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College Track Partners with 14 Institutions of Higher Education in Significant Push to Increase Opportunity for First-Generation College Students

Agreements emphasize and elevate the wealth of talent that exists within underserved and underestimated communities.

OAKLAND – Sept. 27, 2023 – Cohort admissions models, innovative programs, and a diverse range of campuses define the 14 college and university partnerships announced today by College Track, the nation’s most comprehensive college access and success organization.

Founded in East Palo Alto, CA, in 1997, College Track equips students confronting systemic barriers to earn a bachelor’s degree in pursuit of a life of opportunity, choice, purpose, and power. College Track makes a 10-year commitment to each of its scholars, starting in high school and lasting through the launch of their careers.

Over the past year, College Track has executed a strategic effort to identify and ally with institutions of higher education that share a substantive commitment to educational equity. Partnership agreements have primarily centered around the establishment of pathways for cohorts of College Track scholars to matriculate to each institution, with ample financial supports. Select agreements have leveraged an institution’s existing strengths alongside College Track’s 10-year holistic, integrated program. Today’s announcement represents all formal college and university partnerships that College Track has established at the outset of the 2023-24 academic year.

College Track’s cohort of 14 partner institutions are:

- American University
- Arizona State University
- Bowie State University
- Colorado State University, Fort Collins
- Colorado State University, Pueblo
- Colorado State University Global
- Lycoming College
- Middlebury College
- Northern Arizona University
- Paul Quinn College
- St. Mary’s College of Maryland
- Trinity College
- Tulane University
- University of California, Merced



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Key features of the partnerships include:

Cohort models. Understanding that a student's success in college is tied to their sense of belonging on campus, each of these agreements provide for the admission and significant financial aid funding of cohorts of College Track scholars, ranging from 5 to 25 students per cohort. Indicating the level of importance, cabinet-level administrators at each institution directly partner with College Track to ensure each cohort's success.

Innovative programs. Embedded in a handful of partnerships is the creation of new opportunities that leverage institutional strengths. Examples are found in College Track's agreements with [Northern Arizona University](#) and [Arizona State University](#). The former resulting in "Semester Zero," an immersive, college preparatory summer experience on NAU's Flagstaff Mountain Campus. The latter providing College Track scholars with access to ASU's Universal Learner Courses (11th and 12th grade high school students) and Professional Skills For Everyone Series (all college scholars).

Diverse range of campuses. Of the 14 institutions, 2 are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); 4 are Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs); 4 are small liberal arts colleges; 3 are R1 universities; and there are several considered "undocu-friendly" (institutions with policies or systems in place aimed to support undocumented students). They cast a nationwide net. All are brought together by the understanding that intentional, focused partnerships are necessary for the success of students from all walks of life.

"While cohort admissions models help achieve a critical mass of first-generation students on campuses, unless those numbers are matched by an institutional commitment to educational equity, real change will never occur," said President and CEO Shirley M. Collado, Ph.D. "That's why this moment is so important. This group of colleges and universities—regardless of location or student population traditionally served—is stepping forward as a cohort in and of itself, speaking to a growing movement within the higher education sector that understands the necessity of scholars such as ours in their classrooms and in their communities. This movement will do nothing but grow, fostered by cross-sector partnerships like these to serve our shared goal of educational equity."

"Paul Quinn's goal is to be the place that advances the work of eradicating intergenerational poverty. We all know that earning a bachelor's degree is a lever to economic mobility for the individual and their family," said Dr. Michael J. Sorrell, president of Paul Quinn College and member of the College Track Board of Directors. "By joining this cohort of 14 colleges and universities in partnership with College Track, we not only move closer to our goal, but we do so in community with institutions that share our values on this topic and an organization that we are always proud to call a partner and a friend."



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About College Track

College Track's mission is to democratize potential by equipping students confronting systemic barriers to earn a bachelor's degree in pursuit of a life of opportunity, choice, purpose, and power. Today, more than 4,000 College Track high school and college scholars from underserved communities in California, Colorado, Louisiana, and the D.C. Metro Area are moving toward their goal to become the first in their family to earn a bachelor's degree. Across the nation, our 1,100 alumni embody a vision of equity rooted in possibility and progress. Ninety percent of our scholars are first-generation college students, and 84 percent are from underserved communities. They earn their bachelor's degrees at more than two and a half times the rate of their first-generation peers.

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