



Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity

College Planning Cohort™ Program
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Students Who Benefit Most From Our Program

Students who benefit most from their participation in our program are independent of race, socioeconomic background, gender, or even where they attend school. Students who benefit most are students who demonstrate grit, have the ability to develop a growth mindset, and who are intellectually curious. Students who do not possess these qualities can certainly gain admission to college. However, such students eventually experience that their opportunities for getting into the 'right' colleges or being offered the 'right' scholarships significantly diminish.

The first book in Mr. Wynn's *Their Stories* series profiles students from the most challenging backgrounds who were offered full need-based scholarships to an array of colleges and universities. The second book in the series profiles students who did not qualify for need-based scholarships and developed strategies, supported by their body of work, which resulted in their being awarded full merit-based scholarships. However, despite how these students differed in their sociocultural backgrounds, they shared a commitment to the work required to expand their college and scholarship opportunities.

The students profiled here, are part of the 50% of students participating in our program who have been offered full college scholarships (over 25 times the national average of 1.5%). While being offered a full college wishful thinking, or applying to over 100 colleges. These students embraced our curriculum; set and pursued goals across our 3 pillars of scholarship, leadership, and service; intentionally built their résumés; developed a 'body of work' that made themselves competitive college and scholarship applicants; and submitted high quality applications to a group of colleges to which they best matched. By so doing, they demonstrated a willingness to shut out the noise of social media, friends, and classmates who are typically misinformed about the college admissions process or how to determine the best college and scholarship match. Instead, these students, from different schools and communities, focused on developing the 'right' strategies, applying to the 'right' colleges, and positioning themselves for the 'right' scholarships.



Benedict College

Ashley, Florence School District 3 (SC)

"I found out about the College Planning Cohort program at my high school 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.

Brenna, Guilford County Schools (NC)

"When I was a rising high school junior, my mom and I saw a flier about a Guilford County Schools college planning support program and immediately knew that it was something that we should explore. At the first meeting, we knew that it was something that I needed. While I am the first in my family to attend college, I have an aunt who is a college professor at a college in Texas who has often offered advice from afar. Yet, as I worked my way through the curriculum and sat in awe at the monthly meetings in which I learned the distinction between liberal arts colleges and research universities and opportunities for all-expenses paid visits to colleges I began to expand my college reach. I entered the college planning process committed to attending Guilford College, not far from where I lived in Greensboro, North Carolina. Since our state does not offer a state scholarship, I was resolved to take out student loans. After all, isn't that the way that everyone pays for college? Yet, month after month, I set goals of becoming a better and more competitive student. While I was already a 'good' student, I was committed to becoming a 'great' student." Brenna's commitment paid off with her being offered a full scholarship to Amherst College, where she received a debt-free undergraduate degree and is currently serving as a Graduate Design Assistant.



Amherst College



Northeastern University

Damian, Florence School District 3 (SC)

"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. I was offered admission to Bates College and The George Washington University. Just like Mr. and Mrs. Wynn had predicted, I was offered full scholarships to both schools. 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 degree from Northeastern and is awaiting a decision of receiving a full graduate school fellowship.

Jayla, Florence County School District 3 (SC)

"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. The Cohort, through Mr. and Mrs. Wynn, and my monthly discussion group, aided in building my self-confidence and being deserving of the opportunities I have had. As Mr. Wynn is fond of saying, my involvement in the Cohort helped me to become the best version of myself and, as cliché as it sounds, not give up. There were many times I wanted to give up or stop showing up for myself and the Cohort, but Mr. and Mrs. Wynn were always there to help me along the way and helped me to gain clarity in seeing the bigger picture." Jayla's grit paid off with her being offered a full scholarship to Williams College, where she has enrolled.



Williams College



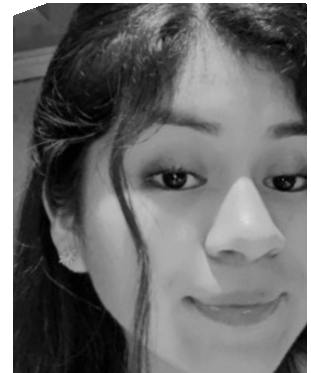
Joanne, Pinellas County Schools (FL)

Johns Hopkins

After attending an all-expenses paid summer medical immersion program at Johns Hopkins University, the college quickly rose to become Joanne's top college choice. Despite being academically accomplished, Joanne was well aware of all of the college rejections received by equally academically accomplished students at her high school each year. She also knew that Sydney, another cohort student who applied to the University of Chicago via Early Decision, was, at the time, the only student from her high school to be offered admission to the University of Chicago. So Joanne did what Sydney had done. She applied Early Decision to Johns Hopkins University and anxiously awaited their decision. Joanne set up a Zoom session with us from a local restaurant to log into her Johns Hopkins Student portal to view her admissions decision. She let out a loud scream as she read the words, "Congratulations..." She then went into her student account page where she shared her screen and asked, "Mrs. Wynn, what does this mean?" Mrs. Wynn's reply was, "Joanne, this is a full ride. Johns Hopkins has met your full financial need without any student loans!"

Juliana, Florence County School District 3 (SC)

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. She stopped attending meetings and she would not respond to our emails or text messages. So Mrs. Wynn called her counselor to call Juliana into her office. Her counselor placed the call on speaker and we could hear the sadness in Juliana's voice. She had given up on her dreams of attending college so she had not even followed through with any of her other college applications. After a little comforting and scolding, Mrs. Wynn 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 over the cost of attendance to assist with travel, health insurance, counseling, books, transportation, and personal expenses.



Williams College



Sydney, Pinellas County Schools (FL)

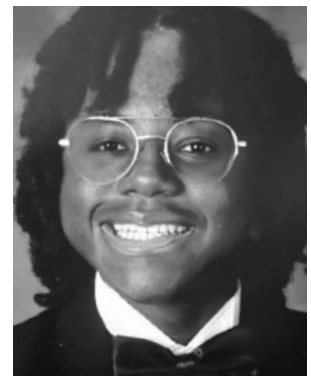
As a rising high school junior, Sydney attended every monthly meeting and spent months developing the deeply personal essays presented in her University of Chicago application—essays that she needed to tip the scales in her favor. Her lifelong top college choice was the University of Chicago, one of 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. By the time that she submitted her application to the University of Chicago, she had made herself into the most competitive applicant possible. Her essays made such a powerful impression on the University of Chicago admissions officers that she received a personal note from the admissions officer for her region,

Dear Sydney,

It is with such joy that I welcome you to the class of 2024! You are a remarkable young woman and have worked so hard for this. Your application exuded eloquence and maturity, and your essays were deeply thoughtful. In your “Why UChicago” essay, you said that you believe that you are a perfect fit for UChicago, and we do too.

Omar, Paulding County School District (GA)

Omar joined our program as a rising high school freshman who had read the news article about Kimberly (one of our students offered 6 full scholarships). Omar embraced the guidance outlined in our curriculum and developed the most rigorous course schedule available in his high school and was intentional in the manner in which he approached leadership and service throughout high school. Omar and Jayla, previously profiled, challenged each other in their monthly discussion group and the manner in which they engaged in building their body of work to become competitive applicants for the top colleges and competitive scholarships to which they both aspired. Omar’s financial aid award from Brown University covered 90 percent of the \$89,690 cost of attendance. Omar was selected as 1 of 60 students nationally, and 1 of only 5 students from the state of Georgia, as a Jack Kent Cooke 2023 College Scholar. Consequently, Omar will be attending Brown on a full scholarship and have additional support through the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.



Brown University

Yuzu, Guilford County Schools (NC)

"As cliché as this may sound, my college scholarship helps to make my goal of attending college possible. Prior to being selected as an Elon Odyssey Scholar, my family was always worried about how to fund my postsecondary education. As much as my parents hoped for me to attend college, we did not have the financial resources to turn such aspirations into reality. Being a first-generation student from an immigrant family brought even more challenges because everyone in the family was unsure of not only how to fund my college costs, but how to go to college or even what colleges to which I should be applying. As an Elon Odyssey Scholar, both my undergraduate degree in accounting, and master's degree in business administration are fully funded, in addition to study abroad, and internship costs. The scholarship not only removed the financial hardships that my family was facing, but allowed me to fully focus on my studies and academic pursuits.



Elon University

The College Planning Cohort (CPC) is integral to my story. When I entered the Guilford County Schools program as a high school junior, I had absolutely no pre-existing college knowledge. Despite the academic demands of attending school at The Academy at Smith in Greensboro, North Carolina, I so very much looked forward to our monthly College Planning Cohort meetings at Guilford Technical Community College. The step-by-step guidance through the enormity of researching colleges and identifying scholarships; and planning my final two years of high school so that I would be a competitive applicant for the colleges and scholarships that I was discovering, was perhaps the most valuable aspect of my entire high school experience—in essence, successful college planning enabled my successful high school experience to result in a full scholarship outcome.

Mr. and Mrs. Wynn were so kind, patient, and supportive throughout the entire college planning and college selection processes by guiding me in finding the colleges that best matched my academic interest, career trajectory, and financial need. Mr. Wynn's books, curriculum, and monthly presentations guided my journey while Mrs. Wynn provided comfort through my anxiety in finalizing my college list, and preparing my college and scholarship applications.

I will be forever grateful for how they helped me, together with their son, Mychal-David Wynn, to find my voice and tell my story through my college essay."



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

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