Higher Education: Access and Support

Background

The American higher education system is a perplexing mix of private and public academies, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, specialized career preparatories and institutions devoted to the pursuit of the liberal arts. Higher education creates individuals who are informed, engaged, and critical and curious learners able to examine and respond to the complex issues that affect our communities. Access to information, a decent standard of living and resources to have a healthy, productive and happy life are keys to any community’s success. “Individuals with well-developed skills have the tools they need to grasp their vision of a good life.” Those without developed potential and the necessary tools may be less able to chart their own course and seize opportunities. Without basic capabilities, our futures are compromised at best and unrealized at worst.11

There continues to be debate around the value of a post secondary degree. If one measures that value by looking at life-long earnings, data indicates a high value for a college degree. In fact, those with a post secondary degree will earn $900,000 more in their lifetime than those with a high school diploma.12 The Common Good Forecaster, developed by United Way Worldwide and the American Human Development project, shows the correlation between higher rates of education and a community’s quality of life by measuring a variety of indicators such as infant mortality, obesity, violent crime, life expectancy and poverty rates. All measures are impacted negatively by lower rates of educational attainment.13 It appears pursuing and attaining a degree can be a powerful step out of poverty and a step toward personal and community well-being.

In these difficult economic times, this point is driven home even more. In Georgia, people with a high school diploma but no college degree had a 12.8 percent unemployment rate in 2010. Those with a Bachelor’s degree or higher had an unemployment rate of 3.5 percent.14

There are 135 institutions of higher education in the state of Georgia. Fifty-eight offer a baccalaureate degree. While the demographic makeup of students continues to change, more women are enrolled in these schools (57 percent) as are more white students (58 percent). In 2008, more than 39,000 students completed their undergraduate degrees.

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education’s report, “Top Ten Issues to Watch in 2011,” details how the path to college and career readiness can be long, arduous and rife with detours. The report offers a view of potential barriers as well as remedies to post secondary educational pursuits in Georgia. Some of these include state support for dual enrollment programs, offering real-world work experiences through internships and apprenticeships, ensuring the integrity of the high school diploma across the state and closing the achievement gap between the haves and have nots.

Data from Complete College America confirms the journey to obtain a college degree can be a difficult one. Only 11 percent of Georgia students beginning their studies at a four-year institution graduated on time (four years) with a total of 28 percent graduating in eight years or less. The reasons are numerous including balancing jobs and family obligations, financial difficulties, fewer opportunities for scholarship assistance post freshman year, lack of motivation and unpreparedness. For low-income students, African American and Latino students, as well as female students and those attending part time, obtaining a college degree presents even more challenges. It is clear that for too many students, the path through college ends with no degree — and often significant debt.15

Georgia’s taxpayers and government have made an 18-year commitment to ensuring that post secondary education is more affordable and attainable for students. The HOPE scholarship is the largest merit-based college scholarship program in the nation; a proud accomplishment for a state that lagged worldwide and the American Human Development Project, www.measureofamerica.org. 4) “College degrees still provide higher value for a college degree. In fact, those with a post secondary degree will earn $900,000 more in their lifetime than those with a high school diploma.” The Common Good Forecaster, developed by United Way Worldwide and the American Human Development project, shows the correlation between higher rates of education and a community’s quality of life by measuring a variety of indicators such as infant mortality, obesity, violent crime, life expectancy and poverty rates. All measures are impacted negatively by lower rates of educational attainment. It appears pursuing and attaining a degree can be a powerful step out of poverty and a step toward personal and community well-being.

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Our Scholarship Program

The Community Foundation’s Scholarship Program allows our donors the opportunity to invest in the future by helping qualified individuals pursue higher education. The Community Foundation works with individual donors, corporations and nonprofit organizations to establish scholarship funds. Each scholarship has its own specific focus, guidelines and criteria. The Community Foundation currently offers 28 scholarships, primarily for individuals pursuing an undergraduate degree.

In 2011, 166 students received a total of $536,925 in scholarship funding to pursue higher education.

Scholarship Funds at The Community Foundation

- B.C. Crowell Scholarship
- Boys High Scholarship
- Lester W. Butts Scholarship
- Vernon & Helen Crawford Scholarship
- Cool Girls Scholarship
- James Cox Medical Scholarship
- Daily Scholarship
- Steve Dearduff Scholarship
- Dreams® Scholarship
- Georgia Gerontology Scholarship
- Butts County Georgia Rural Library Initiative*
- Hancock County Georgia Rural Library Initiative*
- Morgan County Georgia Rural Library Initiative*
- Putnam County Georgia Rural Library Initiative*
- Seminole County Georgia Rural Library Initiative*
- Harvard Business School Scholarship
- Nancy Penn Lyons Scholarship
- William Lucas Memorial Scholarship
- Patterson Scholarship
- Russell Corporation Scholarship Fund
- James & Virginia Smyth Scholarship
- George & Pearl Strickland Scholarship
- Tech High School Alumni Association/W.O. Cheney Merit Scholarship
- Thornton SCAD Scholarship
- Everett Williams Scholarship
- Women’s Chamber of Commerce Scholarship
- Yellowlees College Scholarship
- Dave Young Scholarship

* A scholarship fund of the Kendall Family Fund at The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Impact on Students

Students awarded a scholarship from The Community Foundation’s various scholarship programs receive financial assistance to pursue their studies as well as the recognition of being a scholarship recipient. Students have shared that scholarships allow them to focus more on their scholastics and remove the stress of resolving financial problems, as well as provide them inspiration to be a contributing member of their communities.

I want to thank The Community Foundation for awarding me the George & Pearl Strickland Scholarship for the 2011-2012 academic year in the amount of $3,500. Words cannot express my gratitude. This scholarship has made a significant impact on my financial situation. Because of the George & Pearl Strickland Scholarship, I no longer have to worry about whether or not I will be able to live on campus. It is an honor to receive this scholarship and I am truly grateful that I was selected to receive the scholarship.

– Kevin B. McQuay, Morehouse College

“I was accepted to an ivy league university but was forced to drop out after his first year because he could not afford the high tuition expenses. He began a successful insurance business in Florida, which he would eventually sell, allowing him to focus on his philanthropic pursuits. In 1949, Mr. Lyons set up the Nancy Penn Lyons Scholarship fund in honor of his wife. His desire with the fund was to support young people, who like himself, were not able to afford the cost of an ivy league education. The Nancy Penn Lyons Scholarship is open to graduating high school seniors from Georgia who are attending selective private or out-of-state institutions. It provides $5,000 scholarships renewable for up to four years. Students receiving the Lyons Scholarship are currently attending universities such as Cornell, Yale, Harvard and Duke.

George & Pearl Strickland Scholarship

George and Pearl Strickland strongly believed in the value of education. The Stricklands spent much of their time and resources ensuring the children of their family and friends were able to pursue a college education. This was especially important to Mr. Strickland who was forced to leave school at age 12 to work to support himself. In 1910 he began a job with the railroad where he would work for 43 years. Mr. Strickland purchased land in Scott’s Crossing – now known as Perry Homes – and eventually became one of the wealthiest African Americans in the community. Mr. Strickland died in 1953. Prior to Mrs. Strickland’s death in 1984, she made a provision in her will to establish a scholarship fund at The Community Foundation as a living memorial to their lives and to higher education for deserving students. The George and Pearl Strickland Scholarship assists Georgia students attending undergraduate and graduate programs at universities in Clark County, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine and Spelman College. Students receive awards ranging from $1,500 to $3,500 and may reapply for the scholarship throughout their college careers.

Georgia Rural Library Initiative Scholarships

The Georgia Rural Library Initiative (GRLI) was established by a donor at The Community Foundation with programmatic support from staff members at the Foundation. As part of the GRLI, nonprofit organizations have the opportunity to submit applications that allow them to award scholarships to local individuals interested in teaching in select rural counties in the state. Morgan County, one of the 23 counties in The Community Foundation’s service area, was selected in early 2004 as an additional county eligible for the scholarship program. It awarded its first set of scholarships for the 2005-2006 school year. Today, GRLI scholarships average around $2,000 per year and are awarded in Butts, Morgan, Hancock, Putnam and Seminole counties.

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– Nick Tippens, Duke University, recipient of the Nancy Penn Lyons scholarship and Tech High School Alumni Association/W.O. Cheney Merit Scholarship

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Scholarship Granting Nonprofits

Bonner Scholars Program

Description: The Corella & Bertram F. Bonner Foundation provides four-year service-based scholarships to approximately 1,500 students annually at 27 colleges and universities across the country. Currently, scholarships are awarded to free Georgia colleges. Berry College, Morehouse College, Emory College of Emory University and Young Harris College. Bonner Scholars are actively involved in community service and social justice issues while pursuing their education.

Programs and Services: Financial assistance; education and training on student development, community development and campus engagement

Website: www.bonner.org

Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation

Description: Provides scholarship programs and alumni enrichment opportunities to support the academic studies of young people and their desire to make a difference in the world. Since its first class of Scholars in 1989, Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation has celebrated the accomplishments of 115 metro Atlanta high school seniors with scholarships totaling more than $1,056,000.

Programs and Services: Financial assistance; personal and professional development; community service opportunities

Website: www.coca-colascholar.org

Hispanic Scholarship Fund

Description: Works to address the barriers that keep many Latinos from earning a college degree. As the nation’s leading Hispanic higher education fund, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF) partners with the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation to offer scholarships from $5,000 to $20,000 to metro Atlanta Latino students. In 2010, HSF provided 475 scholarships totaling $1.3 million to Georgia students.

Programs and Services: Financial assistance; community outreach and education to Latino families and students; college retention and career opportunities

Website: www.hsf.net

Jeannette Rankin Scholarship Fund

Description: Awards scholarships to low-income women, 35 years and older, who are an undergraduate or vocational training program. Scholarships are not restricted to tuition, but may also be used for books, transportation, childcare or other living expenses to support their education. In 2011, five scholarships were awarded to Georgia women to obtain education and secure higher paying careers.

Programs and Services: Financial assistance; emotional and social support to non-traditional, adult students

Website: www.rankinscholarship.org

United Negro College Fund (UNCF)

Description: Awards more than 10,000 scholarships as well as 400 internships, fellowships and institutional grants to support low- and moderate-income students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the country. These programs include the Gates Millennium Scholars Program, UNCF-Merck Science Initiative and a Corporate Scholars Program. UNCF funds students at all Atlanta University Center schools.

Programs and Services: Financial assistance; internship; and fellowship opportunities, capacity-building programs to colleges and institutions

Website: www.uncf.org

College Preparatory Programs & Nonprofits

Boys & Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Atlanta

Description: Offers quality programming to empower metro Atlanta youth to be productive adults. Provides 1,200 hours of academic help for youth and teens through its Academic Success focus. In 2009, 88 percent of participants in its College Bound programs were accepted into college. Of those students, 39 received scholarships.

Programs and Services: Literacy, math and science programs; tutoring and homework assistance; college and career preparation; learning centers, computer labs and technology programming

Website: www.bgcm.org

Cool Girls, Inc.

Description: Offers a life skills program that develops girls into confident women through education and exposure to a broader world of opportunity. Cool Girls provides services to approximately 400 girls in nine public schools in metro Atlanta.

Programs and Services: After-school academic support (Cool Girls Club); after-school homework and test support (Cool Scholars); leadership development; job shadowing; motivational speaking; tutoring and mentoring

Website: www.100blackmen-atlanta.org

Rise – W.E.B. Du Bois Society

Description: Promotes success, learning and academic achievement to transform the way African American youth and communities value academics as the best option for achieving life success. Rise has served 300 Atlanta area students in the four years since its founding.

Programs and Services: Financial assistance (W.E.B. Du Bois Scholars); essay competition (iRISE Essay Competition); achievement recognition (90+Celebration); collaborative learning and group study (Team UP)

Website: www.webduboissociety.org

CREW (Creating Responsible, Educated & Working) Teens at Drew Charter School

Description: Provides academic support to Drew Charter students and graduates, as well as other Atlanta high school students, to help them be successful college students and prepare for continuing education and careers. Serves 40 to 70 metro Atlanta students annually.

Programs and Services: Homework assistance and tutoring; standardized test prep; leadership training; career counseling; college tours; technical assistance with college/financial aid applications; opportunities for community service; educational endowments at University of Georgia and Georgia Institute of Technology for Drew graduates.

Website: www.drewcharterschool.org

Junior Achievement of Georgia

Description: Provides practical business experience and active learning opportunities to inspire and prepare Georgia’s young people to succeed in school and in their future careers. Statewide, more than 147,000 students participate in the programs. Of those, 102,000 were served through programming in the metro Atlanta area.

Programs and Services: Education and classroom training by local business and community volunteers; job shadowing; professional development in areas of financial literacy, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial thinking, and global workforce readiness

Website: www.georgia.ja.org

Project GRAD Atlanta

Description: Provides critical academic, behavioral, social, and college access support for underserved students attending Atlanta Public Schools. In 2011, more than 300 graduating seniors participated in Project GRAD Atlanta programming. For the 2010-2011 school year, more than 560 Project GRAD-Brumley scholars attended 91 colleges and universities in 21 states.

Programs and services: Financial assistance; education covering five programming areas: Mathematics, Literacy, Classroom Management, Social Services & Parental Involvement, and the High School Program, which helps students prepare for college

Website: www.projectgradatlanta.org

Posse Foundation

Description: Provides academic and social support to students attending Posse-affiliated colleges. Posse partners with some of the nation’s leading academic institutions to provide four-year scholarships to selected Posse scholars. Twenty Atlanta area seniors received scholarships for the 2011-2012 school year to attend Boston University, Brandeis University, the College of Wooster and Syracuse University.

Programs and Services: Pre-college training; campus tours and visits; career preparation; leadership development

Website: www.possefoundation.org

Locally, there are a number of metro Atlanta nonprofits as well as national organizations with Atlanta programs that provide financial, academic and social support to students pursuing higher education. In this issue of Impact Philanthropy, we have selected strong nonprofits working toward these goals. Many of these organizations have been funded through grants from donor-advised funds at The Community Foundation and/or through the competitive grantmaking programs. Listed are nonprofits providing scholarship assistance to students as well as organizations providing preparatory programs and services.
How You Can Help

The issue of higher education is a critical one in our metro Atlanta communities. We hope that you, our donors, will join us in considering financial support to young people in Georgia interested in and actively pursuing higher education.

How you can help support scholarships and higher education:

1. Make a gift to one of our 28 scholarship funds. For information on which scholarships may align with your interests, contact your philanthropic advisor.
2. Establish a scholarship fund of your own. The Community Foundation provides all administration and back office work for scholarships. The minimum contribution to establish a new scholarship fund is $250,000.
3. Contribute funds or volunteer your time or talent at one of the featured scholarship or college preparatory organizations in this publication.
4. Give to the higher education school of your choice. Support students currently enrolled and increase their access to scholarships and other support.

For more information about any of the organizations or to recommend a grant, please contact your philanthropic advisor, Erin Drury, Audrey Jacobs, Barrett Krise or Robert Smulian at 404-688-5525.

Why We Give

“The Posse Foundation has proven that a small, diverse group of talented students, carefully selected and trained, can be a catalyst for community development, both on campus and subsequent to graduation. As the population of the city and country continues to be increasingly diverse, future leaders must reflect the multicultural nature of the society in which we live. Posse is training these leaders of tomorrow.”

– John Hatfield
Donor, The Community Foundation

“Working with The Community Foundation has become a very special and rewarding undertaking. When the Nancy Penn Lyons Scholarship was established, it was to support students who had been accepted at top rated schools. So as a result, we have had the opportunity to get to know incredibly bright, accomplished and highly motivated students. Every year we are amazed how much these students have accomplished in 18 short years or so. But more importantly we know that the Foundation is helping fund students who we fully expect will accomplish great achievements in the future.”

– Anne & Cleg Penn
Nancy Penn Lyons Scholarship

“Higher education is the engine that drives economic development in our state and in our region; and it provides a brighter future for our young people. Georgia is blessed with regents colleges and universities and an outstanding technical college system that will, in the future, require more private support to maintain their high level of excellence.”

– Don Chapman
Donor, The Community Foundation