

# Scholarship America's Commitment to College Opportunity December 4, 2014



# Scholarship America's Commitment

An organization with more than a 50-year legacy, Scholarship America's mission is to mobilize America through scholarships and educational support to make postsecondary success possible for all students. Scholarship America has distributed \$3 billion in scholarships to more than 2 million students since 1958. Today, Scholarship America remains steadfast in its commitment to turning student dreams into degrees.

Currently, local volunteers in more than 500 communities across the country come together to support students in pursuing their higher education goals by raising scholarship funds, establishing endowments, assisting with college readiness and the financial aid process, and distributing scholarships to their hometown students to realize their dreams of a college degree. These activities both drive impact through access and completion, and drive student persistence: student recipients of these local scholarship programs consistently report a significant boost in motivation and the drive to complete their education knowing they have the support of their local community behind them.

Scholarship America's reach is enhanced by our Scholarship Management Services division, which manages and administers scholarship and education assistance programs for more than 1,200 corporations, foundations and individuals internationally.

In addition, Scholarship America currently partners with colleges in two major ways: through the Collegiate Partners program, where colleges agree not to displace scholarship with other grant aid, and through the Dreamkeepers program, where colleges provide students with emergency financial assistance. Scholarship America commits to increasing the number of colleges with which we partner to support students and to showcase these college partners as examples for others.

In light of President Obama's 2020 goal to increase the number of Americans with college degrees and the First Lady's Reach Higher Initiative, the White House held a summit on December 4, 2014, to announce college, university, and organization "commitments" to produce an additional number of college graduates over the next decade, particularly for low-income and under-represented students. Scholarship America has joined this national effort, as detailed in this document, with new commitments to increasing student access, success and completion over the next decade.

Specifically, Scholarship America commits to focus on serving low-to-moderate income students and communities of greatest need. As part of this new strategic focus, Scholarship America will add 110 community-based scholarship chapters across the nation by 2020. These chapters will be primarily located in high-need communities including states with limited need-based financial aid programs; metropolitan areas with high poverty rates; poverty-stricken rural and suburban towns near community colleges and regional universities; and where partnerships are ripe with others committed to serving students from K-12 through college completion. In addition, Scholarship America commits to increasing the number of colleges with which we partner to support low-to-moderate income students and to showcase these college partners as examples for others.

By continuing to leverage private dollars and a diverse set of stakeholders, including community volunteers, civic leaders, private donors, corporations, community foundations, and postsecondary institutions, Scholarship America will serve as a catalyst for postsecondary success.

# Creating an Impactful Public-Private Partnership

As a national non-profit with a diverse set of partners and a broad presence in communities across multiple states, Scholarship America is well-positioned to expand its reach and have a greater impact in supporting students and communities that need additional support. Scholarship America's theory of change posits that scholarships advance equity in postsecondary education, mobilizing communities to help students overcome barriers to access, persistence, and attainment. This theory of change is actualized through the organization's scholarship and educational assistance programs.

For some students, private scholarships can make the difference between attending, persisting, and completing college or not. In the only comprehensive national research report done on the role of private scholarships, *"Private Scholarships Count: Access to Higher Education and the Critical Role of Private Scholarships"* (May 2005, Institute for Higher Education Policy), it was noted that private scholarships stand apart from government and institutional aid in three important ways:

- They help students who slip through the cracks of other financial aid programs;
- They facilitate choice and affordability for students of varying income levels; and,
- They provide a testing ground for new approaches to student financing.

As increased financial and political pressure is brought to bear on federal and state aid, and colleges and universities continue to modify their policies to serve an increased number of students or different groups of students, private scholarships are increasingly important for students and their families in financing their postsecondary education. These realities provide a unique opportunity for private sector entities and others, such as Scholarship America, to leverage our resources, help fill gaps, focus efforts on students with the greatest need and become a testing ground for innovative solutions to advance student success.

Scholarship America has an important set of stakeholders, primarily in the private sector, including community volunteers, civic leaders, private donors, corporations, and community foundations, who have an investment in students and their success within the postsecondary education system. Through Scholarship America, these stakeholders express their interests and aspirations for advancing postsecondary attainment within their communities, their companies, and the future workforce of our country. The nature and strength of these stakeholder relationships are important distinguishing assets for Scholarship America that can be leveraged to support postsecondary success.

As part of Scholarship America's new commitment, the organization will mobilize America through community-based support systems that target high need populations. Scholarship America will utilize its diverse relationships to test innovative designs, analyze their impact, and scale as new models generate success.

# Commitment Goals

Scholarship America commits to a new strategic focus on serving low-to-moderate income students and communities of greatest need. As part of this strategic focus, by 2020, there will be a total of 648 community-based scholarship chapters across the nation, representing a 20% growth in Scholarship America's community-based program. Scholarship America plans to increase this number through larger national partnerships with similar organizations who have established ties in targeted communities. These chapters will be primarily located in high-need communities including states with limited need-based financial aid programs; metropolitan areas with high poverty rates; poverty-stricken rural and suburban towns near community colleges and regional universities; and where partnerships are ripe with others committed to serving students from K-12 through college completion.

In addition to focusing overall programmatic growth on communities and students of greatest need, Scholarship America will achieve the following specific results by 2020:

- At least 88 of the 110 additional community-based affiliates will be focused on serving metropolitan areas with high poverty rates and poverty-stricken rural and suburban towns near community colleges and regional universities, representing 80% of the growth in this program;
- At least 66% of community-based affiliates will award scholarships based on need or a combination of need and merit with an emphasis on need;
- At least 50% of community-based affiliates will focus on serving communities of greatest need, as defined by communities with large concentrations of low to moderate income students;
- At least 50% of community-based affiliates will offer renewable scholarships;
- Partnering with 142 additional colleges and universities as Collegiate Partners, for a total of 500 colleges and universities who agree not to displace scholarship funds with other grant aid, some of which also agree to match a portion of students' scholarship funds; and,
- 70 colleges will offer emergency financial assistance programs with Scholarship America's support.

As part of the organization's overall commitment, Scholarship America plans to assist in producing a total of 375,000 additional college graduates by 2020 and 375,000 additional graduates by 2025 for a total of 750,000 new graduates by 2025 served through all of the organization's programs and services.

The long-term overall impact of the organization's efforts will be as follows:

- 750,000 students complete their education beyond high school which allows them to attain a bright future full of possibilities and unburdened by student loan indebtedness;
- Students served by Scholarship America showcase the importance of greater financial equity in postsecondary attainment that enhances social mobility and economic success;
- The nation's financial aid system makes progress toward recognizing and valuing the importance of scholarships;
- Civic leaders, communities, and the nation become greater advocates for students; and,
- There is increased funding in financial assistance for students.