

ROSES IN  
CONCRETE  
2023-2024



**Roses in Concrete**  
**Final Report**  
**2023-2024**





## Roses in Concrete

Roses in Concrete (RIC) is a Leadership & Mentorship Program for BIPOC Brandeis undergrad students and Waltham High School students coordinated by the Brandeis Intercultural Center, Brandeis Department of Student Engagement, and Waltham Partnership for Youth (WPY). This annual report shares highlights of the third year of the program where we continued to foster educational, leadership, mentorship, and professional development opportunities for participants.

RIC pairs Brandeis undergraduate mentors with Waltham High School mentees for a yearlong mentorship experience. Through the mentorship pairings and monthly workshops coordinated by Brandeis and WPY staff, the program empowers students to network and form connections with Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous peers and professionals in our local community, while having access to a safe environment to seek guidance on the systemic challenges they may experience on their path to professional exploration in the classroom and beyond.

17

**Brandeis University  
Mentors**

17

**Waltham High School  
Mentees**



“I really enjoyed this program. I joined the program just to see what it would be like but was sincerely impressed. I would give it a 10/10 and tell future juniors and seniors to participate in it.” – Olivia M. (Mentee)

“What I liked about RIC was the connection I built with my mentor. She is kind honest and we connected to early in the program. I have no negative feelings towards her. What I disliked was that this program ended so early.” – Mirembé B. (Mentee)

## Monthly Workshop Topics

**October**

**Mentor-Mentee  
Meet & Greet**

**November**

**Navigating the College Admissions  
Process**

**January**

**Community Building  
and Goal-Setting**

**February**

**Affording College**

**March**

**Mental Health:  
Managing Stress**

**April**

**Career Panel with  
Brandeis Alumni**

**May**

**Closing Ceremony**



## Impact

The program's effectiveness was measured through session evaluation forms, monthly check-in reports, and a comprehensive year-end survey. 82% of participants completed the end-of-the-year survey.

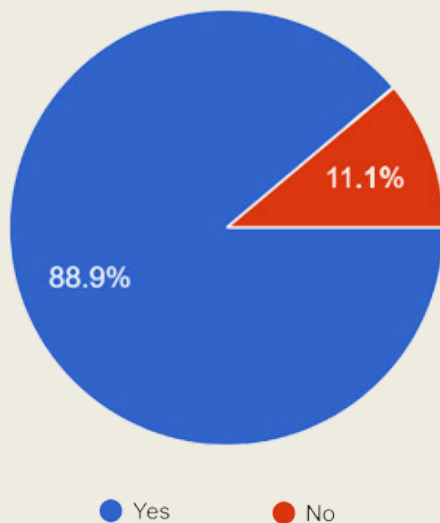
Participants highlighted the program's significant impact in fostering meaningful relationships between mentors and mentees. This year we piloted a "Bonding Fund", which provided pairs with \$50 to go towards a fun activity to do together. The meaningful funds were used by 15 of 17 of the pairs to do adventurous and relationship building activities (ice skating, rock climbing, dinners, etc.) outside of the monthly workshops.

Furthermore, participants lauded the interactive and in-depth career panel and mental health sessions, where they navigated professional networking opportunities with Brandeis alumni and learned about mental health challenges and systems of support.

**"As a mentor I learned a lot about the effect my support and presence can have on my mentee. Simply being there and listening and reassuring my mentee was often enough and I was able to learn that sometimes it does not need to be something elaborate to be helpful. I really appreciated the opportunity to build that relationship."**

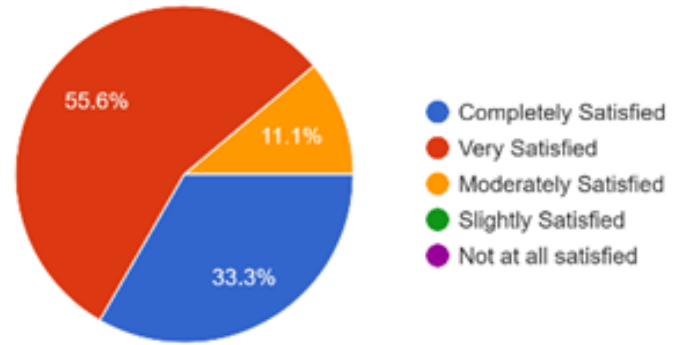
**- Bernyss K. (Mentor)**

89% of participants said the program helped improve their understanding on how to navigate different spaces as a member of the BIPOC community.



**89% of participants said they were completely/very satisfied with the program.**

How would you rate your overall experience with the Roses in Concrete Program?



**"I liked having the funds to be able to go out and do activities as well as the food that was provided during sessions. I also enjoyed the ice breakers that was at the beginning of every session as a way to get to know other people in the program."**

**- Angie Z. (Mentor)**





## Challenges

The third year of Roses in Concrete was a resounding success overall. However, both the program staff and participants identified several areas that could be improved.

Limited funds restricted the ability to provide ongoing support for training and community-building activities to support and enhance the development of the mentor-mentee relationship. For example, participants have expressed the need for facilitated group bonding and community-building initiatives, such as off-campus trips, and increased social/professional networking opportunities, similar to the career panel session. However, due to funding limitations, we are unable to provide transportation for off-campus excursions and larger networking events. As Roses in Concrete aims to broaden its reach to more students, ensuring a seamless and unique mentorship experience is imperative.



“It was really impactful and very helpful. I got a lot of support from my mentor Erick when I didn't have anyone else helping me out and it went a long way.  
- Arthur N. (Mentee)”

“I love RIC!! I couldn't be more happy to even pick a program to be at in my life!  
- Haybi G. (Mentee)”

“I was able to learn different work environments and develop an educational relationship with another BIPOC.  
- Laila R. (Mentee)”

## Opportunities for Enhancing the Program

We reflected on participant feedback and hope to consider the following adaptations to the program:

- Provide more structured opportunities for mentor-mentee engagement
- Provide social gathering opportunities for mentors and mentees, such as an off-campus field trip
- Offer additional support to mentors by designated meeting locations for the required bi-monthly meetings with their mentees
- Provide additional structured support for mentors through training workshops and office hours with RIC staff
- Reorganize the schedule for the workshop sessions to minimize schedule conflicts and to have the opportunity for a session in December

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