

Our Mission

Help impoverished children go to college by providing mentoring from the fifth grade and supplemental college funding upon graduation from high school.

10 Years Later: Class No. 1 - Class of 2021

There were initially five Scholars selected in the Fall of 2009. All graduated from high school, which should be viewed as a significant accomplishment, given some of the obstacles many of our Scholars had to overcome. But three managed to strive further. Here is an update on the three who have survived the rigors of becoming First Generation college students and are headed toward becoming First Generation College graduates.



Jha' Meisheia Griffin

Jha' Meisheia "Meisheia" Griffin - Currently a sophomore at Georgia State University, where her favorite class thus far has been chemistry. She is a middle hitter on the volleyball team, starting 24 of 26 matches at GSU as a sophomore, and 25 of 28 as a freshman. She was named to the athletic director's honor roll in both her freshman and sophomore years. She finished last season with 124 blocks (team-high, third most in the Sun Belt), and 135 kills (fourth on the team). Her 1.35 blocks per set ranked second in the Sun Belt, and 22nd in the NCAA. She attended Hannan Magnet Academy elementary school, where her favorite teacher was Mrs. Owens. After graduating, Meisheia went on to Arnold Magnet Academy for middle school, where her favorite teacher was Mrs. Blackmon. She is a 2017 graduate of Columbus High School, where she was a four-year starter in volleyball and member of the 2017 Columbus High state basketball championship team.



Quandre Lewis

Quandre Lewis - Currently a sophomore at Georgia Southern University, Quandre's favorite college course thus far has been webpage development. He attended Downtown Elementary School where his favorite teacher was Mrs. Jaynes. After graduating, he went on to Arnold Middle School where his favorite teacher was Mrs. Blackmon. Quandre is a 2017 graduate of Columbus High, where he was greatly influenced by Mrs. Jenkins.



Rawlanda Hercules

Rawlanda Hercules - Currently a sophomore at Wesleyan College. Rawlanda is a 2017 graduate of the International Baccalaureate program at Hardaway High. School, where her favorite teachers were Carrol Medley and Stephen Campbell. She is a graduate of Clubview Elementary School, where her favorite teacher was Kevin Sharpe. After graduation, she went on to attend and graduate from Richards Middle School, where her favorite teachers were Beth Gilbert and Betty Jones. Rawlanda is also the 2017-2018 winner of the Omega Psi Phi Talent Hunt competition for her singing skills.

Columbus Scholars Mourns the Death of Hal Averett



Jaques Jones and his Big Brother Hal Averett

The entire Columbus Scholars family mourns the loss of Hal Averett, a CS mentor, board member, and all-around optimist, builder of dreams and spreader of light. No more fitting words could be spoken to honor him, than those shared with his friends and family at his funeral on December 3, 2018, at First Baptist Church in Columbus. His mentee, or “Little,” Jacques Jones, had been part of the Averett family since the day Hal interviewed a skinny 10-year-old 5th grader from J.D. Davis Elementary School in the Fall of 2010. The kid wanted to build things. Hal’s eyes lit up. They were matched on the spot. Eight years later – right up until Hal’s diagnosis – they were still matched. Here’s what Jacques shared with Hal’s wife Gina when he heard the news: “Just got word on your condition and I’m honestly at a loss for words. Immediately broke down in tears. It’s been almost 10 years since we first met each other and it’s been a pleasure to have known you for so long. Hal, you’ve helped me and my family in ways unimaginable. The amount of doors you’ve opened, the people you’ve introduced me to, the adventures we went on all have made me a better person and you’re a person I’m forever thankful for. The words of wisdom and the life lessons are something I will never forget and will cherish in my heart. My thoughts and prayers are with you. Love”

The Columbus Scholars Creed

I am a Columbus Scholar. I pledge to make education a real priority in my life. I will work hard and never give up, even when times get tough, even when the road gets rough. I will set high standards and believe in myself. With the help of my mentor, I shall succeed and positively influence others. I believe that through this creed, hope will meet success. (Written by Class 1 at the first Columbus Scholars Enrichment Session held at the Columbus Ledge-Enquirer in November 2009)

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To Support the Scholars, make checks payable to: Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley/Columbus Scholars Fund, 1340 13th Street, Columbus, GA 31901

The Columbus Scholars Story

Columbus Scholars began as a dream in a private home here on March 29 and 30, 2009. Over those two days, 62 Columbus citizens came together for dinner, fellowship and to share the dream of equal educational opportunity for all. The premise was and remains simple: If an American kid is smart and works hard and stays out of trouble, he or she should be given a shot at college, even – especially – if no person in that family has ever gone past high school. A decade later, there are 70 Columbus Scholars in good standing with the program, spanning the fifth grade through college sophomores. Since our first class of Scholars was interviewed and selected at the Ledger-Enquirer in November 2009, the Columbus Scholars Project has grown and improved. In the early days, CS was comprised of a small group of fifth-grade Muscogee County public school students. It is hard to believe that those bright-eyed 10 year olds are now sophomores in college. We have just chosen our 10th class. Our partnership with Columbus State University is expanding and growing stronger. And we are in the final stages of creating stand-alone 501(c)(c) status in order to operate our low-cost monthly enrichment, tutoring and summer programs. Our administrative fund pays for things like books, laptops and teacher stipends. But we do not pay administrators or CS leadership one penny of salary.



Columbus Scholars, Mentors and Board Members at the Booker T. Washington home on the campus of Tuskegee University on February 10, 2018.

Our Motto is: “Where Hope Meets Success”



Columbus Scholars Quarterly

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WHO'S HERE?

(From farthest left, clockwise around the table) Jamisha, Dominic, Natalia, Keshunti, Aryaman, Terrica, Aidan, De'Shaun

One month into the 2018-19 school year, Columbus Scholars is off to a strong start. Since August, we have hosted several Tutorial Sessions at the Columbus Public Library to much avail. Several students from Columbus High School volunteer their time each Wednesday, working one-on-one with our scholars to complete homework and projects alongside general studying. De'Shaun Dawson, a Columbus Scholar, remarked that the tutors he worked with were "very helpful, smart, and pretty funny."

Grappling with Precalculus

Many of the scholars attending the Tutorial Sessions seek help learning difficult math concepts in algebra, trigonometry, and precalculus. One such scholar is Terricka Womack, a senior at Kendrick High School, who needed help bringing up her grade in Precalculus. Working closely with tutor, Aryaman Singh, they walked through topics ranging from trigonometric identities to the characteristics of sine, cosine, and tangential graphs. Gradually, through an hour of back-and-forth she began solidifying her grasp of the ideas. In Terricka's words, "Columbus Scholars free tutoring greatly helped improve my grade in pre-calculus."



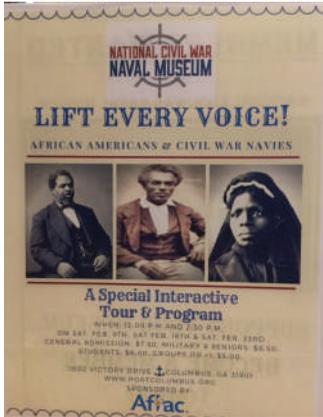
Columbus Scholar Terricka is working with Aryaman on pre-calculus concepts

Clear and Concise Communication

Each Wednesday after the scholars complete their assignments, projects, and have displayed a full understanding of their courses' current units, we've intently focused on improving their communication skills. Whether revising essays, writing responses to on-the-spot prompts, or practicing extemporaneous speeches, the Scholars have greatly improved their written and spoken word.



Columbus Scholar Natalia working with Tutor Niko on improving her writing skills.



February Enrichment Session Held at Naval Museum

Our February Enrichment Session took the Scholars to the National Civil War Naval Museum for an interactive first-person “walking play” highlighting the involvement of Black American slaves in the naval portion of the Civil War. The play, sponsored by AFLAC, was presented to both middle and high school Columbus Scholars at the Naval Museum on Saturday, February 23. The Scholars dined on Chick-fil-A lunch, followed by the interactive tour with first-person living history interpretations through the eyes of African American Naval nurses, pilots, sailors, and engineers.

Calendar of Upcoming Enrichment Sessions and Columbus Scholars Events

- March – Law Day at Hall Booth and Smith- High School scholars
- April – Induction Ceremony – High School, Junior High, Bigs and Parents
- May – Billy Byrd, Chairman of History Dept at Brookstone – Columbus History, Industrialization, influence of Columbus being on the fall line – high school
- June – Holden Family Pool Party- All Scholars and family welcome
- July – West Point Lake Aquatic Study (grades 3-8)
- August – West Point Lake Water Quality Index Study (AP high school/college)
- September – Springer – Life Lessons – grades 3-8
- October – Tour of jail with high schoolers. Our own version of “Scared Straight” where the kids actually go in the jail (so they will never go back)

Columbus Scholars Class No. 2 – Class of 2022

(Selected in 5th grade during the 2010-2011 MCSD school year)

- Amayha Mathis – Currently a freshman at Georgia State University.
- Marina Cooper – Currently a freshman at West Georgia University.
- Chanyha Cobb -Currently a freshman at Columbus State University.
- Jacques Jones – Currently a freshman at Columbus State University.
- Emily Lopez – Currently a freshman at Columbus State University.
- Mallory McElveen – Currently a freshman at Columbus State University.
- Jakalia Norman – Currently a freshman at Columbus State University.

Here's How It Works

Bright fifth graders (most from single-parent families) are selected with the help of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Chattahoochee Valley. Mentors are provided by BBBS to guide them through junior high, high school and college. Donations are set aside in a Columbus Scholars Fund at the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley, Inc. to help meet the Scholars' college needs. By relying upon existing groups and resources, Columbus Scholars operates on a minimal administrative budget, and has no fulltime staff or paid office space. Mandatory monthly enrichment sessions provide additional educational and other cultural opportunities. Students with any grade of "C" or below must attend Columbus Scholars-sponsored tutoring sessions until the grades improve. Each summer, Scholars are divided into three groups by grade level for summer educational camps. The rising 6th graders attend a weeklong art school administered by the Columbus Museum and sponsored by Mayor Teresa Tomlinson and her husband and Board member Trip. The 7th through 11th graders attend an ACT/SAT prep program which provides practical test-taking skills for college entrance exams. Rising high school seniors attend a two week College Application workshop, where the goal is to actually transmit the application to multiple colleges. We provide meals to our Scholars at all CS activities.

Our Board Members

Gwen Ruff

Gwen Ruff is a senior Vice President for Customer Relations and Corporate Relations with the Columbus Water Works.

Karl Douglass

Karl is a political consultant based in Georgia, who has managed major statewide races.

Lou Dillard

Lou is a business system consultant in the Global Products Division at Columbus-based TSYS.

Joy Holden

Joy Holden is a first-year student at Harvard Law School and a 2014 Columbus High graduate.

Benjamin Holden, Esq., Chairman of the Board

Ben teaches media law at the University of Illinois and is the former editor in chief at the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer. He is one of two CS Fund Managers.

Bianca H. Brown, Esq.

Bianca is a lawyer in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and was the 2014 Big Sister of the Year for the six-county Chattahoochee region of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

LaRae Moore, Esq.

LaRae is a partner at the law firm of Page, Scrantom, Sprouse, Tucker & Ford

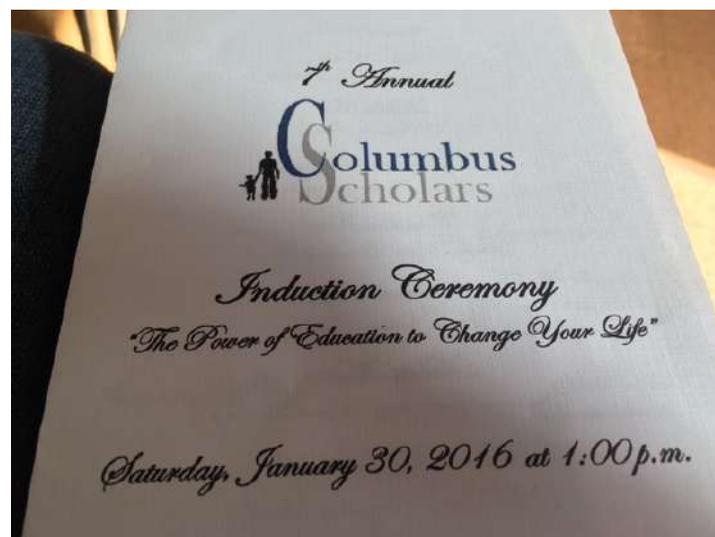
Melanie Slaton-Holden, Esq.

Melanie is a partner at the law firm of Hall Booth Smith, PC. and Counsel to Columbus Scholars.

Wade "Trip" Tomlinson, Esq.

Trip Tomlinson is an attorney with the Columbus-based law firm Pope, McGlamry. He is one of two CS Fund managers.

Donate



100% of every dollar you donate to the Columbus Scholars Fund is held by the Community Foundation for the direct benefit of a deserving college student.

Board members and other donors pay all overhead, fund raising and program expenses from a separate administrative fund.

If you want to make a donation, please send a check to:

Columbus Scholars Fund, Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley, Inc.

**1340 13th Street
Columbus; GA 31901.**

You can also go online to www.cfcv.com and make a donation by credit card through the Community Foundation website. You must designate the funds to the Columbus Scholars Fund.



1340 13th Street
Columbus; GA 31901-2345

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