



# 10,000 DEGREES

*Creating college graduates who change the world*



### What we do:

By serving students who wouldn't otherwise have the knowledge, skills, or financial resources to attend college, we are changing not just their lives, but those of their families and communities as well. Our 84 percent graduation rate from four-year colleges far surpasses the national average of 31 percent for the same cohort (low-income, first generation). It is also greater than the national average of 54 percent for all students entering four-year colleges. Our program in Sonoma Valley supports our mission of enabling all students – regardless of their backgrounds – to pursue their college dreams and go on to change the world.

### Our start:

In 1981, a group of concerned citizens, led by founder Judy Edgar, founded the Marin Education Fund to develop scholarships for local students.

In 1999, the organization underwent a transformational change, redirecting its focus to underserved North Bay students, most of whom would be the first in their families to graduate from college.

Along with that new focus, came the change in name to 10,000 Degrees. Our new name reflects our promise to the community – we aspire to help students become successful in college and to achieve 10,000 degrees earned in every community we serve.

### A single story:

*I was an interesting child. How could I not be? I was raised by the most amazing two women: my mother and my grandma. I learned from them that in order to have a bright future, I had to aim high.*

Sonoma Valley High graduate, Denia Candela is an alumna of the 10,000 Degrees program. Despite setbacks, including separation from her mother for seven years while her mom established her family in the US and having difficulty in school because she didn't know enough English, Denia persevered. Thanks to her counselor and mentor, Betzy Chavez, Denia graduated from middle school and was placed in Honors English her first year of high school.

In 2010 she was accepted to the Summer Intensive Institute of 10,000 Degrees. "For a whole week, I got to experience college – where I could live, read, and for the first time, understand college material! I finally was able to see that MY dreams could be as big as I wanted them to be. I knew that my education was a priority. I knew what I wanted, and I refused to let it go."

Denia is now in her third year at Sonoma State majoring in Applied Statistics. To other 10,000 Degree students, Denia advises: "I cannot tell you it will be easy; there will be some obstacles. Take it from someone that went against all odds. And to all the truly amazing people who have become donors, I promise that every single student here today will not disappoint you. We will not give up. We are the future. We are each One Degree."

### Our future:

Over the next decade, 10,000 Degrees will apply its winning formula to tackle the educational opportunity gap throughout the North Bay.



**Impact100 Sonoma awarded a \$15,000 Community Grant to 10,000 Degrees to expand their program into the Sonoma Valley (2012).**