

# COHORT SISTAS



## ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE



As schools returned back to in-person instruction and the world seemed to go back to “normal,” many of the promises made in the summer of 2020 to advance racial equity in education faded to the background.

*But over the past year, Cohort Sistas remained focused on supporting the academic, professional, and socio-emotional wellbeing of Black women and non-binary people pursuing doctoral degrees. We listened intently to our community through one-on-one conversations, member surveys, and social events, and implemented changes in our programming to address their needs*

Time and time again we hear from our scholars that they desire a safe space and community to learn more about the doctoral journey, support at whatever stage of the journey they're in, and mentorship and accountability from people who look like them. We added an evening writing group to accommodate scholars who work during the day and offered more career-related professional development events, taking into consideration the present economic realities and increasingly dire future professional prospects of those with doctoral degrees. The Sista Circle Mentorship Program was refashioned into a full-year program based on community feedback, and we were able to provide mentorship for 53 mentees this year - more than double our impact in previous year. Our leadership and team also evolved to meet the growing needs of the Cohort Sistas community, now well over 2,500 scholars strong. We welcomed our first board of directors and two part-time employees, all of whom share a passion for gender and racial equity in higher education. Many of our board members are Black women with doctoral degrees themselves, who have worked in various ways to increase representation and retention of underrepresented scholars in higher education. Their strategic input and oversight has been absolutely invaluable.

Our program year ended on a high note, with us becoming one of the recipients of the Goldman Sachs One Million Black Women Black Women Impact grant. We have already been hard at work using that philanthropic investment to expand our capacity, and look forward to continuing to serve our community hand in hand with all our committed partners, volunteers, donors, and most importantly - our Sistas.

*In solidarity and sistahood,  
Ijeoma Kola  
Executive Director*

# 2021-2022 HIGHLIGHTS

July 2021 to June 2022

*Our work is guided by three pillars - resources, mentorship, and community.*



We successfully mentored 53 mentees and carried out the Sista Circle Mentorship Program for an entire year. 87% of Sista Circle mentees said their mentor played a role in their support system in towards their doctoral degree and 65% reported an increase in confidence about their progress towards their doctoral degree.

We held 12 professional development events with invited guests and partners on topics such as managing your time for optimal success, strategies to win fellowships and funding for your academic training, transitioning from academia to big tech, prioritizing your mental health and branding your academic self. Our monthly professional development workshops had an average of 67 attendees. We also shared monthly funding opportunities for scholars at all stages (applicants, current students, and doctors) and interviewed 24 Black women doctors for the Cohort Sistas Podcast with 33,300 total downloads.

Our community grew over 41% to a total of 2,336 community users, connecting scholars around the world (50 countries represented!). 63% of content shared on the Cohort Sistas platform has been user-generated. We saw a 57% increase in following on Instagram and grew to an audience of 6,824 followers. Our monthly professional development events, socials, and writing group have brought global scholars and researchers together to make progress towards their doctoral and postdoctoral goals.

Essential Strategies to Win Fellowships and Funding for Your Academic Training

Hosted by:  
Dr. Lamia Harper

Monday, October 18th  
7:00 pm EST

Register Now!

COHORT SISTAS

SATURDAY YOGA SESSION

JOIN US FOR A RELAXING PRACTICE LED BY COHORT SISTAS MEMBER AND YOGA INSTRUCTOR, OLUWASEYI ISHOLA.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2022  
12 PM ET | 4PM GMT | ZOOM

EVENT DETAILS AVAILABLE FOR COHORT SISTAS MEMBERS. NOT A MEMBER YET? SIGN UP AT COHORTSISTAS.COM

"Your WHY... and why it matters"

with Dr. Shelly-Ann Gajadhar

Workshop Exclusively for Cohort Sistas Members

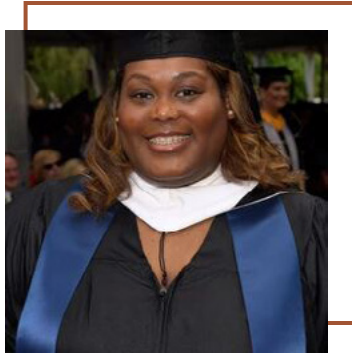
Thursday, June 23, 2022  
at 12:00 PM EST

RSVP NOW!

For more information, please visit:  
[www.cohortsistas.com/events](http://www.cohortsistas.com/events)

COHORT SISTAS

# OUR IMPACT



I have benefited tremendously from the mentorship and support I received from the Sista Circle Mentorship program. Because of this program, I received two acceptances to doctoral programs and will be attending my top choice I truly could not have navigated this process again without the guidance of my Sista Circle!

*Morgan, Fall 2021 Sista Circle Mentee*



Before getting involved in the Sista Circle Mentorship program I felt alone in my doctoral journey. Through this program I have received resources and fellowships that have encouraged me to keep going. I feel prepared to enter my 2nd year.

*Acquel, Fall 2021 Sista Circle Mentee*

2,336

SCHOLARS

33,300

PODCAST  
DOWNLOADS

53

SISTA CIRCLE  
MENTEES

22

VIRTUAL  
EVENTS

74

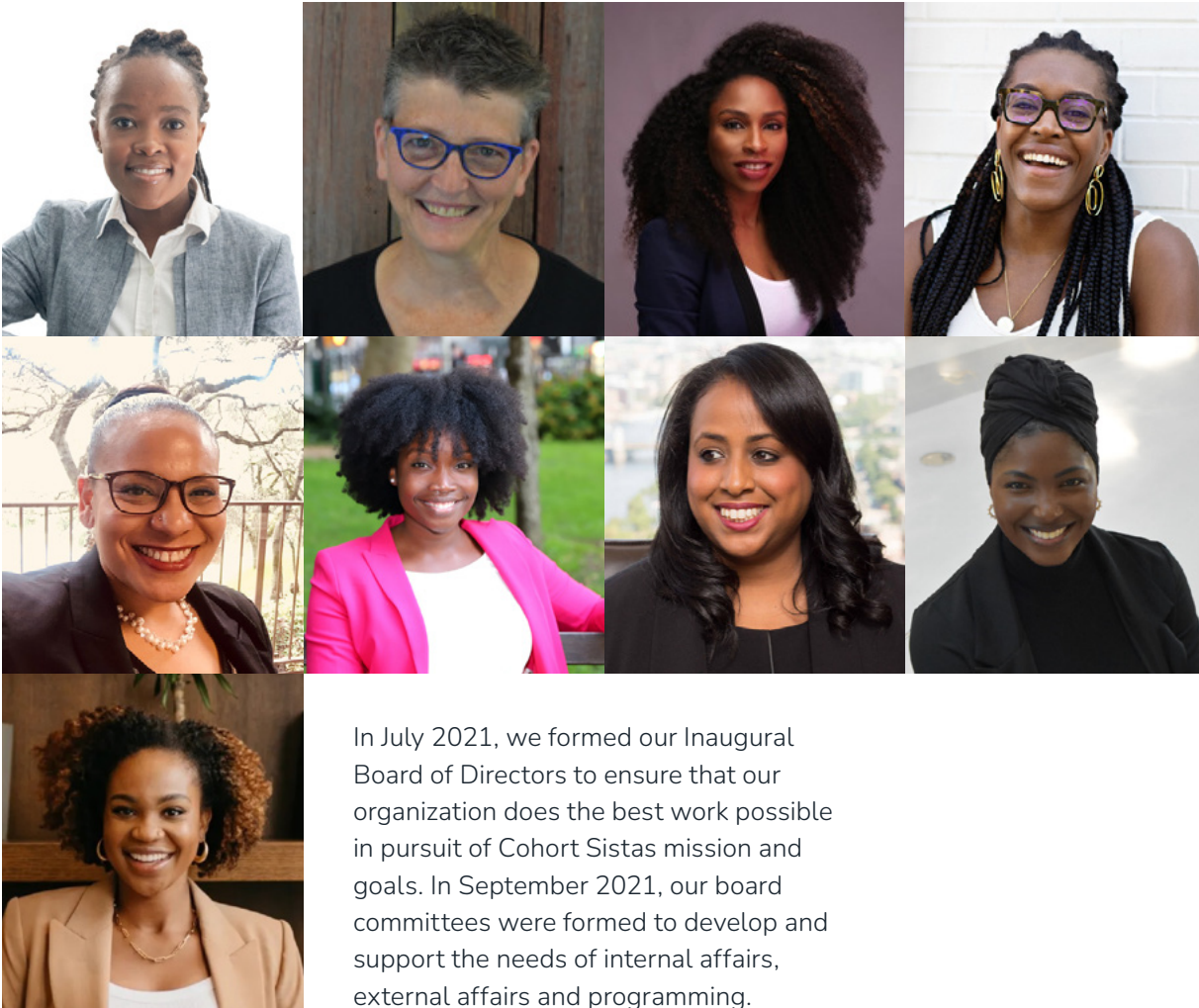
WRITING GROUP  
PARTICIPANTS

48

SCHOLARSHIPS  
SHARED

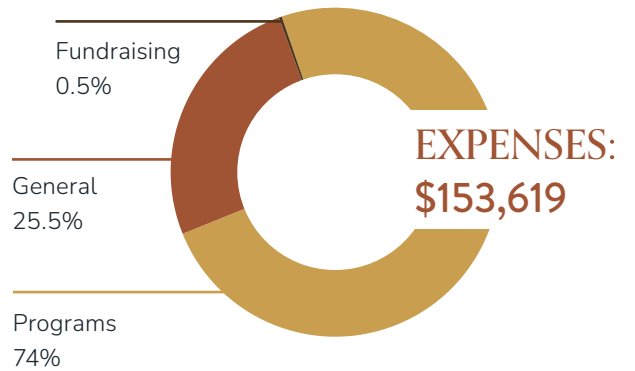
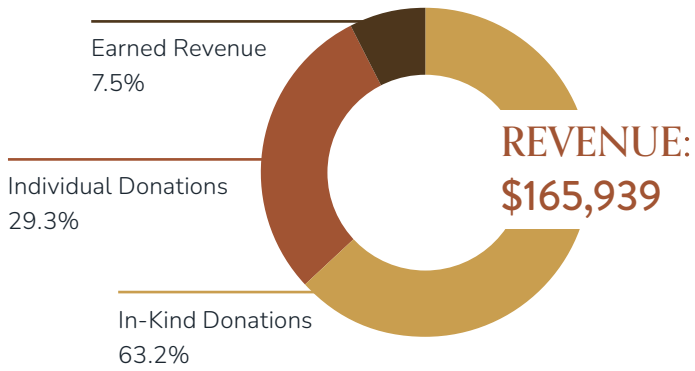
# OUR BOARD

*MISSION: Cohort Sistas is a digital network that supports Black women and non-binary people pursuing doctoral studies by providing resources, mentorship, and community to improve academic, professional, financial, and emotional outcomes.*



In July 2021, we formed our Inaugural Board of Directors to ensure that our organization does the best work possible in pursuit of Cohort Sistas mission and goals. In September 2021, our board committees were formed to develop and support the needs of internal affairs, external affairs and programming.

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



74%

*of fiscal year expenses supported our programs*



Cohort Sistas is a 501(c)(3)  
Delaware nonprofit.  
EIN: 86-1674110

*Over the past 12 months, we raised \$50,554.81 from 94 donors. 40% of which were made during Giving Tuesday. We celebrated the end of a successful year and Goldman Sachs awarded Cohort Sistas the Black Women Impact Grant, securing 2 years of philanthropic support funding, totaling \$100,000.*

## MAJOR DONORS > \$1,000

Adam & Gina Nebular  
Adiam Tesfalul  
Ashley Schloss  
Chinny Ogunro  
Ijeoma Kola  
Lancôme  
Lisa Forssell  
Olivia Howard  
Saron Tesfalul

## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS!

Adiyah Ali  
Alexis Smith  
Alyce Adams  
AnnMaureen Nwabuzor  
Asya Spears  
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Stephanie Wharton  
Taisha Caldwell-Harvey  
Tega Edwin  
Tenaya Vallery  
Thea Zunick  
Tiffany Staples  
Tola Ilegbusi  
Trené Cornish Barksdale  
Vivian Rodriguez-Holliday

# LOOKING AHEAD



## SISTA CIRCLE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

To meet the needs of our scholars, we are expanding the Sista Circle Mentorship Program to have separate cohorts for current students and prospective applicants. Our goal is to expand our reach and support 75+ scholars from all academic disciplines in our 2022-2023 mentorship program. We look forward to collaborating with Black women and non-binary mentors from all academic disciplines to support us with our growing mentorship program.

## COMMUNITY REACH AND IMPACT

We want to grow our global community to 5,000+ scholars and researchers and optimize their community experience. We recently launched a new community platform and will be launching a branded mobile app in a few weeks that will make it easier for scholars to search for and connect with one another, as well with resources and advice that can help propel their academic and professional journeys.

## OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

As we work to expand our reach and impact, we are developing relationships with universities and corporate partners who share our commitment to recruiting, training, and supporting Black women and non-binary doctoral students and advanced degree holders. We will be piloting the Sista Circle Mentorship Program with 3 institutional partners and establishing year-long recruitment, training, and mentorship partnerships with consulting, tech, and research companies.





◆ JOIN THE  
COMMUNITY

[cohortsistas.org/join](https://cohortsistas.org/join)

◆ MAKE A  
DONATION

[cohortsistas.org/donate](https://cohortsistas.org/donate)

◆ BECOME  
A PARTNER

[cohortsistas.org/partner](https://cohortsistas.org/partner)

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