

2014 Review |
ACCESS College Foundation

One Remarkable year



From the Chairman

In 2014 ACCESS College Foundation helped over 4,500 students from South Hampton Roads enter and succeed in college. Without ACCESS many of these young people would never have dreamed this future for themselves.

Taesha Plonka, a freshman at UCLA, embodies this dream. Taesha's ACCESS Advisor at Cox High School in Virginia Beach suggested she apply for the Gates Millennium Scholarship, then helped her win it. Through this grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Taesha earned a full four-year scholarship to UCLA, 2nd among public universities in the latest U.S. News and World Report college ranking.

Taesha's story appears on the back cover of this report. As a friend to ACCESS, we want to tell you about other personal victories and the remarkable headway gained in one short year. Thank you for helping to unleash this great potential within our area youth.



R. Bruce Bradley
Chairman, ACCESS Board of Directors



What We

We gave thousands of middle school students in low-income schools a head start toward college.

Early College Awareness Program

Inspiring middle school students and parents toward college.

Over 8,000 7th and 8th graders in 20 low-income schools learned that college is attainable and how to begin now to get there. Especially for at-risk children, this is a life-changing revelation. In addition to starting early, it greatly helps if moms and dads are onboard. In support of that, ACCESS also hosted a succession of Parent Night Workshops giving parents the information and confidence to navigate their journey ahead.

High School Program

Impacting every aspect of the college entrance process.

In a comprehensive approach we created educational plans with students, advised about college requirements, provided test registration fee waivers/payments and helped with admissions applications and fees. Then we helped file for financial aid and scholarships and even provided campus tours.

ACCESS helped more than 17,000 high school students prepare for college and garner \$44 million+ in financial aid and scholarships.

Accomplished

One year

Last-Dollar Scholarships

Bridging the gap.

When everything else is in place for college, a small funding shortfall often makes the critical difference in attending. To bridge that gap, last year ACCESS awarded over \$800,000 in Last-Dollar Scholarships to hundreds of local students. Each scholarship extends up to four years and averages \$5,000.

College Success Program

Hands-on counseling to ensure graduation for ACCESS Scholars in 13 Virginia colleges.

Particularly for low-income students, staying in college can be more challenging than getting there. But bolstered by ACCESS Advisors, last year ACCESS Scholars had a 91% college retention rate, compared to 58% nationally. Additionally, four-year graduation rates for ACCESS Scholars ranked 2 1/2 times higher than the Virginia average.*

* According to a study by Complete College America.

We mentored hundreds of ACCESS college students toward graduation, helping with personal, academic and financial issues.



Before hearing about ACCESS, a lot of kids I know thought that only people with plenty of money went to college. It changes the game when an ACCESS Advisor says, 'If you study hard, we'll find a way.' Words like these change your whole idea of yourself.

**Kelvin Braxton, Class of 2020
Rosemont Middle School
Norfolk**

Kelvin plans to be an architect and wants to design something that will change the world.

**In 26 years
ACCESS has
helped over
45,000 students
go to and
succeed in
college.**

I've overcome many personal obstacles, but despite it all, my ACCESS Advisor has helped keep me on track for college. He assisted with everything from fee waivers to applications and financial aid. As if that wasn't enough, he inspired me to stay positive and calm about the college process.

Jenny Do, Class of 2015
Churchland High School, Portsmouth

Jenny is applying to Virginia Commonwealth University, Old Dominion University and Virginia Tech for her undergraduate degree and wants to be a dentist.



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What Your Contributions Funded

One Year

Early College Awareness Program

- School based workshops, small group meetings and one-on-one sessions in 20 low-income middle schools.
- Parent Night Workshops attended by nearly 1,500 people.

High School Program

- 20 Access Advisors in 29 local public high schools offering 17,000 9–12 graders complete navigational support to inspire and guide them toward college.
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filed for 4,000 students.
- One-on-one appointments between ACCESS Advisors and 9,800 high school juniors and seniors with GPAs of 2.5 and higher.
- Last-Dollar Scholarships to nearly 700 students.

College Success Program

- 3 Advisors on 13 Virginia college campuses counseling nearly 1,000 students in transitioning to, remaining in and graduating from college.
- 12 summer transition workshops to start incoming freshmen on the right path.
- Help in re-applying for financial aid and scholarships, totaling more than \$5.6 million in 2014.

Rated Four Stars by America's Leading Charity Evaluator



In Charity Navigator's latest ratings of over 8,000 charities, ACCESS earned four stars, the highest designation bestowed by this independent evaluator. Four stars defines an entity as "exceptional, as exceeding industry standards and outperforming most charities in its cause."

Charity Navigator is the nation's largest and most utilized organization of its kind. Its ratings show givers how efficiently a charity will use their support today, how well it has sustained its programs and services over time and their level of commitment to being accountable and transparent. We are proud to score so well against these rigorous standards.



I challenge anyone looking to improve their community to find a better return on investment than ACCESS.

Conrad M. Hall, Chairman
Access College Changes
Everything Campaign

We Have to Do More

A college education changes lives,
families and our community.



I never thought I would make it this far in college because I didn't know how I would support myself financially. When I entered TCC, my ACCESS College Success Advisor showed me the right resources to support me through and beyond college.

Reginald Ford, Class of 2013
Landstown High School,
Virginia Beach
Tidewater Community
College

After completing his associate's degree, Reginald plans to pursue a bachelor's and master's degree in business management and become an entrepreneur.

**COLLEGE
CHANGES
EVERYTHING.**

This report has shown ACCESS' indelible imprint in young lives from middle school through college graduation, but without an infusion of funds we cannot continue the momentum. For example:

The Early College Awareness Program now only provides one advisor to 12 middle schools. We greatly need to strengthen this ratio to one in five.

The need for additional High School Advisors is urgent. One of every two students in South Hampton Roads' 16 high-need schools is at or below the poverty level. Adding just four more full-time Advisors will allow ACCESS to reach many more students who need our support.

College Success Advisors are spread very thin, each with hundreds of students in their caseload. And, this includes only students who receive ACCESS Scholarships. There are many more collegians whom ACCESS helped in high school who need our reinforcement. The 91% graduation rate among our college advisees demonstrates that this is an outstanding program, but greatly in need of expansion.

Complicating these needs are soaring college costs. Nationally, by 2030 annual tuition to an in-state university could reach nearly \$58,000 which puts immense pressure on ACCESS to help students find funding.

For these reasons, there has never been a more important time for you to support ACCESS College Foundation. Whatever the amount, your donation will make a real difference.

WHAT YOUR GIFT CAN FUND

\$5,000 One ACCESS Last-Dollar Scholarship

\$2,000 College application fees for 10 students

\$1,000 A college tour for 50 students

\$500 SAT fees for 10 students

You Can Make it Happen **This Year**



Change Begins with You.

Please make a commitment today to forever change young lives and our community. You would be hard pressed to find a better charitable investment than Access College Foundation. Every dollar from you is leveraged to \$20 in financial aid and scholarships.

The Batten Darden Giving Societies

Because of their immeasurable contribution, ACCESS giving societies are named for our founders Frank Batten, Sr. and Joshua P. Darden, Jr. The Batten Legacy Society welcomes as members everyone who makes a planned gift—regardless of size. The Darden Leadership Society celebrates donors whose cumulative gifts total \$100,000 or more.

Make a Current or Deferred Gift

There are several ways to support the good work we do. Participate in annual giving or make a deferred/planned gift by including ACCESS in your will or estate plan. Please complete the enclosed reply card to take your next step in support of ACCESS. For more information about giving, you may also visit our website at www.AccessCollege.org.

Four months before college, even with a partial scholarship and grants, I still couldn't pay for my freshman year. A Last-Dollar Scholarship from ACCESS covered the shortfall and made the difference between my going and not.

**Taylor Kline, Access Scholar, Class of 2012
Great Bridge High School,
Chesapeake
Old Dominion University**

Taylor will graduate this year from Old Dominion University with a master's in education and plans to teach second grade.

Complete information about ACCESS Supporters, Financial Statement/Balance Sheet and ACCESS Administration and Advisors can be found online.

Visit www.AccessCollege.org



One year

ACCESS helped with every crucial step that brought me to UCLA on a good-through-graduation scholarship from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Apart from my supportive family, Jenny, my ACCESS Advisor, made all the difference. She and ACCESS changed my life.

My ACCESS Advisor helped with fee waivers, plus applications for financial aid and college acceptance, calling and faxing schools when needed. She encouraged me to pursue my dream school, UCLA, then suggested I apply for the Gates Millennium Scholarship, good for any college of my choice.

I won a full-tuition scholarship for an undergraduate degree, including study abroad. I also have the opportunity to earn a master's or doctorate within one of the Gates-funded disciplines. I never would have imagined this for myself two years ago, and none of it could have been possible without ACCESS.

I am the first person in my family to attend a four-year university. I hope to earn a bachelor's degree from UCLA in international relations, followed by graduate school on the East Coast. I've found that dreaming big works if you put muscle behind it. I hope that my story inspires others.

Taasha Plonka
Class of 2014, Cox High School,
Virginia Beach
UCLA Class of 2018



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