train our clients to support criminal justice-involved people with our core suite of evidence-based practices



Financial Education



Asset-Focused Leadership Development



Trauma Awareness

We received the THRIVE training which helped us develop and implement strategies for supporting the workforce success of adults with criminal records. When we started working with this population, the people in our HireAC! program with CJ histories were unemployed and lacked resumes. Now, 38 of them are working in the union. We're delighted to put what we learned through THRIVE into use and really give people second chances."

*Tara Timberman, Atlantic City Hard Rock Hotel & Casino*

I hadn't thought too much about trauma before this. Now, I plan to use my "trauma lens" when working with my caseload moving forward.

*Probation Officer, North Carolina Department of Public Safety*



Motivational Interviewing



Organizational Learning & Development

Below: twelve counties' worth of trainees from the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, spanning corrections, parole, probation, reentry, and legal resource officers



Interested in receiving THRIVE Technical Assistance for your staff?

Email Lettisha Boyd at [lboyd@collegeandcommunity.org](mailto:lboyd@collegeandcommunity.org).



# Policy & Advocacy

*Making change on a systemic level by training advocates and taking the lead on criminal justice reform*



In 1994, the Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act stripped incarcerated students of the ability to use federal Pell grants toward their college educations. Almost overnight, college programs in prisons vanished – in New York State alone, the total number of programs dropped from 70 to just four.

Since then, CCF has been advocating to reinstate Pell grant eligibility for incarcerated students. In 2014, our advocacy coalition recommended that the Department of Education start a Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative, granting temporary access to this crucial resource to groups of incarcerated students across the country. We saw this as a stepping stone to full restoration for all students.

This year, we've partnered with Operation Restoration in New Orleans to form Unlock Higher Ed, a broad coalition of stakeholders all dedicated to restoring Pell grants to students in prison. Senator Brian Schatz introduced the REAL Act in April 2018 with bipartisan support – this bill would achieve our goal. We also aim to pass bills providing standards and oversight for the quality of educational programs in prison, to remove criminal history screenings from college applications, and to remove the drug conviction question from the FAFSA.



As a member of the steering committee for the Formerly Incarcerated and Convicted People and Families Movement (FICPFM) - a national coalition of over 50 civil and human rights organizations led by directly impacted people - CCF students and staff helped the group register over 84,000 new voters at the 2018 FICPFM conference in Orlando, Florida. Our work paid off, resulting in the passage of Amendment 4 to Florida's constitution restoring voting rights to people with felony convictions.





# Women Influencing Systems & History



Last fall, CCF launched our advocacy training program, WISH. Covering topics like storytelling, the policymaking process, and different types of advocacy, WISH connects women to social justice campaigns like Beyond Rosie's, Close Rikers, Halt Solitary, and others, to make sure that the voices of women who have felt the impact of incarceration are represented in all the issues that affect them.



24

women trained in 2019

10

WISH trainees who gave testimony at City Council hearings

44%

increase in participants' confidence in community organizing skills

**“**The WISH advocacy training taught me that I can be part of change. Most importantly, we learned how to collectively and individually take power back through making our voices heard.

*Nathalie, Fall WISH Participant*

**“**WISH was a policy and advocacy training but very quickly it became more than just that to me. I realized not only was I in a space with some courageous, enlightened and powerful women but also women who have walked the same prison halls as my mother. Not having any incarceration history I always thought I was not affected by the criminal justice system... however, there was a constant fear of anything going wrong and ending up in jail or prison. WISH gave me the opportunity to honor my own pain and story.

*Tatiana, Spring WISH Participant*

# *2018-19 Event Highlights*

## *Graduation 2018*

On June 7th, we celebrated our 18th Annual Graduation Ceremony. Our students earned four Associate's degrees, four Bachelor's degrees, and three Master's degrees. With a keynote speech by PhD candidate and criminal justice reform advocate Michelle Jones, graduation was an event to remember.



CCF staff congratulate one of our 2018 graduates

“

Through education, diligence and hard work, I've learned that one can really be free and make significant contributions to society.

*Miosotis, CCF 2018 Valedictorian*

# *2018-19 Event Highlights*



## *Family Outing*

To celebrate summer and a break from school, we took students and their families to Six Flags for bonding with each other and with our staff.

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## *Block Party*

What better way to let the community know about our services than with a block party?! Held at NYCHA's George Washington Houses, we invited residents and other community-based agencies to join us at our Back to School celebration.



## *(In)Visible Freedom*

Partnering with the CUNY Graduate Center, Mellon Foundation fellows Rose Kim and Grace Cho, and creative director Nina Mercer, our Theater for Social Change Ensemble wrote and performed a new piece about their experiences with education and incarceration. With a powerful Q&A session featuring JustLeadershipUSA president DeAnna Hoskins and Just Media co-founder asha bandele, their performance raised important questions about what freedom is and who has access to it.

# *2018-19 Event Highlights*

## **Bulletin Panel**

In October, we held a panel at Bulletin Williamsburg, a feminist marketplace. CCF Community Organizer Ivelisse Gilestra (right), along with activists Shanequa Charles (left) and Marilyn Reyes (middle) spoke about organizing women against mass incarceration.



## **Holiday Party**

In December, we held our annual holiday party for students and their families to celebrate! With a dance contest, games, and gifts for everyone, it's a great way for our community to get together.

## **CCF's Spring Benefit** *Celebrating Education and the Power of Books*

In April, we held our fundraiser at the beautiful Housing Works Bookstore Cafe honoring asha bandele (author, activist, and co-founder of Just Media) and The New Press (the publishing house behind The New Jim Crow, Becoming Ms. Burton, and others). Thanks to our generous donors, we raised \$50,000 to support our work!



**“** "We fight because something's not right; we fight because something's unjust. Be as loud, as bold, and as proud as possible."

asha bandele, Honoree

# Getting the Word Out

*Each year, our students, staff, and advocacy trainees speak about the injustices of our carceral system and what the possibilities are for rebuilding communities.*



Executive Director Vivian speaking at The Atlantic's Renewal Summit



WISH trainee Carole speaking on behalf of the Beyond Rosie's campaign



WISH trainee Starr speaking for the Close Rikers campaign.



Rita Zimmer of Housing + Solutions with women trained by CCF to participate in Beyond Rosie's



Community Organizer Ivelisse Gilestra on a panel with incarcerated individuals speaking about access to higher education.



WISH trainee Turquoise giving testimony on behalf of Beyond Rosie's.

It's not just speaking engagements - it's getting the word out in print, too. This year, Vivian placed op-eds in **USA Today** and **The Hill** about conditions of confinement and access to higher education. Our Academic Counselor, Anna, published a piece about our work in the **Coalition for Adult Basic Education Journal**.

# Financial Summary

*Statement of financial position at close of Fiscal Year 2018*

*Fiscal year July 1-June 30*

Assets	2018	2017
Cash and Cash Equivalents	573,124	115,381
Contributions and Grants Receivable	346,444	53,961
Securities	1,099,909	1,049,333
Property and Equipment	28,353	47,494
Other Current Assets	39,374	40,724
 Total Assets	 2,087,204	 1,306,893
 <b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	74,592	90,116
Refundable Advances	-	91,858
 Total Liabilities	 	 
Unrestricted Net Assets	1,300,143	975,582
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	712,469	149,337
 Total Net Assets	 2,012,612	 1,124,919
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	2,087,204	1,306,893

# Financial Summary

*Statement of financial position at close of Fiscal Year 2018*

*Fiscal year July 1-June 30*

Support and Revenue	2018	2017
Contributions	1,189,263	1,505,436
Government Grants	422,607	137,782
Program Service Revenue	50,970	-
Investment Income	77,709	101,394
Special Events	83,320	-
Other Income	-	65
 Total Support and Revenue	 1,823,869	 1,744,677
 <hr/>		
Expenses		
Program	1,1019,890	1,185,522
Management and General	275,574	227,946
Fundraising	203,844	150,100
 Total Expenses	 1,499,308	 1,563,568
 <hr/>		
Change in Net Assets	324,561	181,109
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	975,582	794,473
Net Assets, End of Year	1,300,143	975,582

# Funders & Donors

## \$2,000,000+

Criminal Justice Investment Initiative

## \$250,000 - \$1,999,999

Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative  
Ford Foundation  
New York City Council

## \$100,000 - \$250,000

Art for Justice Fund  
ECMC Foundation  
Laughing Gull Foundation  
Porticus Foundation

## \$25,000 - \$99,999

AD Philanthropic Fund  
Baskin Family Foundation  
Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund  
Kohlberg Foundation  
NoVo Foundation  
Sills Family Foundation  
Stavros Niarchos Foundation  
Tow Foundation  
van Ameringen Foundation  
Weissberg Foundation

## \$5,000 - \$24,999

Peter Bakstansky\*  
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Judy Family Foundation  
JustLeadershipUSA  
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## \$1,000- \$4,999

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## \$500 - \$999

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## \$5 - \$499

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\*CCF Board member

\*\*CCF Alumna

\*\*\*Monthly donor

All donations are as of  
May 28, 2019

# **Supporting CCF**

CCF relies on public and private support to carry out our work. You can help too!

- No gift is too small - donations from individuals help fill in the gaps every day.
- Check whether your employer has a matching gift program. You can multiply the impact of your donation to CCF!
- Consider planned giving to increase our endowment, providing financial stability for years to come.
- Hire our alumnae: get in touch with CCF staff to learn more about our confident, educated students who are eager to build their careers.
- Volunteer with CCF: we welcome volunteers who can help our staff with administrative support, policy research, mentoring, and tutoring.

## **Staff**

Vivian Nixon, Executive Director

Les Hayden, Deputy Executive Director

Raphael Anil, Operations Coordinator

Stephanie Bazell, Director of Policy & Advocacy

Lettisha Boyd, Associate Director of Technical Assistance

Angela Diaz, Academic Counselor

Anna Giannicchi, Academic Counselor

Ivelisse Gilestra, Community Organizer

Chris Massey, Associate Director of Career Advancement

Jesús Reyes-Velardo, Associate Director of Academic Support

Wendy Romano, Program Support & Events Coordinator

Jordyn Rosenthal, Senior Associate of Policy & Advocacy

Maria Santangelo, Director of Programs

April Smith, Technical Assistance Coordinator

Melanie Steinhardt, Senior Adviser

Jacqueline Thompson, Recruitment/Intake/Support Coordinator

Randall Vair, Grants Associate

Tim Ward, Associate Director of Communications

Lisa Yankowski, Director of Development & Communications

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College and Community Fellowship



@ccf\_ny



Top: WISH trainees and CCF students Tina (left) and Starr (right)

Bottom left: Policy staffer Jordyn (left) and WISH trainee Tabaitha (right) at the 2019 Beyond the Bars conference hosted by Columbia University



Staff at the North Carolina Department of Public Safety discuss the THRIVE training and strategize for which parts of our curriculum they will implement into their programming.



# College & Community Fellowship



Transforming the lives of  
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