



# Facing Student Emergencies Together

*Scholarship America & Achieve Atlanta*



**In 2019, Scholarship America established an emergency aid partnership with Achieve Atlanta, a nonprofit that was looking for ways to meet the most urgent needs of their students: graduates of Atlanta Public Schools pursuing their college goals.**

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Achieve Atlanta saw local students facing unexpected transportation, housing and technology needs, and wanted to help students address these needs so they could stay focused on school. With this in mind, we worked together on a pilot program designed to bring emergency funds to students who need them.

## Core Principles for Achieve Atlanta's Program Success

### Clarity

The program needed:

- An informative landing page that clearly outlines what types of emergencies are and are not eligible for grants
- The ability to monitor student needs and application trends, and be flexible with requirements

### Efficiency

We provided:

- A streamlined, mobile-capable application that collects only the most critical data and gives applicants easy ways to provide information (such as uploading a picture or document)
- Electronic payment of funds

### Outreach

- Regular email and text communication with students about the availability of aid
- Multiple paths to connect students to additional resources, including a critical communication pipeline to help identify the students who need additional support

# \$190K

emergency aid distributed in the first 90-days of COVID-19





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## Pivoting in the face of a crisis.

The initial launch of the small-scale, targeted pilot program in January 2020 was promising, awarding students with almost \$10,000 in emergency grants. Around 60% of the emergency needs were for help with housing needs like rent and utility payments.

When COVID-19 struck, however, the program suddenly had a new focus, and expanded to serve more than 2,000 students. With campus closures across the country, students were forced back home and many lost their jobs. The urgent needs of Achieve Atlanta Scholars were growing and changing daily. Achieve Atlanta immediately responded by making emergency funds available to a larger group of students and securing additional funding.

**Because of our streamlined application process, we were able to start awarding these new funds to students almost immediately as they came in.** Working in close partnership with Achieve Atlanta, we also developed a new system to prioritize student needs and expedite delivery of funds.

The first wave of grants helped students who needed assistance moving off campus and finding alternative housing or travel to their hometowns. The second wave assisted those who needed technology (such as a laptop or Wi-Fi access) to transition to online coursework.

Between March 15 and June 30, 2020, around a third of eligible Scholars applied for emergency grants; Scholarship America and Achieve Atlanta awarded over \$190,000, allowing students to focus less on finances and more on the changing demands of remote learning.

“[The emergency grant] allowed for me to have an easier transition from my college life—where I had housing and meals provided by scholarships—to my at-home life, where I no longer had a job due to COVID-19. Thanks to the emergency grant, I was able to get my car repaired so I could start working for Instacart delivering groceries.”

- Achieve Atlanta Aid Recipient

## Ready to learn more?

Contact Scholarship America at 800-537-4180 or [scholarshipdesign@scholarshipamerica.org](mailto:scholarshipdesign@scholarshipamerica.org) to discuss how you can contribute or start an emergency aid scholarship fund.