

Nepali Dreamers
Nepal
Oberlin College
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www.nepalidreamers.org

Section I

The goal of the project is to foster a community of changemakers to empower millions of young Nepali Dreams through a comprehensive college counseling program grounded in reflection and college counseling. Our values stem from the belief that everybody deserves an opportunity to work towards their goals and that a supportive network is essential to uplift their ambitions. We are acting as this support system to a group of high school students working on their foreign university application process. This guidance is aimed at maximizing their chances of getting into high-quality schools. Furthermore, our reflection-centered programming helps students understand themselves first and discover the ways they are connected with other Nepalis.

Before starting on the project this year, we had already made progress on our goals. During our first year of organizing, we recruited volunteers and created partnerships with test preparation non-profits and Nepali high schools. Students skyped with native English speakers to work on spoken and written American English. They participated in college application workshops centered around reflection. The students were also offered online SAT classes and practice tests with Aspire Education Project, a Californian based test preparation non-profit. Our second year of operation was funded by the Kathryn W. Davis Project for Peace, so we built on these partnerships to expand our programs.

The transition to the newest cohort of nepali dreamers went very smoothly except for a few hitches along the way. First, the delay in the availability of the funds set our plans back a little bit as we were running behind on our payment to Aspire and other logistical expenses. Once the funds were made available, the classes went relatively smooth. However, there were a few instances where the students weren't able to reach the classroom due to national strikes from communist extremists. These strikes severely affected transportation during those days.

In total, we completed 10 SAT classes, 5 mock exams and 10 application workshops over the course of 3 months. The students responded well to the classes conducted by Aspire and our workshops and our website build on this progress to sustain measurable growth in communication and college search capacities. Initially we had a problem with our internet connection which was provided to us by the co-working space: Bikalpa Art Cafe. The connection would randomly drop and the instructor from Aspire would lose us and vice versa. A switch to cellular 4G internet resolved the problem.

The program was very effective. The students showed a marked improvement in the SAT scores through our partnership with Aspire as their score increased by an average of 280 points.

One of our students' scores even improved from 820 on the practice test one to 1370 by practice test four. Our other students have all shown similar consistent improvement in their SAT scores. Furthermore, the speed at which they read and the clarity with which they speak in English has shown remarkable improvement through our workshops. The reflection exercises were also very effective as the students had a better understanding of the school they wanted to attend.

Thanks to the Davis Project for Peace award, we were able to enhance our organizational capabilities. We have worked with a programmer and have managed to successfully create an online platform which has greatly helped us facilitate secure access, storage and sharing of resources and application research done by our students. It has also streamlined the way in which we and the students themselves track their progress in SAT preparation and their college application process. It has enabled us to monitor our student's interaction with our resource and has helped us provide individualized guidance: thus ensuring the quality of our service.

The long term goal of this project is to have this cohort get into places of higher education that they want and deserve with the expectation that they will act as mentors to the next cohort of Nepali Dreamers as we have been for them.

Personal statement

Everybody deserves an opportunity to work towards their goals and a supportive network is essential to uplift ambitions. - Bikalpa Baniya

Recently, one of our scholars has begun applying to the top law schools in Nepal, and we have managed to connect her to advisors who can help her achieve her ambitions. We are growing our success into a third year!

Section II

