



## WHO WE ARE

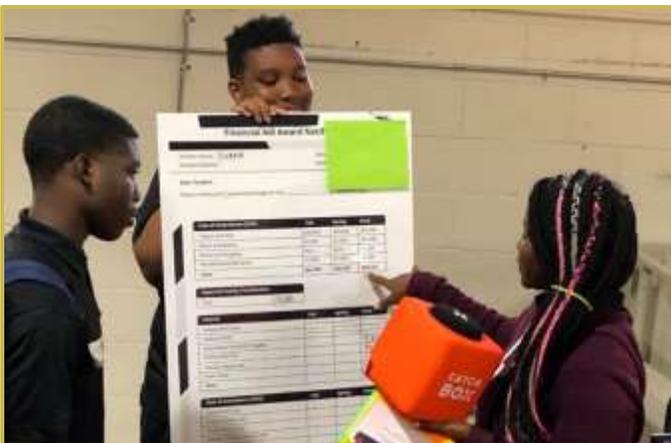


The Scholarship Academy (TSA), a nonprofit founded by a recipient of over \$200,000 in scholarships, teaches low-income and first-generation high school students how to create realistic college funding strategies. Through in-school curriculum modules, financial aid counselor trainings, and access to an innovative scholarship planning platform, The Virtual Scholarship Center, we connect students to local/state-based scholarship resources that enable them to pursue debt-free degrees. Our program partners with schools and

nonprofit organizations to build the financial aid confidence of high school students as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We serve over 5,000 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students in 12 counties in Georgia, including Fulton, Clayton, and DeKalb.



## COVID-19: WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL AID CHALLENGE?



The COVID-19 pandemic is slowly revealing inequities in the financial aid system in Georgia. Before the pandemic, research indicated that fewer than half of freshmen from families earning less than \$35,000 per year would graduate with a bachelor's degree within six years. Even after Pell Grants, the University System of Georgia estimated that more than 112,000 students each year were struggling with a gap between available financial resources and college costs.

Today, with more than 100,000 new Georgia unemployment claims in the last month, it may be too early to tell just how devastating students' financial aid gaps will be in the fall. What is clear, however, is that there's an unprecedented urgency around robust, individualized financial aid counseling to support students' immediate college funding needs.



## WHAT WE'RE DOING: COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Scholarship Academy has identified the following COVID-19 related challenges facing our current college students and high school seniors anticipating college enrollment:

### ADVANCED FINANCIAL AID COUNSELING

- ▶ Nearly 44% of the students in the University System of Georgia rely on the Federal Pell grant to fund a portion of their education. Without direct access to high school guidance counselors, many students are experiencing uncertainty around existing/offered financial aid packages.

The Scholarship Academy is positioned to provide access to a team of Financial Aid Experts via Virtual Office Hours, and giving our school/community partners free access to our Virtual Scholarship Center tool for 500 students across Fulton, Clayton and Dekalb County to help them 1) understand their financial aid letters, 2) identify additional private aid to close gaps and 3) re-negotiate their financial aid packages based on the loss of household income due to the pandemic.

### EMERGENCY STUDENT AID

- ▶ With remaining local and state-based scholarship deadlines rapidly approaching, The Scholarship Academy is raising funds to be able to provide immediate technology resources to seniors in high-need communities across Clayton and South Fulton who are in mid-scholarship application mode, support transportation needs of returning students, and close gaps in items such as final college application fees that students may be experiencing with limited counselor access.

### TECHNOLOGY ACCESS/SUPPORTS

- ▶ It is impossible to ignore the technology gaps that existed prior to COVID-19. We are prepared to launch a mobile app version of our Virtual Scholarship Center tool to help students secure county and state-specific private scholarship resources and gain access to Virtual Scholarship Mentors via the Scholarship Chat Functionalities.



## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:

### BECOME A VIRTUAL SCHOLARSHIP MENTOR (GREAT FOR INDIVIDUALS AND CORPORATIONS)

► Using our Virtual Scholarship Center platform, you/your team can help our students with:

#### Financial Aid Award Guidance

Help students understand their financial aid award letter and draft a financial aid appeal for post-COVID-19 aid (templates provided)

#### Last Minute Scholarship Research

Help students identify scholarships to close gaps in their financial aid packages using our scholarship search engine (lists provided)

#### Scholarship Application Completion

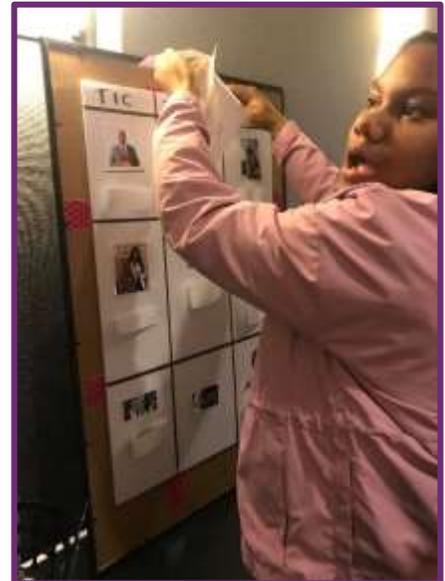
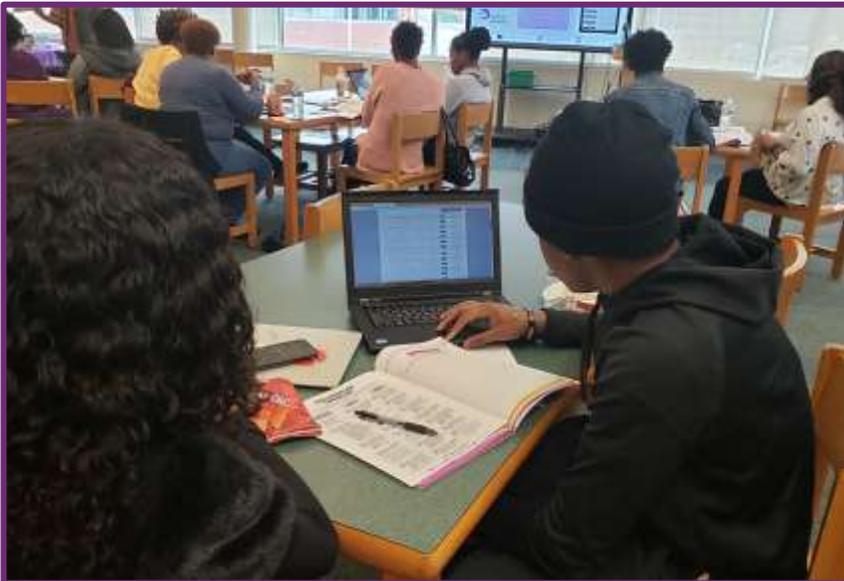
Review scholarship essays and résumés before they click submit!

### DONATE TODAY!

► We're ramping up our services to be able to provide expert advice and resources to nearly triple our current student population.

**DONATE NOW!**

Thank you in advance.



For more information about The Scholarship Academy, visit [www.scholarshipacademy.org](http://www.scholarshipacademy.org)



### **HOW DOES THE VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING WORK?**

- ▶ Volunteers will provide virtual scholarship supports to 12th grade students and current college students across DeKalb, Fulton and Clayton county. Using our Virtual Scholarship Center platform, Volunteers will have an opportunity to log into the portal to provide one-on-one supports to help our students with upcoming scholarship applications and drafting their financial aid appeal letters. Students submit their support requests online each week, and The Scholarship Academy gives volunteers the opportunity to sign up for the population of students they wish to serve.

### **HOW CAN CIVIC AND CORPORATE GROUPS SUPPORT?**

- ▶ Civic and Corporate Groups can select a Virtual Day of Service (2 options per month recommended) and offer our students Virtual Office Hours to answer questions, provide feedback on applications and provide general motivation to keep pushing through the financial aid process during these times.

### **WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT FOR THIS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY?**

- ▶ Volunteers will be needed to provide emergency support to students from April 20th to June 15th (but this timeline may change based on COVID-19 public health regulations). Specific days and times will be assigned once volunteers have registered. There is a 2-hour minimum (avg 2 students/volunteer) time commitment for this volunteer activity. With our virtual platform, volunteering can be done anytime you like!

### **WHERE WILL THIS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY TAKE PLACE?**

- ▶ All volunteering will be online via our Virtual Scholarship Center portal. Volunteers can log into view our students' scholarship portfolios and upload edits/suggestions. The site can also be used to schedule web conferencing sessions to answer student questions.

### **WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO I NEED TO VOLUNTEER?**

- ▶ While not required, experience in financial aid planning, essay editing, conducting interviews, scholarship research etc. will be helpful. The Scholarship Academy provides templates of financial aid appeals and winning essays for volunteers to use as a guide.

### **WILL I RECEIVE TRAINING?**

- ▶ YES! All volunteers will have an opportunity to participate in a 1-hour webinar training before participating in a volunteer opportunity.

**Still have a question? Please send an email to Keyonia Holland, Program Manager at [keyonia@scholarshipacademy.org](mailto:keyonia@scholarshipacademy.org).**