

INVEST

UNCF and Gray Foundation Partnership Provides a Pathway for More New York City Students to Attend HBCUs



THE GRAY FOUNDATION WELCOMES THE NEWEST GRAY NYC SCHOLARS AT A RECEPTION AT THE BLACKSTONE EVENT CENTER IN NEW YORK CITY.

In January 2023, UNCF partnered with the Gray Foundation to launch the UNCF Gray NYC Scholars Program. The program provides scholarships and wraparound supports to help underrepresented New York City students from low-income backgrounds attend and earn their degrees at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Funded with a \$3 million grant from the Gray Foundation, UNCF selected 11 scholars from among 79 New York City (NYC) students who were nominated by the Gray Foundation's 27 college access partners. Together, the organizations provide vital assistance to thousands of students in the

college application process. Including this new collaboration, the foundation has now committed more than \$55 million to improve college access and success for NYC youth.

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The goal of the UNCF Gray NYC Scholars Program is to increase awareness of, access to and graduation from HBCUs for economically disadvantaged NYC students who might not otherwise have considered these schools. Each scholar will receive an annual scholarship of up to \$50,000 per year to help cover tuition, room, board and other related expenses.

Generous renewable scholarship awards allow students to concentrate their time and energy on academic activities, without the distraction of financial concerns. But the student support does not end there. The scholarship program's financial support is complemented by wraparound student support services that provide frequent, intentional engagement with students essential for them to successfully complete college and graduate.

Program services include a college success coach whose regular engagement and communication with scholars supports their academic progress and professional development; a mentor network to provide HBCU alumni mentors for these HBCU-bound students; and an online learning community that provides valuable online resources, tools and information designed to empower and prepare scholars for academic and personal success.

The wraparound support services have proven critical to enabling students to overcome challenges that limit successful academic outcomes—especially among students from vulnerable populations, such as low-income, first-generation college students.

In June 2023, the Gray Foundation hosted a reception in New York City for its Gray NYC Scholars, including the inaugural cohort of UNCF Gray NYC Scholars. The scholars along with members of their families and representatives from the college access organizations met with Gray Foundation co-founders Mindy and Jon Gray, as well as UNCF President and CEO Dr. Michael Lomax.

“We’re excited to deepen our partnership with UNCF and build on our significant investment in expanding college access for New York City students. And we couldn’t be more thrilled to welcome this new cohort of accomplished and deserving students into the Gray NYC Scholars community and help them pursue their educational aspirations at the HBCU of their choice. We are confident that with the backing of UNCF, with its impressive track record of supporting student success, these scholars will achieve excellence in college and beyond,” said Jon and Mindy Gray.

“For too long, HBCUs, which have played such an outsized role in producing this country’s Black middle class, have been out of reach, and in some cases off the radar, for low-income students in New York City. This program puts HBCUs within reach and broadens the realm of viable college options so that students can choose the school that is the best fit for their interests and needs,” said Gray Foundation President Charissa Fernández.

Together, UNCF and the Gray Foundation are empowering more students to achieve better futures to serve their communities and the nation.