

## INNOVATE

# Making a Path for STEM: The Fund II Foundation Continues to Invest in Talented Students



**W**hen Fund II Founding Director and President Robert F. Smith and the Fund II Foundation's Executive Director Linda Wilson committed to changing the lives and trajectory of 500 African American students seeking degrees in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields (STEM), they were firm in their belief that more Black Americans needed the opportunity to make their contributions to the high-demand, high-paying careers of our future.

Thus, in 2016, Fund II Foundation and UNCF collaborated to jumpstart and improve low undergraduate graduation rates of minority STEM students. With a \$48 million grant to UNCF, the UNCF STEM Scholars Program was created, focusing on building a robust pipeline of African American students well-prepared for careers in the STEM industries. The program provides scholarships to enable students to focus on studying without worrying about

paying for college; gives extracurricular education, tutoring support and mentorship opportunities; and opens the door to corporate internships that students might not otherwise be able to find.

Now in its third year, the program has selected 300 highly motivated and academically talented African American high school students who are pursuing a STEM major in college and a STEM career. These students are advancing their educations thanks to the generosity of the Fund II Foundation.



An example of the talented students who benefit from the UNCF STEM Scholars Program is Soinkne Morant, a sophomore at Xavier University of Louisiana. Soinkne was recognized by UNCF at its 2019 National Annual Gala in Washington, DC, for her academic achievements. In front of a large audience, which included Fund II Foundation guests of honor, Smith and Wilson, Soinkne shared how her close network of peers within the UNCF STEM Scholars Program community and the program's support services have helped her successfully navigate personal challenges during her first two years of school. And, with the benefit of that crucial support, Soinkne excelled in her courses and will graduate one year early with plans to attend medical school.



FUND II FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LINDA WILSON GREETES NEW SCHOLARS AT THE 2018 COHORT 4 ORIENTATION.



UNCF STEM SCHOLARS PROGRAM DIRECTOR LU DUONG LEADS A WORKSHOP AT THE 2018 ORIENTATION.





A NEW STEM SCHOLAR REACTS TO A JOKE TOLD BY DR. MICHAEL LOMAX DURING THE STEM SCHOLARS ORIENTATION.



NEW STEM SCHOLARS TAKE PART IN A NETWORKING ACTIVITY.



THE UNCF STEM SCHOLARS PROGRAM STAFF WELCOMED 100 NEW SCHOLARS TO THE UNCF FAMILY IN JULY 2018.

Thanks to the Fund II Foundation, students like Soinkne are an investment in better futures for us all.