



## Florence School District 3 College Cohort

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### Overview

Florence School District 3 has partnered with The Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity, a Marietta, Georgia community-based organization, since 2014. The foundation has used its partnerships with colleges and universities; published materials; essay writing guidance; and expansive knowledge of college admissions and financial aid policies to unlock amazing opportunities for Florence School District 3 students.

As a result of the guidance, essay writing assistance, and interview preparation provided by the program, FSD3 students have received thousands of dollars in scholarships each year and over \$5 million in scholarships since the inception of the program. Students participating in the program have been profiled in the WMBF News segment, "[Lake City High School senior wins coveted Gates Millennium Scholar Award](#)," and in the SallieMae video segment, "[2017 Bridging the Dream Scholarship Winner - Damian's Story](#)."

Participation is open to any FSD3 student, but students who most benefit from their involvement are students who are vested in their own futures and who genuinely desire to maximize their college and scholarship opportunities. Such students and their amazing outcomes are profiled in "[Their Stories: Volume I - Inspiring Essays of Students from Challenging Backgrounds](#)." Copies are available in the library or from the counseling office. You are encouraged to check out a copy of the book to read what students have said about their participation in the program and how they identified full scholarship pathways allowing their families to avoid borrowing thousands of dollars in student loans.

FSD3 students profiled on the following pages provide examples of how earning high grades in dual enrollment classes not only resulted in earning college credits, but positioned them as competitive college and scholarship applicants, allowed them to avoid student loans, and saved thousands of dollars in college tuition costs.

## Class of 2023 Cohort Students



**Williams College**

### **Jayla, Lake City Early College High School**

*"Without participating in the Cohort, I do not believe I would have had as many opportunities as I have had because of how unaware I was of anything pertaining to the college planning process. The moment I realized how significant my participation was in the program was when I was accepted to the Yale Young Global Scholars Program. I honestly thought applying to that program was going to be a waste of time because I did not believe I was going to be accepted."*

While Williams College does not award credit for Jayla's dual enrollment classes, her grades, and DE English classes, played a huge role in her being offered a full 4-year scholarship to Williams College (valued at over \$350,000 over 4 years); \$7,500 in additional funding each year to pay for books, fees, health insurance, personal, and transportation expenses; and an all expenses paid 6-week pre-college program.



**Clafin University**

### **Keosha, J. Paul Truluck Creative Arts & Science Magnet School**

*"The Cohort Staff, and particularly, Mrs. Wynn, are amazing! I wouldn't know where I would be throughout the college planning process without them. They went out of their way to learn who I was and what my aspirations for my future were. Using my goals, my future plans, and my state of mind, they guided me into a place that I did not believe was possible—a 4-year college. One difficult challenge I had to overcome was procrastination! I procrastinate every single aspect of my life and when joining the cohort, I learned more about being persistent and working ahead to avoid procrastination. My counselor, Ms. McDaniel, insisted that I meet with Mrs. Wynn. However, when I entered the J. Paul Truluck media center, I had all but resolved that being a dental hygienist and attending a technical college was as far as my ambitions could take me. However, as Mrs. Wynn got to know me and my goals, she inspired me to consider more, but left it up to me as to whether I wanted to dream bigger or reach higher. Guess what? I did! I will now be attending Clafin University on a full scholarship. I can still become a dental hygienist, however, if I choose to do so, I can also become a dentist. My future is within my hands and the cohort taught me how to go for it. I am truly grateful to Ms. McDaniel, Mrs. Wynn, and being able to work with the Cohort staff."* Keosha's DE grades and course taking gave her options to pursue technical college or a 4-year university and helped her to meet The Meeting Street Scholarship qualifying criteria.



**Isaiah, J. Paul Truluck Creative Arts & Science Magnet School**

**Claflin University**

*“Before college cohort I hadn't the slightest idea of how I was going to pursue my dreams of pursuing a career in engineering. The cohort helped me weigh my options for school and literally cut my college list in half. They helped me understand my family's financial need and each of my financial aid award letters. They helped me to understand what it would cost to attend college and how I could find funds for my education. The cohort helped me plan my future by helping me apply for scholarships, reviewing my essays, teaching me how to tell my story, and showing me how to highlight my passions through writing. The cohort actually saved me from myself because of all the stressing trying to find money to pay for college. The most difficult obstacle I had to face during my time in college cohort was understanding my financials. A lot of free money wasn't given to me based on what society deems students from my background as needing. So the cohort helped me find other ways to pay for school.*

*I learned about the cohort last summer (2022), but I wish I started earlier—probably about freshman year would have been best, because if I had, I would have saved myself a lot of stress and hardship. Nevertheless, better late than never. I will be attending Claflin University and their dual degree engineering program with Clemson University.”*



**ShiDasia, Lake City Early College High School**

**Winthrop University**

*“I joined the Cohort as a high school senior. I will attend the Winthrop University Honors College in Fall 2023 to major in Secondary English Education with a minor in Communication. My most significant Cohort experience was when Mr. Wynn reviewed one of my essays for a scholarship and he acknowledged that I was a great writer but could use some help. What I adored about this situation was he stated that he was going to help me become better at writing and he did just that. Another experience that was significant in the college cohort was when Mrs. Wynn uplifted and motivated me to keep going when I felt discouraged. Both Mrs and Mr.Wynn have and will play a major role in my life. Participating in the cohort writing sessions helped me to land over \$6,000 in scholarships.”*

ShiDasia's DE grades and course taking helped her to be invited in the Winthrop Honors College and qualify for The Meeting Street Scholarship.

## Other Cohort Students



**Benedict College**

### **Ashley, Lake City Early College High School**

*"I found out about the College Planning Cohort program at the beginning of my junior year during the height of COVID. At the first meeting, when we were asked about our aspirations and how we would pay for college, I found myself stuck at the aspirations question. I admittedly did not even know the meaning of 'aspirations.' As the first in my family to apply to college, none of my older sisters could help me. My great grandmother had not attended college, so she could not help me. When I received my first college acceptance, I was relieved to know that I could actually go to college. But then I received the financial aid award letter and I saw that I would need to take out thousands of dollars in student loans...I almost cried. However, Mrs. Wynn comforted me, 'Ashley, don't worry. You are a good student and have applied to a good group of schools. This wasn't a school that you should have applied to anyway, so just wait to see what happens with the other schools.'" Ashley was offered a full scholarship to Benedict College where she is majoring in Public Health.*



**Northeastern University**

### **Damian, Lake City Early College High School**

*"My amazing life and my amazing journey would not have been possible without the College Planning Cohort program that Dr. Hickson, our Superintendent of Schools, and Ms. Yvonne Scott, the Director of College and Career Readiness brought to our school district. I am from a family of ten with a single-parent mother who did not graduate from high school. When I entered the program in the 10th grade, I knew that I wanted to go to college, but I did not know anything about the process. From the day that I attended the first meeting in the School Board Room with my good friend, Cathryn, we did everything that Mr. and Mrs. Wynn asked us to do. We built our résumés by assuming leadership roles in every organization and committed to being top academic students. It all paid off! I was offered admission to Bates College and The George Washington University. Just like Mr. and Mrs. Wynn had predicted, I was offered a full scholarship by each school. I was also selected as one of 5 students from throughout the country to receive the \$25,000 SallieMae Bridging the Dream Scholarship, and, as a result of Mr. Wynn's nomination, I was selected as a Northeastern University Torch Scholar and awarded a full scholarship valued at \$81,472 per year and \$325,888 over 4 years." Damian has received his BS in Political Science from Northeastern and is awaiting a decision of receiving a full graduate school fellowship.*



**Williams College**

### **Juliana, Lake City Early College High School**

With the hopes and dreams of her entire family on her young shoulders, Julianna applied to Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, and several other schools that we recommended. Then she received a rejection from Northwestern, followed by a rejection from the University of Chicago. She was crushed. However, Mrs. Wynn tracked her down and had Juliana sit down in the counselor's office and go into the student portal at each of her colleges. Williams College had not issued an admission decision because they were still awaiting a financial aid document from her father. Juliana went home that night, had her father submit the document, and called Mrs. Wynn a few days later, "Mrs. Wynn. I got it, but what does this mean?" She shared a screenshot of the financial aid award letter, which offered Juliana a full scholarship, AND, \$12,000 per year over the cost of attendance to assist with travel, health insurance, counseling, books, transportation, and personal expenses.



**USC - Columbia**

### **Jason, Lake City Early College High School**

Entering his junior year of high school, Jason was urged by his older sister to join our program. His older sister participated in our program as a high school senior with a "I have made up my college list." Despite her having made up her mind regarding where she was going to apply to college, we were able to redirect her focus on the one college where she had an opportunity for being awarded a full scholarship—the Claflin University Honors College where she is having a wonderful, debt-free college experience. While Jason's sister was quiet and deeply pensive during her involvement in our program, Jason was outgoing and talkative. He was full of questions and wanted his essays reviewed in real-time, "Mr. Wynn, I just wrote another paragraph in my essay, can you review it?" Jason's exuberance was matched by his hard work. He applied to 17 colleges and for many scholarships. He rarely missed our bi-weekly meetings, completed all of the work, and met all of his college and scholarship application deadlines. After being guided in developing his College Cost Comparison Table, Jason's questioning persisted, "Mr. Wynn, why do they show student loans as 'Awards?' Are these one-time scholarships or will I get them every year? What school do you think is really the best for me and where neither me nor my mother will need to take out student loans?" Jason is now attending USC-Columbia on a full scholarship as an Opportunity Scholar and Meeting Street Scholar.



**UMBC**

**Mikayla, Lake City Early College High School**

Mikayla distinguished herself as a first in so many ways. She was the first, and one of only two students in the history of Florence School District 3, to be selected as a Gates Millennium Scholar (both students participated in the cohort). Mikayla is also the only student from the state of South Carolina to be selected to a University of Maryland - Baltimore County Meyerhoff Scholar, the country's preeminent program for students of color pursuing MDs/PhDs. Mikayla is also the first QuestBridge College Prep

Scholar from Florence School District 3.

Mikayla has received her BS in Biology from the University of Maryland - Baltimore County; is currently living in Fredericksburg, Virginia; in Seargent in the US Army; and attending graduate school.



**Francis Marion**

**Rebeca, Lake City Early College High School**

Rebeca, a twin, was the second student in Florence School District 3 to be selected as a Gates Millennium Scholar. Rebeca is from a closed-knit Mexican-American family and was committed to attending college close to home. She was able to use her Gates Scholarship funding to attend Francis Marion University, which is within driving distance of her home in Lake City, South Carolina. Subsequently, she got off to a great start and went on to receive her BS in Biology and is now attending graduate school

pursuing a MS in Nutrition.



**Francis Marion**

**Lurdes, J. Paul Truluck Creative Arts & Science Magnet School**

*"My parents left El Salvador to come to the United States to make a better life for me and my siblings. However, entering school was a challenge, especially learning. While my teacher taught the students in English, I would sit in my chair confused and learning nothing from the daily lessons. My teacher finally recommended that I be placed into an ESL class. I quickly made better grades, improved my communication skills, and began developing English fluency."*

Lurdes received a full scholarship to Francis Marion University through the Darla Moore Scholarship.



**Cathryn, Lake City Early College High School**

*"It would be wrong of me to leave out something as important as my love for theatre from my college essay. While I clearly had a passion for singing, dancing, acting, and performing throughout elementary school, it was not until middle school that I fully understood that theatre is as much of my life and each breath that I take."* This except from Cathryn's college essay is her story. After attending Francis Marion University on a full scholarship as a South Carolina Teaching Fellow, Cathryn has receive her BS in Elementary Education and is currently a 5th grade English/Language Arts and Social Studies teacher.

**Francis Marion**



**Haley, Lake City Early College High School**

*"Hey Mr. and Mrs. Wynn! I loved my discussion group today. We got to know one another and they had a lot of really good questions about college and even their next years of high school. I loved their presentations too! I hate to pick just 1 that was the best but I really enjoyed Nishan Watson's. His was very detailed and I liked that. Riley Brown and Joshua Cassady had good ones too. I gave them some feedback about making their plans a little longer and more detailed and they said they would try to do that."* As Haley

**Francis Marion**

has been attending Francis Marion University on a full scholarship as a South Carolina Teaching Fellow, she has found time to serve as a College Cohort Discussion Group Leader.

All of these students are examples of the 3 pillars of the College Cohort: Scholarship, Leadership, and Service.

**Full Scholarships Cohort Students Have Received**

Benedict College (8)	USC - Columbia (3)
Clafin University (8)	Wake Forest University
College of Charleston	Williams College (2)
Francis Marion (4)	Winthrop University
Hamilton College	Gates Millennium Scholars (2)
Northeastern University	Meeting Street Scholarship (3)
University of Maryland - Baltimore County	UMBC - Meyerhoff Scholarship