



## Pinellas County Schools College Cohort

Contact: Dr. Lewis Brinson  
Minority Achievement Officer  
[brinsonle@pcsb.org](mailto:brinsonle@pcsb.org) or 727-588-6436

### Overview

Pinellas County Schools has partnered with The Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity, a Marietta, Georgia community-based organization, since 2018. 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 Pinellas County Schools students. While the program is open to any PCS student, the program is particularly relevant in closing the college knowledge gap and expanding college pathways for students from underserved groups (i.e., students of color, students who are the first in their family to attend college, and students are from lower income families and communities).

As a result of the guidance, essay writing assistance, and interview preparation provided by the program, participating PCS students have received thousands of dollars in scholarships each year and over \$2 million in scholarships since the inception of the program. Students and parents participating in the program have been profiled in such video segments as, "[2019 PCS High School Boot Camp](#)," "[2019 PCS Middle School Boot Camp](#)," "[Jocelyne and Briana Explain the Process](#)," "[Sydney Soskin - Why I Owned the Process](#)."

The Cohort is open to any PCS 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 are profiled in Mr. Wynn's recent book, "[Their Stories: Volume I - Inspiring Essays of Students from Challenging Backgrounds](#)." Copies are available in the Career Centers, from the counseling office, or through Dr. Brinson in the District 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.

The majority of the PCS students profiled on the following pages benefitted greatly by developing and pursuing a high school plan that positioned them as competitive college and scholarship applicants, and allowed them to avoid incurring thousands of dollars in student loan debt.



### **Ryan, Lakewood High School CAT Program**

**Tuskegee University**

*"My most significant Cohort experience was participating in the 5-day summer college planning boot camp with Faith Kumi (University of Chicago). The boot camp really showed me that there are ways to pay for college besides athletics, but it takes work. Mr. and Mrs. Wynn didn't sugarcoat the fact that it takes work to earn scholarships, but that boot camp helped guide my scholarship and school search. Initially I wasn't considering Tuskegee, or any HBCUs for that matter, until Mr. Wynn stepped on the scene with the CPC."*

Ryan was offered a full scholarship to Tuskegee University as a Presidential Scholar. While he was not a recruited athlete, as a varsity baseball player, he will be able to continue playing baseball, but his scholarship money will not be dependent on baseball.



### **Collin, St. Petersburg High School IB Program**

**University of Maryland**

*"Perhaps what has resonated most from my involvement in the cohort is that grades and test scores may open opportunities, but there is so much competition that so much more is required. Not only do I now fully appreciate the concept of developing a high quality 'body or work,' but I intend to take the lessons learned through my involvement in the cohort and one-on-one sessions with Mr. and Mrs. Wynn with me into college so that I position myself for additional scholarships, internships, and future opportunities."*

Like Ryan, Collin had full scholarship opportunities at Xavier University of Louisiana and in the Clafin University Honors College. However, Collin chose to attend the University of Maryland, where he will be in the CIVICUS Living and Learning Community.



### **Joanne, St. Petersburg High School IB Program**

**Johns Hopkins**

As a ninth grader, Joanne joined the PCS Cohort on the urging of her younger sister, Jocelyne, who had participated in the middle school boot camp as a rising 6th grader. Throughout high school, Joanne's intentional efforts across the program's 3 pillars of scholarship, leadership, and service landed her a full scholarship to Johns Hopkins University and selection as a Jack Kent Cooke College Scholar.

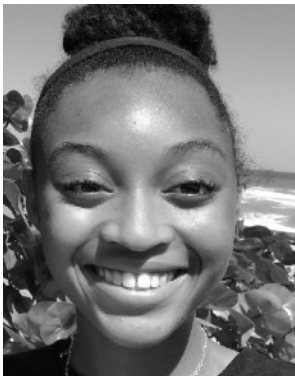


### **Sydney, St. Petersburg High School IB Program**

**University of Chicago**

As a rising high school junior, Sydney was in our second PCS cohort of students. Sydney attended every monthly meeting and spent months developing the deeply personal essays presented here. Her lifelong top college choice was the University of Chicago, one of the most selective schools in the country. However, she was intentional in fully engaging in our program, building her résumé, pursuing leadership roles, and working to make a community impact. She put herself on the University of

Chicago’s campus through a summer immersion program during the summer between her junior and senior year of high school. As a result of her efforts, Sydney was one of only two students from the state of Florida to be offered admission via Early Decision to the University of Chicago Class of 2024, together with a full scholarship.

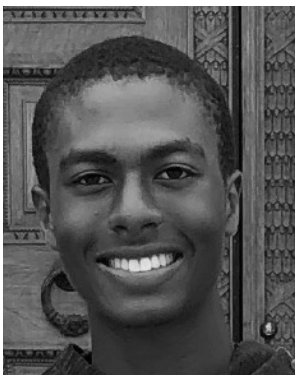


### **London, Lakewood High School Early College Program**

**FAMU**

*"I now have a deeper understanding of how to plan for college and the admission process. I have been inspired to set goals for leadership in clubs and activities, SAT and ACT preparation and community service. I would like to continue the program. I enjoyed the boot camp. I was a little overwhelmed the first day because of the login issues and amount of information that I did not know. However, on the second and third day, things started to make sense, and I figured out how to configure a plan. I*

*have a lot more work to do, but this boot camp has pushed me in the right direction. I look forward to continuing in the program."* After attending the summer college planning boot camp as a rising high school sophomore, London continued participating in the program and received a full scholarship to FAMU where she is currently majoring in Physics.



### **Etame, Palm Harbor University High School**

**Swarthmore**

Etame was in our first PCS summer boot camp as a rising high school senior. He landed several all-expenses paid fly-in invitations to such colleges as Amherst, Williams, and Swarthmore. We assisted Etame with his Early Decision application to Swarthmore, where he was offered a full need-based scholarship and has gone on to receive his BS in Computer Science



### **Parris, Boca Ciega High School**

**NC A&T Honors College**

Parris, who lived with his aunt, joined the PCS Cohort as a rising high school senior with little time to identify full scholarship opportunities. However, through guidance provided through the program, Parris landed a full scholarship opportunity in the Claflin University Honors College. He was also offered admission to the North Carolina A&T Honors College where he interviewed for one of NC A&T Honors College Scholarships. While he was not awarded a full scholarship to NC A&T, he has enrolled at NC A&T and is currently majoring in Biology.



### **Hubert, St. Petersburg High School IB Program**

**University of Florida**

*“Participating in the boot camp experience was an amazing time. Many things had become more clear to me such as the importance of a resume, a strong body of work, and the characteristic of grit when it comes to the college application process. I have set various academic, community, and personal goals for myself for my upcoming years in high school. Some of them include becoming president of Key Club, the most influential service club on campus, getting an SAT score that would qualify me for national merit, and getting in contact with physics professors and physicists around the country to understand the career and education of an actualized physicist.”* By embracing the 3 pillars of scholarship, leadership, and service, Hubert’s efforts were rewarded with his being offered admission to the University of Florida where he received the highest level of Bright Futures and is majoring in physics.



**St. Petersburg College**

### **Makayla and Kierra, Northeast High School**

Sisters, Makayla and Kierra, provide the best examples that a college-bound plan does not have to lead directly into a 4-year institution. After attending the in-person sessions at Lakewood High School and engaging in comprehensive college admissions and financial aid research, they developed college-bound plans through the St. Petersburg College Transfer Agreement Program with plans of continuing their

studies at FAMU.



## **Tuyen, St. Petersburg High School IB Program**

*"As an individual raised in a Vietnamese-speaking household, I had never been truly exposed to my options in higher education. Neither of my parents attended college and neither spoke English. I had no idea what it took to apply to college. Applying to college hadn't even crossed my mind. However, as I proceeded through my high school years until the start of my junior year, I noticed my classmates were equipped with resources and connections that I did not have. I knew that I wanted to pursue higher education but I didn't know how. That was what led me to attend the first meeting of my school's College Cohort Club, organized by Jocelyne Lioe, a current member of this program.*

*College Cohort Club provided the resources that I was looking for, and so I sought to join this program.*

*Joining this program and meeting Mr. and Mrs. Wynn has been the best decision I have made. Not only did they educate me about the college process, they helped me form an objective to work toward, and have tirelessly helped me along the way. I still remember the night one of my application essays was due: it was late into the night, usually the time people like Mr. and Mrs. Wynn should be sleeping, and yet they were on the shared document of my essay, helping me revise it along the way. One thing that I can say about the College Planning Cohort program that makes it stand out from any other program is that Mr. and Mrs. Wynn are there for you even when you are not there for yourself. And they give brutally honest feedback that snaps you back to work-- speaking from personal experiences.*

*I am a high-achieving student. But I am also first generation and low income. Yet, I didn't know how to convey my story in my application essays. By writing and revising countless essays with the Wynns I have learned how to write more with them than with all of my English/Writing classes combined. Additionally, I have been introduced to programs and opportunities that I would not have known of without Mr. or Mrs. Wynn's help. I'm confident that I would not have been accepted to most, if not all, of the programs that I have applied to if I had not joined College Cohort. By joining this program, you can be assured that you will receive all the support that you need. Not only will you be guided but you will be encouraged to work hard for your goals.*

*I've come far from where I started a year ago, thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Wynn. I understand the college process better than ever, and I know how to show and portray my background, my activities, and my greatest strengths. Most significantly, I've learned the importance of leading, serving, and making a difference within this cohort. My only regret is not joining sooner."*

*Tuyen Nguyen*

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*St. Petersburg High School | Class of 2024*

*International Baccalaureate Program*

*GPA: 4.58 | Class Rank 2/426*

*Adviser: College Cohort Emerging Leaders*

*Key Club: Division 13 Lieutenant Governor*