

PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE
FUTURE



THE CLASS OF
2026

Stories of SUCCESS

Class of 2026 – Stories of Success

First Name	Last Name	High School	College	Class Ranks	Scholarship	Internship Experience
Jesujuwonlo	Adelakun	Highland Springs	James Madison University		Full-Ride Scholarship	Capital One
Sasha	Allgood	Henrico	Old Dominion University			Richmond Symphony
Marlene	Amaya	L.C. Bird	University of Richmond	Salutatorian	Full-Ride Scholarship	Arrington Solutions
Lundon	Bediako	Hermitage	Virginia State University			CAPUP
Shyla	Benn	CodeRVA Regional	George Mason University			Dominion Energy
Davin	Bernstein	Henrico	University of Virginia	Top 10% of Class		Capital One
Isaiah	Berryman	Highland Springs	Old Dominion University			
Aryelle	Boone	Highland Springs	Virginia Commonwealth University			Children's Museum of RVA
Aaron-David	Brown	Varina	William & Mary	Top 10% of Class	Full-Ride Scholarship	Henrico Varina Library
Kimberly	Bugg	Richmond Community	North Carolina A&T	Top 10% of Class		NextUp RVA
Josiah	Burton	Varina	Virginia Tech			Richmond SPCA
Valerie	Cedeno-Villalobos	Hermitage	Virginia Tech			Tuckahoe Library
Anihja	Clark	Highland Springs	Virginia Tech		Full-Ride Scholarship	The Faison Center
Chase	Coleman	Henrico	Old Dominion University			Markel
Jaelyn	Collins-Mallory	CodeRVA Regional	Prairie View A&M University		Full-Ride Scholarship	
Zariah	Cornelius	Richmond Community	Coppin State University	Top 10% of Class	Full-Ride Scholarship	St. James's Children's Center
Vincent	Cummins	Hermitage	University of Virginia			First Tee of Richmond
Amaan	Dhanani	Glen Allen	University of Virginia			Markel
Samantha	DiPace	Goochland	George Mason University			Goochland Co. Public Schools
Brianna	Dung	Hermitage	University of Virginia			Markel
Khalil	Epps	Hermitage	Reynolds Community College			Capital One
Merola	Fahim	J.R. Tucker	Virginia Commonwealth University			Markel
Zakiyyah	Foster-Rasheed	Highland Springs	Virginia Tech			Start 1 Spark
Sterling	Franklin	Franklin Military Academy	Virginia State University			Black History Museum
Allisson	Garcia-Posada	Franklin Military Academy	Virginia Commonwealth University			
Tylar	Gee	Highland Springs	Virginia Commonwealth University			Black Girls Run!
Saria	Hargrove	Highland Springs	Illinois State University			Capital One
Taliya	Harris	Huguenot	James Madison University	Top 10% of Class	Full-Ride Scholarship	Greater Richmond Fit4Kids
Madison	Harrison	J.R. Tucker	Old Dominion University			
Kimyrie	King	Open	Spelman College	Salutatorian		Visual Arts Center of Richmond
Kirelos	Labib	J.R. Tucker	Randolph-Macon College			Capital One
Jasmine	Lewis	Richmond Community	North Carolina A&T	Top 10% of Class	Full-Ride Scholarship	Dominion Energy
Jonathan	Love	Highland Springs	Hampton University	Top 10% of Class		Podium RVA
Muzghan	Majidi	Hermitage	Virginia Commonwealth University			Henrico Libbie Mill Library
Sonia	Marquez	Franklin Military Academy	University of Virginia	Salutatorian		Greater Richmond SCAN
Destiny	McDonald	Hermitage	Johnson & Wales University		Full-Ride Scholarship	Art for the Journey
Alana	McFail	Highland Springs	Hampton University	Top 10% of Class		FRIENDS Assoc. for Children
Jackie	Mead	Goochland	Norfolk State University		Full-Ride Scholarship	Science Museum of Virginia
Dylan	Menevseoglu	Highland Springs	Virginia Tech			Dominion Energy
RaeNesha	Moseley	John Marshall	Chowan University	Top 10% of Class	Full-Ride Scholarship	RMTA
Lynette	Mukisa	Hermitage	James Madison University			Art for the Journey
William	Murray	Hermitage	Virginia Commonwealth University			St. James's Children's Center
Aditya	Nair	Highland Springs	Virginia Tech	Salutatorian		Dominion Energy
Mikaela	Pertos	Henrico	William & Mary			Virginia Housing
Makayla	Rankin	Highland Springs	William & Mary		Full-Ride Scholarship	Commonwealth Savers
Eric	Riley	Highland Springs	Virginia Commonwealth University			Capital One
Alayah	Roane	Highland Springs	Virginia Commonwealth University			Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
Patrick	Sapini	Richmond Community	Hampton University			Podium RVA
Maddison	Scott	Open	Old Dominion University			Black History Museum
Naimir	Smith	Hermitage	Virginia State University			
Victoria	Smith	J.R. Tucker	Hampton University			McGuireWoods
Awa	Soumahoro	Highland Springs	Virginia Tech			Community Foundation
Tiffany	Taylor	Huguenot	Virginia State University			Podium RVA
Kellen	Travers	Highland Springs	Virginia Tech			Richmond Intl. Film Festival
Darrell	Vaughan	Franklin Military Academy	James Madison University	Top 10% of Class	Full-Ride Scholarship	
Chanel	Washington	Highland Springs	Old Dominion University			FRIENDS Assoc. for Children
Angeniece	Wilkes	Highland Springs	Marymount University			Henrico Mobile Library
Carey	Williams	Varina	George Mason University			RMTA
Wayne	Williams	John Marshall	Virginia Commonwealth University	Salutatorian		Markel
Tianna	Woodson	Highland Springs	Virginia Commonwealth University			Big Brothers Big Sisters



“Life is not always about praying for sunshine, it’s about learning to dance in the rain.” Every graduating class at Partnership for the Future has its own unique personality and experiences in the program. For the Class of 2026, that meant continuing to move forward even as the road ahead included unexpected twists and turns. A lot of people don’t learn this skill until well into adulthood, if ever. Now, as you embark on this next chapter in college, continue to lean in and challenge yourself to embrace the joys and challenges that come with growth, and whenever you feel you are at the edge of your comfort zone, don’t be afraid to take another step forward.

As I reflect on the stories you are about to read, I am reminded that the strongest structures are the ones we build ourselves, brick by brick. For those of us who are a little more seasoned, we truly understand that often the days are long, but the years are short. To the Class of 2026, it feels like yesterday that you arrived at Institute Week at Randolph-Macon College and officially began your journey as a PFF scholar. You were excited and very nervous about the journey ahead. In three short years, you have built a quiet confidence in who you are and where you are going. Each year, reading each student’s success story reminds me of how grateful I am to have been a small part of your journey and transformation.

For over 30 years, Partnership for the Future has supported students like you in achieving their dreams of earning a college degree. As you step onto your respective college campuses next year, I think of a quote Oprah shares often from Maya Angelou: “I come as one, but I stand as 10,000.” You are never alone if you remember that you have a village, seen and unseen, that will continue to cheer for you, challenge you, and believe in you even when you may doubt yourself. Your success is not yours alone; you are sowing seeds of hope in your family, your community, and most importantly, for the next generation.

With Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dionne W. Henderson".

Dionne W. Henderson
President & CEO



JAMES MADISON
UNIVERSITY®

Full-Ride Scholarship

JESUJUWONLO ADELAKUN

James Madison University



My name is Jesujuwonlo Adelakun. I am a Nigerian immigrant and the daughter of two immigrants. Growing up, I always knew that one day, I would go to college. But I didn't want to rack up debt, and with the ever-increasing cost of college, I was very concerned.

One bright morning in the spring of my freshman year of high school, I met Mr. Rich from Partnership for the Future (PFF). In a dim auditorium, Mr. Rich lit up the room with talk of PFF with such charisma, enthusiasm, and goodwill for students like me. So I applied. After writing an essay and submitting my application, I was interviewed by PFF. During the panel interview, I asked for one piece of advice, and the interviewer said, "Be a sponge." In other words, soak up or absorb the experience. So that's what I did, regardless of whether it was a Cultural Capital Session or a summer Friday session.

Summer after summer, my plan for the future became clearer and clearer. During my first summer with PFF, I took part in Institute Week, an educational, fun-filled, four-day stay at a college. From the experience, I discovered everyday things I want in college. That summer, PFF helped me step out of my comfort zone through public speaking. In my second summer with PFF, I participated in Career Immersion, which felt like a bootcamp for professionalism. Through PFF, I took advantage of opportunities such as mock interviews with Capital One, visiting Davenport, an investment bank, and eventually obtaining an internship at Capital One.

My Capital One internship was everything I wanted and more! The company culture is to assume positive intent. My support system included several PFF students and Capital One associates. I learned how to handle conflict in the workplace by example. This experience also taught me to advocate for myself.

This March, I was invited to speak at a PFF board meeting, during which it felt like everyone wanted me to succeed. With the preparation of PFF and my amazing GUIDES mentor, I gained admission to nearly every college I applied to. My acceptances cleared the way for a much bigger challenge: obtaining a full-ride scholarship. I applied to several scholarships, but I faced some rejections. I felt pressure; I was worried, but I had help. My mentor, Ms. Jenn, would read every word of my essays and offer extensive feedback.

I received not just one, but two full-ride offers to two different colleges! I will be attending James Madison University, and I plan to major in accounting and computer information systems. PFF didn't just help me in the college admissions process; it challenged me to step out of my comfort zone, build my network, and provided me with a community.



SASHA ALLGOOD

Old Dominion University

PFF helped me through many trials on my way to college, whether that was through scholarships, internships, or essential life skills. Through my experience with PFF, I have grown and learned so much. I have gained skills that will continue to help me through college, interviews, friendships, relationships, and just overall life.

The one thing I appreciate most about this program is that it has given me a big arena of opportunities. I was offered an opportunity to work at one of the youth centers that partnered with PFF, and although I wasn't able to take advantage of this opportunity, I truly appreciated having the opportunity. This opportunity made it clear that PFF truly cares about my success and will put in an unbelievable amount of effort to help us achieve our goals.

Another reason I enjoy this program is because they are very understanding and supportive. Throughout my life, I have had to face many challenges, such as being an overworked older sister, balancing schoolwork, and managing my ADHD, depression, and anxiety. Despite all of the things I'm dealing with, PFF has been patient and encouraging. Their care and support have made things less chaotic and challenging for me.

PFF is also very attentive and consistent. I always appreciate their updates and reminders. They send a lot of reminders for deadlines, internships, important events, and scholarships. They try their best to make sure I stay on track, and I appreciate it. I like the fact that they are so invested in us achieving our goals.

Additionally, PFF has helped me with my organizational skills. As a person with ADHD, being organized will always be a struggle, but this program has helped me manage dates and events better. I love that I've been able to develop key skills that will help me tremendously in the future. Although the long summer sessions and balancing my personal life can be a bit overwhelming at times, I still love what this program has to offer. Overall, this program has made a big impact on my growth, and I hope to continue my journey with them to learn more.



Full-Ride Scholarship

Salutatorian

MARLENE AMAYA

University of Richmond



It's all about taking the first step, not seeing the whole staircase. When I saw that I had been accepted into this program, all I could do was thank God. I felt a wave of different emotions because I thought I had not done well during my interview process. Yet, Partnership for the Future thought otherwise, for which I am entirely grateful as I continue with this community.

Not only has it taught me skills and knowledge for the future, but it has also impacted the life of even my older sister, Julene Amaya. We were both able to earn multiple full-ride scholarships from different universities.

If it weren't for this program, we would have both believed that our chances of receiving a higher education were quite slim. However, thanks to Partnership for the Future, both of us have grown as people, students, and leaders. This community has truly shown us the importance of putting in the work for a better tomorrow.

Partnership for the Future continues to grow and increase its resources, allowing me to become exposed to numerous people who care about their careers and their contributions to society. My four years here have only seemed like a second of my life and bring excitement about what will happen later on within this program.



Top 10% of Class

LUNDON BEDIAKO

Virginia State University



My parents didn't go to college, so I never actually knew much about it. I didn't know the difference between private and public colleges, didn't know what PWI stood for, and I didn't even know what to study. During my freshman year, PFF came to my school, Hermitage High School, to recruit new students to the program. Instantly, I knew they were what I was looking for in my journey to self-discovery and guidance. I remember being pretty scared but excited for the new opportunity presented to me.

That summer, we stayed at Randolph-Macon College for Institute Week, and it was there that I met my friends. I had a lot of fun that week, and I have never been more grateful for the opportunity PFF has given me. Being a part of the program answered all of my questions, even questions not related to college. They helped me figure out what I want to do in the future and even showed me where to look.

I got an insight into what a job would be like during the Career Immersion program my rising junior year. I've learned a variety of work and life skills, including how to write a proper email to a colleague and dress for an interview. To this day, I always make sure to proofread everything and have a very strong resume.

Because of PFF, I will be attending Virginia State University in the fall and studying psychology. They helped me pick the right school for me, and I am so excited for what my future holds.



SHYLA BENN

George Mason University

Before joining PFF, I was extremely shy and lacked the confidence to interact socially. As a ninth grader, I knew I did not want my shyness to hold me back from opportunities, and I hoped that PFF could help me strengthen my communication skills.

On the first day of PFF, we had a workshop on communication skills. This workshop taught us valuable lessons on how to communicate with others effectively. It taught us techniques such as active and passive listening skills. Active skills included asking for clarification to demonstrate engagement in conversations, whereas passive skills relied on eye contact and nodding to demonstrate comprehension. To me, learning these communication skills seemed very important, as they can be used in everyday life. I was skeptical about how learning these skills would benefit me if they were not put into practice. To be honest, I was afraid to put these skills into practice, and I probably would not have if it were not for PFF.

It was extremely nerve-racking at first because it was the first day of PFF, everyone was new, and I knew no one. I had no idea how I would start a conversation with my teammates. That was when I remembered how I could apply what I had learned in the communication skills workshop. I began to project my voice loudly so that others could hear me, as I am a soft-spoken person. When communicating with my teammates about their ideas, I used both passive communication, such as nodding, and active communication, such as asking for clarification.

With the positive energy provided by my teammates and the PFF staff throughout the workshop, I found myself becoming more comfortable interacting with others and speaking confidently and efficiently. This group activity forced me to communicate with my peers, and looking back, I am very grateful for the push.

Being a part of PFF has positively impacted my life. PFF has helped me gain confidence in communicating with others and has helped me improve my listening and teamwork skills, both at PFF and at school. PFF has also prepared me for college and the professional world through its resume-building and networking workshops. These are skills I hope to carry with me throughout my education, employment, and everyday life.



Top 10% of Class

DAVIN BERNSTEIN

University of Virginia



Before joining PFF, I didn't really understand what sector I would want to pursue in the future. I always thought that I would make a decision right before college... I was wrong. PFF showed me the possibilities in the business and finance field. I always thought that this field would be limited to people with connections, resources, and experiences, but PFF changed that completely.

Through PFF, I didn't just learn the concepts of the finance industry, I immersed myself in them. Whether it was exploring financial topics or discovering how there's more to finance than just money, PFF gave me a direct vision of what my future in finance would look like. A Capital One internship secured my future in finance, and I realized that the corporate world was the type of setting that I would thrive in. With this internship provided to me by PFF, my future in high finance went from something that was abstract to achievable.

Branching away from the professional world, my four years in PFF have taught me invaluable lessons on what it means to be a leader. PFF has taught me that a leader adapts, supports, reflects, and grows. Leaders acknowledge the small details and turn them into larger, more meaningful outcomes. Through my experiences in this organization, I've come to realize that leadership is all about finding a balance: a balance between inspiring those around you and finding personal comfort while doing so.

I can tell you now that comfort was exactly the feeling that came over me throughout the years. The atmosphere that was built around me made me believe I had another family. It gave me a sense of purpose to keep pushing, providing me with the clarity to pursue my college and career aspirations while positively affecting the individuals around me.

In terms of giving back to the community, spreading positivity in an intellectually honest and truth-seeking manner is a big part of my identity, and I yearn to instill confidence in those who feel uncertain. If I've ever learned an overarching lesson through my time in PFF, it is this: Everyone's potential extends far beyond the boundaries they currently see in themselves. In essence, jump out of your comfort zone to experience things outside the barriers that have held you back from reaching possibilities that were always waiting for you on the other side.

Thank you.



OLD DOMINION
UNIVERSITY



ISAIAH BERRYMAN

Old Dominion University

PFF has been a very interesting and rewarding program for me. Since becoming a part of it, I have been given many opportunities that have helped me grow both personally and professionally. One of the things I appreciate most about PFF is that it has allowed me to learn a variety of new skills that I may not have had the chance to develop on my own. Through different workshops, activities, and experiences, I have gained valuable knowledge that will benefit me in school, in the workplace, and throughout my future career.

I have built relationships with mentors, professionals, and other students who have encouraged me, shared their experiences, and inspired me to continue working toward my goals. These connections have helped me become more confident and have shown me the importance of networking and building strong relationships.

PFF has had a significant impact on my life by providing me with an internship that gave me real world work experience and allowed me to develop important professional skills. The program has also helped me financially by awarding me various scholarships, making it easier for me to continue my education and pursue my future goals.

Overall, PFF has opened many doors for me and has given me experiences that I will always be grateful for.



ARYELLE BOONE

Virginia Commonwealth University

While participating in PFF, I learned a lot about college, the workforce, and, most importantly, myself. Growing up, I wasn't very familiar with the idea of college. Although my parents are educated, their experiences and opportunities were very different from mine. Once I entered high school and joined Partnership for the Future, they began to see just how many possibilities were available to me.

During my first summer with PFF, we attended Institute Week, where we stayed on a college campus and experienced dorm life. Since neither of my parents had lived on campus, they were nervous about sending me away. I, however, was excited. Living in a dorm and walking to class seemed exactly like the college experience I had always imagined.

By the end of the week, I realized that reality did not match my expectations. I discovered that I do not enjoy dorm life and strongly value my privacy and personal space. Looking back, I am grateful for that experience because it helped me understand what environment suits me best before making a major college decision. My time at Randolph-Macon encouraged me to think critically about my preferences and what I want for my future.

Later, through PFF, I received an internship at the Children's Museum of Richmond. I wasn't sure what to expect because my only experience with the museum had been as a visitor when I was a little kid. During my internship, I worked with young children, observed teaching, and learned how a nonprofit organization operates.

Many people assumed I would enjoy working directly with children because of my outgoing personality and babysitting experience. Instead, I found myself drawn to the behind the scenes aspects of the organization. I enjoyed learning about planning, coordination, and daily operations more than being on the museum floor. Through this experience, I discovered that I prefer helping things run smoothly behind the scenes rather than being the center of attention. Without this opportunity, I may never have realized where my interests truly lie.

As a teenager growing up in the age of social media, it is easy to feel pressure to follow trends and pursue the same goals as everyone else. One of the most valuable lessons I learned through PFF is that my path does not have to look like anyone else's. These experiences gave me the opportunity to explore my own interests, challenge my assumptions, and gain confidence in who I am. I am grateful that PFF not only prepared me for college and the workforce but also helped me better understand myself.



WILLIAM
& MARY

Full-Ride Scholarship

Top 10% of Class

AARON-DAVID BROWN

William & Mary



I've always been an individual who sees his life as one great script. Growing up, I was never able to grow in an environment that was forgiving of my lack of knowledge in certain fields. I was always expected to have an adult level of understanding of topics when I was only a child doing my best. Yet, the script finally took a turn when I joined Partnership for the Future.

For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by individuals driven with an astounding level of passion, which I had never seen before. From adults who saw our potential and went out of their way to mold us into the best possible versions of ourselves to peers who recognized each other's accomplishments and fully allowed each other to feel heard and valued without jealousy or competition.

The patience exhibited by every student, staff member, and associate truly shaped the way I view my professional and educational career. Without their unlimited support, I couldn't possibly imagine my path forward as a filmmaker being as clear and visible.

Thanks to PFF, your friendly neighborhood superhero geek is bound for a full ride at the College of William and Mary. The gratefulness that I have for this program truly knows no bounds. This chapter at Partnership for the Future will always be remembered as one of the most crucial plot developments in this grand script of a career. I hope that every student who graduates from this program is truly on the best trajectory for their career moving forward.

Remember, when you help someone, you help everyone. And PFF certainly helped me in more ways than you can even imagine.



NORTH CAROLINA
AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL
STATE UNIVERSITY

Top 10% of Class

KIMBERLY BUGG

North Carolina A&T



Partnership for the Future (PFF) has had a lasting impact on both my personal and professional growth. When I first joined the program, I didn't fully know what to expect. I remember going into my Level 1 summer at Randolph-Macon College feeling unsure and a little nervous. However, those few days on campus quickly changed my perspective. Being in a new environment pushed me out of my comfort zone, and I began to feel more confident and open to new experiences.

As I continued through PFF, I realized that the program was doing more than just preparing me for college life. One of the most meaningful parts of my experience has been the opportunity to connect with professionals and mentors. I've gained insight into different career paths and learned the importance of networking, communication, and professionalism. These are skills I know will benefit me long after high school.

Equally important has been the community within PFF. I've had the chance to meet and build relationships with other students who share similar goals and mindsets. Being surrounded by peers who are gifted, motivated, and college bound has inspired me to push myself and stay focused on my future. It's empowering to be in a space where everyone is striving for success and encouraging one another along the way.

Looking back now as a Level 4 student, I can clearly see how much I've grown. I came into PFF as a shy ninth grader who was still trying to find her voice. Over the years, I've become more confident, more social, and more prepared for what's ahead. PFF has given me experiences and skills that I know will help me succeed in college and beyond.

Overall, I am incredibly grateful for Partnership for the Future. It has not only prepared me academically and professionally, but it has also helped me grow into a more confident and capable version of myself. As I prepare to start college this fall, I feel ready to take on new challenges because of everything PFF has given me.



JOSIAH BURTON

Virginia Tech

When I first joined PFF, I was nervous and unsure of myself. One of my first experiences in the program was Institute Week at Randolph-Macon College, where all incoming PFF students spent a week together on a college campus. At the time, I was insecure about my voice, worried about being judged, and constantly second guessing myself. Being surrounded by so many new people felt intimidating, and I often stayed quiet because I was afraid of making mistakes. Looking back, I never imagined how much that experience, and PFF as a whole, would change my life.

After completing Level 1, I began to challenge myself in ways I never had before. PFF encouraged me to step outside of my comfort zone and take advantage of opportunities that I might have avoided in the past. Whether it was speaking to new people, participating in activities, or challenging myself academically, I learned that growth often comes from being uncomfortable. Because of the confidence I gained through PFF, I enrolled in more rigorous courses, including AP and dual enrollment classes, pushing myself to reach higher academic goals.

As a Level 2 student during my sophomore year, I continued building my confidence and forming meaningful relationships. Through Career Immersion and other PFF experiences, I met people who would have a lasting impact on my life. For the first time, I felt connected to a community of students who motivated and supported one another.

By Level 3, I had truly started to find my voice. I became more comfortable speaking up, sharing my ideas, and building connections with others. Opportunities that once seemed intimidating now felt like chances to learn and grow. PFF helped me explore career options and think seriously about my future. I began discovering what I wanted to study in college and where I wanted to apply.

My senior year was the most impactful of all. A college tour to Virginia Tech completely changed my perspective and helped shape my future. During that trip, I connected with fellow students, shared countless laughs, and created memories that I will never forget. Seeing the campus, learning about the programs, and experiencing the student culture made me realize that Virginia Tech was where I wanted to be. I fell in love with the university and could see myself building a future there.

Today, I am proud to say that I will be attending Virginia Tech to study Animal and Poultry Sciences. PFF helped me discover my passions, build lifelong friendships, and develop the confidence to pursue opportunities I once thought were beyond my reach. Because of the experiences, mentors, and support I found through PFF, I am entering this next chapter of my life with confidence and purpose. The student who arrived at Institute Week unsure and afraid to speak up is not the same student leaving for college today, and I will always be grateful to PFF for helping me become the person I am now.



VALARIE CEDENO-VILLALOBOS

Virginia Tech

I came into PFF not knowing what I truly wanted to do. I had a vague idea that I wanted to do research, but I didn't know what kind of research or how I should get to that point. I knew I needed to attend a school with a research facility, but I had nobody to guide me about college, especially as a first generation student from immigrant parents. My family and I had no clue about FAFSA or the other documents needed for the college process, but PFF became something to lean on.

I was taught about personal finances, finding career choices, and what to consider when choosing a school, including demographics, geography, and other factors. Having PFF helped me navigate the college application process and become life ready. Learning financial advice through VACU, such as certificates of deposit and savings, and participating in simulations that taught us budgeting and prioritizing fixed expenses really prepared me to be more independent than I otherwise would have been.

PFF has also helped me better understand my interests and what I want to do in life. I learned that I wanted a mix of STEM and health after many one on one sessions with my Level Coordinator, and I decided that the major I want to pursue that involves both would be biochemistry. This program incentivized me to join many clubs and groups that aligned with my interests and would strengthen my college application.

They also helped me understand what setting I am most comfortable in and what I prioritize when choosing a college by looking into my major's coursework and prerequisites for each school I was interested in. PFF has been a stepping stone for me in understanding myself. Utilizing PFF has given me insight and knowledge of what to expect in the future.



Full-Ride Scholarship

ANIHJA CLARK

Virginia Tech



The opportunities you dream about are not out of reach. Take the risk; you'll surprise yourself.

If I could speak to the version of myself who first walked into Partnership for the Future, that is what I would say. Before joining PFF, I was ambitious but lacked direction. I had goals and a desire to succeed, yet I often questioned whether the opportunities I admired were meant for me. In public settings, I shrank myself. I lowered my voice, withheld my opinions, and doubted my abilities. I was driven, but I lacked the confidence to trust my judgment and embrace my potential.

Partnership for the Future changed that.

PFF gave me something I had not realized I needed: community. For the first time, I was surrounded by peers who shared my determination and aspirations. Being among equally motivated students encouraged me to dream bigger and reminded me that I did not have to navigate my future alone.

The mentors I encountered challenged me to move beyond the limits I had placed on myself. Through my internship, leadership experiences, and professional development opportunities, I developed skills that extended far beyond the classroom. I learned to communicate with confidence, advocate for myself, build professional relationships, and trust my ability to make decisions. More importantly, I learned that growth begins with a willingness to take risks.

One of the most meaningful milestones in my journey was becoming an ambassador for the program. It marked a shift in how I viewed myself. I no longer saw myself as someone standing quietly on the sidelines, hoping to be chosen. Instead, I recognized my capacity to lead, represent others, and contribute with purpose. I discovered that leadership is not about having all the answers; it is about using your voice, uplifting those around you, and continuing to learn.

Today, I am confident yet humble, communicative, and open to new opportunities. I no longer let fear of failure prevent me from pursuing what I love. I take pride in my passions, stand firm in my accomplishments, and trust the judgment I once questioned. Now, I will be attending Virginia Tech on a full ride scholarship, ready to carry forward the confidence and growth I've gained.

Partnership for the Future did not give me ambition; it taught me to believe in it. It helped me find my voice, recognize my worth, and understand that success is not something to fear or diminish. Because of PFF, I now walk into opportunities with confidence, knowing that I belong in the spaces I once thought were beyond my reach.



CHASE COLEMAN

Old Dominion University

Being a part of Partnership for the Future has helped me a lot and changed the way I think about my future. Before joining the program, I knew I was interested in college however I did not know what I wanted to study or even how to get there. Partnership for the Future helped me learn more about different opportunities and showed me ways I can start preparing for my future now instead of waiting until later.

One experience that really stood out to me was going to Institute Week at Randolph-Macon College. Being on a college campus made everything feel more real to me. It gave me a chance to see what college life could be like and helped me think more seriously about my future after high school. I met new people and got to be around other students who were also thinking about their goals and what they wanted to do in life.

We learned about leadership, teamwork, and stepping outside of our comfort zones. I also liked hearing advice from mentors and professionals because they shared real experiences and encouraged us to keep working toward our goals. That experience made me feel more confident and excited about going to college one day.

Partnership for the Future has also helped me become more prepared for my future. The program introduced me to internships, networking, and opportunities that I probably would not have known much about on my own. It helped me understand how important it is to meet new people, ask questions, and take opportunities when they come. Because of PFF, I have started thinking more seriously about my goals and what steps I need to take to be successful after high school.

Another thing I like about Partnership for the Future is the support. Being around mentors and other students who are trying to be successful motivates me to do better. Sometimes things can get stressful or difficult, but PFF has shown me the importance of staying focused, asking questions, and continuing to work toward my goals.

Overall, Partnership for the Future has made a big impact on my life. It has helped me grow as a person and think more seriously about my future. I am thankful for all of the experiences and opportunities the program has given me. I know the things I learned from PFF will continue to help me as I get older and work toward my goals.

**COPPIN**
STATE UNIVERSITY

Full-Ride Scholarship

Top 10% of Class

ZARIAH CORNELIUS

Coppin State University



Growing up, I never expected anything beyond an ordinary life. I knew what I wanted from life, and I was confident that I was determined to take the necessary steps to get there. What I didn't realize, however, was how much room there was for me to grow into the person I am becoming. I wouldn't describe myself as shy, but I wasn't the type of person to naturally put myself out there. Over time, I learned to take up space in every room I walk into.

Coming into high school as a freshman, I knew little about the college preparation process. I realized I hadn't broadened my knowledge of my plans after high school. It's ironic that I knew I wanted to go to college but didn't know the steps to get there. Starting with Institute Week, I was introduced to valuable information and resources that I used throughout my high school career. From the public speaking opportunities and workshops about financial aid to actually staying in a college dorm, I was introduced to a world I didn't know. Those experiences have helped me begin planning for the future with true intention and care.

As I progressed in Partnership for the Future (PFF), I had the opportunity to work as an intern at St. James Children Center. This opportunity has been greatly beneficial in helping me figure out what I want to pursue after college. During my internship, I developed interpersonal and professional skills that have put me ahead of my peers. More importantly, I saw a glimpse of my future while working there, and I genuinely loved every aspect of the work I was doing.

Partnership for the Future has provided mentorship, guidance, and unwavering support throughout my years in the program. The numerous networking opportunities, workshops, college tours, events, professional development sessions, and community experiences have instilled the confidence I carry within myself. The program has shown me that I already possess the tools I need to succeed.

I just needed to step into the space and have a little encouragement to recognize them. I am fortunate to be a part of PFF, and I appreciate every experience that has been provided to me. Most importantly, PFF has taught me to strive for the utmost excellence and a life out of the ordinary.

UNIVERSITY
of VIRGINIA

VINCENT CUMMINS

University of Virginia

My name is Vincent Cummins, and I am a senior at Hermitage High School. Next year, I will be attending the University of Virginia, majoring in Kinesiology and Biology. Prior to high school, I had no clue what I wished to pursue as a career. Throughout my four years, I've bounced around the ideas of law, medicine, and occupational health services. Now that I've reached the end of my high school journey, I can confidently tell you all that my goal is to go to medical school and pursue a career as an orthopedic surgeon.

When I applied to Partnership for the Future, I wrote that I wished to join a program that would surround me with like minded students because, as the saying goes, you are who you surround yourself with. This statement held true in every possible situation. In school and in this amazing program, I've spent time with students who had bigger dreams than my own. Their determination planted a seed and desire for me to be just as successful as they aspired to be. I feel this is the "secret sauce" of fostering any form of success.

Aside from the people you surround yourself with, it is also important to step out of your comfort zone. Like we were told during Institute Week, where there was a series of hula hoops on the floor, it is easy to hide away in the real world when faced with real decisions. However, it is important to step out of this shell in order to pursue growth. I've often encountered situations where it is easiest to remain silent however the easiest route is not always the best route. Moments like my time with the American Heart Association come to mind, where I was tasked with organizing events and talking with hundreds of strangers. In the pursuit of our goals with our charity campaign, we ultimately raised \$23,000 for research and care for hearts across America.

In my short time on this planet, I've found love for the people around me and a desire to help the world where I can. Because even on the smallest of scales, change can help someone. Improving someone's day, week, or even life would be the greatest blessing I could ever wish for. I have lived an amazing life filled with love, support, and good times. I hope I can use my situation to help others feel the way I feel every day. Life is genuinely a gift, a sweet, salty, and sour gift. But its ability to provide us with the love that it does is absolutely beautiful. Thank you, everyone, for allowing me to pursue my dreams.

Go Hoos!



AMAAN DHANANI

University of Virginia

PFF has had a meaningful impact on my life by helping me explore career pathways, build professional skills, and grow more confident in my future goals. Through the Career Immersion Program, I was able to learn more about different industries, meet professionals from a variety of fields, and develop skills that I continue to use today.

One of my most memorable experiences happened while I was at Highland Springs High School. Students were called to the auditorium for a meeting about an exciting opportunity, but I had accidentally not been invited. I decided to skip class that day and go to the auditorium anyway, curious about what I might find. When I arrived, I saw Mr. Rich give one of the most inspiring presentations I had ever witnessed. His energy, insight, and encouragement immediately grabbed my attention. I remember feeling a mix of excitement and determination. I wanted to be part of whatever this opportunity was. That moment was my first encounter with PFF, and it sparked my desire to join the program. I realized that taking chances and staying open to new experiences could lead to opportunities I had never imagined.

Once I joined PFF, I quickly discovered how impactful the program truly was. I gained exposure to career paths I might not have explored on my own and connected with professionals who helped me better understand the professional world. Learning about companies such as Markel and hearing directly from industry leaders gave me insight into what different careers look like in practice and what it takes to succeed. These experiences helped me think more intentionally about my own future and career goals.

I am also grateful for the workshops on networking, interviewing, resume building, and professional etiquette. These sessions helped me grow more confident when speaking with professionals and applying for opportunities. The guidance and resources provided through PFF were invaluable as I applied for scholarships and prepared for my long term goals.

The \$1,075 stipend was another highlight. Being paid while learning and developing professionally made the experience even more meaningful. It allowed me to save money for my future education while gaining skills that will continue to benefit me for years to come.

Most importantly, PFF taught me the value of building connections and taking advantage of opportunities. The relationships I formed, the lessons I learned, and the experiences I gained have all contributed to my personal and professional growth. Thank you, PFF, for investing in students like me and for creating opportunities that inspire, challenge, and prepare us for our futures. I am truly grateful for the impact this program has had on my life.



SAMANTHA DIPACE

George Mason University

Despite the unconventional PFF experience I have had, PFF has helped me get to where I am today. This program has taught me how to work with different personalities and navigate less than ideal situations. Through all of the highs and lows, my peers in this program have always been there for me.

Over the past year, it has been so exciting to watch all of my friends get accepted into the colleges and universities of their choice. My most memorable experience happened during my first week in PFF on our week long trip to Randolph-Macon. We were all so nervous because, for many of us, it was the first extended time we had been away from our parents. The first couple of days were filled with icebreakers and opportunities to get to know one another, and everyone had to step outside of their comfort zones.

What really showed me the culture of PFF was the party we had one evening in the courtyard during our first few days. The clearest memory I have from that week is all of us gathered around the speaker, singing "Love" by Keyshia Cole at the top of our lungs. At that point, we barely knew each other, but once the music started playing, we relaxed, opened up, and connected. It became one of the biggest team bonding experiences we have ever had, even though it was never intended to be one.

Going from nervous freshmen with no idea where we wanted to go in life or who we wanted to become, to students preparing to start college, would not have been possible without PFF and our mentors.

UNIVERSITY
of VIRGINIA

BRIANNA DUNG

University of Virginia

PFF was the first step in my goal of pursuing growth and stepping out of my comfort zone. Starting my freshman year, I had no intention of wanting to get out of my comfort zone. I felt comfortable staying in my own space and only knowing a small group of people I considered my friends. But my goals of pursuing higher education and the ambitions my parents had for me outweighed the comfort I wanted. I knew PFF was an opportunity that I couldn't let slip by. I was determined to give it my best effort rather than not try at all.

I'm grateful for the experiences and the guidance PFF has offered. They were the first to help me overcome my reserved personality. For example, the presentations and networking events helped build my confidence by encouraging me to engage in conversations with various people. They helped me become more comfortable with myself and helped me, as a first-generation college student, learn many things about college in general.

PFF's guidance has helped me a ton, not only with college, but also in finding valuable opportunities and making connections that will last a lifetime. Being around like minded peers in PFF has tremendously helped me navigate these four years, and I'm proud to say that I've grown as a person during my time with PFF.

Attending Institute Week was a big factor in helping me get out of my comfort zone. Being around my peers for a week and socializing with everyone was a huge help in stepping outside of my comfort zone. Along with the Friday sessions, I learned a lot about preparing for college through financial literacy courses and discussions about college life. I feel more prepared for college life and the college experience as a first generation student because of the resources PFF has provided, as well as the time and effort the staff have put into helping students.



KHALIL EPPS

Reynolds Community College

As a first generation student, college began as an expectation, but the idea didn't solidify until Partnership for the Future bridged that gap of confusion and uncertainty. I remember being a freshman without direction, guidance, or a plan for what I wanted to pursue. I was initially happy to have something to occupy my time because it made me feel like I had finally found something that I was fortunate enough to be chosen for. However, Partnership for the Future gave me a perspective that allowed me to realize that it was never only about being chosen, but about the effort put forth to achieve and earn that privilege.

Though the program has made my life much busier, I adapted and developed crucial time management skills. Through opportunities such as Career Immersion, luncheons, and mock interviews, I've learned to be a stronger interviewee, demonstrate a high degree of professionalism at a young age, and advocate for myself to open doors to opportunities that otherwise wouldn't have been within reach.

Of all the things I've discovered on this four year journey, the most important is that you should never sell yourself short if you want to be seen at all. A resume and a reference can get you to an interview, but the way you market yourself is what determines how you're viewed. Growing up as an introvert meant often not knowing how to navigate social environments, but being a Partnership for the Future student forced me to become less of an observer and more engaged in conversations. The workshops, speakers, and Cultural Capital Sessions all played a vital role in shaping the way I interact with others and view the decisions I make every day.

I've also been taught that you should take the route that costs you the least, which led me to follow the community college transfer pathway instead of a traditional four year track. Even if it meant I would be missing out on the experiences of campus life, it is because of the program that I realized dorms and school pride did not interest me. I'll forever be grateful to have had the opportunity to be a student in the program because one decision that once seemed small has made a major impact on improving my self esteem, work ethic, communication skills, and has provided me with a lifelong network of peers.



MEROLA FAHIM

Virginia Commonwealth University

I come from a family where success is expected, but hard work and perseverance are valued above everything else. My parents immigrated to the United States from Egypt in search of opportunities they never had. My father was fortunate enough to win the visa lottery, giving him the chance to leave poverty behind and build a new life with little money and no formal education. Their sacrifices motivate me every day to make the most of the opportunities they worked so hard to provide.

As a first generation college student from a low income family, pursuing higher education has come with financial challenges. Partnership for the Future (PFF) has played a huge role in helping me navigate that journey. Through PFF, I toured college campuses, which helped me picture myself earning a degree, and I had the opportunity to intern at Markel, where I developed professionalism, communication, and teamwork skills. I also built meaningful connections with mentors, staff, and other students who encouraged me to believe in my potential and pursue my goals with confidence.

Today, I am attending Virginia Commonwealth University and working toward my Bachelor of Science in Nursing. My goal is to become a forensic nurse, combining my passion for healthcare and the justice system to support patients during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. I am grateful for the opportunities PFF has provided, and I hope to one day give back to my community and inspire other first generation students to pursue their dreams, no matter where they come from.



ZAKIYYAH FOSTER-RASHEED

Virginia Tech

It had been a normal, uneventful morning during my freshman year. Around ten o'clock, I was sitting in the gym with my friends when I received a pass directing me to the auditorium for something called "Partnership for the Future." At the time, I assumed it would be another presentation to sit through until the bell rang. Then Mr. Rich stepped onto the stage. As his voice echoed through the auditorium, something felt different. For the first time, I wasn't just hearing about opportunities; I could actually see them.

What seemed like a random pass out of class would become one of the most important moments of my life. A few weeks later, I received the email that I had been accepted into the program. I didn't realize it then, but I had just opened the door to a world I never knew existed.

Through Partnership for the Future, I experienced college tours, networking opportunities, conferences, luncheons, internships, and leadership development experiences that expanded my vision for what my future could be. Growing up, there were times when life felt uncertain. Like many students, I faced challenges that could have easily made me settle for less. However, through every experience, PFF taught me that my future was bigger than the limitations I sometimes placed on myself. It showed me what was possible when preparation meets opportunity.

As I continued through high school, I began stepping into leadership roles, building relationships, and gaining confidence in spaces that once felt intimidating. PFF taught me that leadership is not about having a title; it is about showing up, taking initiative, and helping others see what is possible. The more I grew, the more my mindset changed. College was no longer distant. Success was no longer something reserved for other people. During difficult moments, I reminded myself, "Success wasn't just possible; it was necessary." Not only for me, but for those who believed in me.

Looking back, it is amazing to think that everything started with a simple pass to leave the gym. What seemed like an ordinary morning became the beginning of a journey filled with opportunity, growth, and purpose. Partnership for the Future didn't just prepare me for college. It helped me discover the leader I was capable of becoming and gave me the confidence to believe I belong in every room I walk into.

As I prepare for the next chapter of my journey, I carry with me a lesson from PFF's President and CEO, Ms. Dionne: "You have to make space for others to take space." To me, that means leadership is not about personal achievement but about opening doors and creating opportunities for others to grow. I now see my success as more than reaching my own goals. I see it as paving a pathway for those who will come after me and serving as a model of what is possible. Because, in the end, leadership is not what you achieve; it is what you leave behind.



STERLING FRANKLIN

Virginia State University

Throughout my freshman year, I heard stories of PFF experiences through my peers. Given that Franklin Military Academy is a small school, we were naturally close knit and shared our dreams and aspirations. What is a bigger aspiration for a high schooler whose parents had never graduated from college and for a boy who didn't have a lot growing up? For me, it was going to college and becoming successful, no matter what I had to do to achieve it.

My dream is to become a version of myself who doesn't have to worry about my next meal, doesn't have to look over my shoulder while opening my bank account, or skip school trips because my family couldn't afford them. Many people I know have felt that pain. Few I know have the courage to admit it, and even fewer I know are capable of overcoming it.

I grew up in the Gilpin Court projects of Jackson Ward, and I haven't had it as easily as many may think. In reality, college is a pipe dream where I'm from. Even getting a 9 to 5 is considered a challenge when half of the people around you are convicted before they reach adulthood. I was blessed to have the voices in my ear and the hands upon my shoulder that encouraged me to make the decisions that have led me to this point in my life. I've never openly complained about anything, even though it took everything I had and more to live instead of simply surviving and to do the basic things necessary just to reach a point where I could finally start my life.

That's what this is. It's only the start. I speak for all of those who feel as if they have already lived enough or who feel they've spent their lives surviving while watching everyone else live. I'm glad to say we've made it to the threshold of life, and we can begin anew. PFF truthfully sounded like the answer to a lot of questions in my life. I don't like to call them problems because I see them more as stepping stones to my character, things placed in my path to build the version of myself I fight to become every single day.

Getting to high school, especially after COVID, I was beyond lost in my ambition, but I still had that dream. PFF helped me realize that dream. It helped turn something that once felt impossible into something I could actually see myself accomplishing. Without some of the outlets and opportunities PFF provided, I honestly don't know where I'd be. From Institute Week to the college tours that allowed us to experience what college life is actually about, every opportunity pushed me one step closer to believing I belonged there.

Today, I'm going to college without paying anything, and for the first time in a long time, things are finally alright. More importantly, this isn't the end of my story; it is only the beginning. My dreams are now bigger than the ones I started high school with, and I finally have the opportunity to chase them.



ALLISSON GARCIA-POSADA

Virginia Commonwealth University

Partnership for the Future (PFF) has changed the course of my life and education in many positive ways. It has brought many opportunities to me that have helped me grow stronger, become more responsible, and develop into a better individual. These experiences and activities have taught me many important lessons about leadership and the significance of setting high goals for myself, not only by helping me but also by pushing me to grow as a student. I am glad to be a part of this program and what it stands for.

Partnership for the Future has allowed me to meet new people, make new friends, and talk to educators who have shared their experiences and given us insight into what their careers are like. For example, during my first summer with PFF, we participated in Institute Week. I was so nervous about the trip and being away from home for the week. We had an amazing time dancing the salsa, listening to talks, and gaining insight into college life while living in dorms. This trip helped me develop friendships, learn more about PFF, and overcome my fear of public speaking.

During my summers with PFF over the last couple of years, we have participated in amazing workshops that have allowed us to be a step ahead in preparing for college. It has helped me tremendously step out of my comfort zone, not only in my education but also personally. This program does not only teach you about college preparation but also about life.

PFF has encouraged me to take bigger steps and take risks in order to maximize my education by building good habits, becoming more involved, and using resources that make success easier. The opportunities presented to me are ones that I may have never experienced without the program. I greatly appreciate the support I have been given. They have shown me that success comes from hard work, determination, and consistency.

Growing up, college has always been part of my future, but I never knew where to start planning or what I needed to do to get ready. PFF played an important role in helping me prepare and guiding me on the right path. I have been inspired to keep working hard and pushing myself to be the best student I can be. I look forward to continuing to grow, learn, and make the most of what the program has to offer. The knowledge, friendships, and life lessons I have gained will continue to guide and inspire me as I work toward my academic goals.



TYLAR GEE

Virginia Commonwealth University

Joining Partnership for the Future (PFF) has opened many doors for me. Working with the students and staff in this program has allowed me to create many goals and reach accomplishments I wouldn't have otherwise achieved. The experiences I've gained from my time in this program are unlike any other. I am proud to say that I truly value the opportunity I was given to connect with others in my community.

The connections I've made have prepared me for my future in higher education and beyond. I have used the friendships and connections I've made as a source of motivation throughout the hardest times in my high school career while working with my GUIDES mentor to decide on my future university. Without PFF, I wouldn't have had the knowledge to apply to universities and determine which would be the best fit for me and my career.

With the knowledge and understanding I gained from PFF, I was able to navigate the college application process without putting a strain on my family. I was able to reassure them of their worries while telling them about my various acceptances. The amount of preparation PFF has given us was truly amazing. Despite the challenges we've all faced, the compassion from the staff will always stand out to me. I am now able to use my own experiences to prepare myself and others for whatever the future may hold.



**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**
Illinois' first public university



SARIA HARGROVE

Illinois State University

The summer before ninth grade arrived all too quickly. By that time, I had decided that I was going to achieve my late father's dream of going to college. Coming from a family without college experience, I recognized it would be tough, but I convinced myself that I would create a roadmap based on my own research, and simply follow through. It only took a few weeks at my new school for that idea to become improbable at best. Every conflicting idea about admissions, financial aid, majors, or careers seemed to reveal another gap in my understanding. I was trying to map out my future alone while barely knowing what the path was supposed to look like.

This uncertainty was what made me turn to Partnership for the Future (PFF). At first, I was surprised to see such an extensive program tailored to kids like me, first-generation college students, and I almost thought it was too good to be true. In spite of that surreal feeling, everything became very tangible in the blink of an eye. Mornings spent with my godmother doing community service in the summer, afternoons spent walking across Randolph-Macon's campus with my friends during Institute Week, and evenings spent excited about tomorrow, came before I knew it. In just my first year with PFF, I began to see the path to college as something to be enjoyed instead of something I had to push myself through.

This last year has been one of the most difficult points in my life, with college applications, family health issues, and my own mental wellness causing me stress. PFF has found many ways to continue providing me with stability and guidance to keep me on track towards my goals. The part of this program I'm most grateful for is my mentor. Her presence has been invaluable in keeping me focused and motivated. From the hour-long phone calls and the tireless reviews of essay drafts, she has dedicated so much time and effort to my success, and I couldn't be more glad this program brought us together.

As I prepare for my internship with Capital One and my first year at college, I can't help but look back and wonder at how far I've come. I owe much of that growth to Partnership for the Future and the community that comes with it. Throughout the most unstable points in my high school career, their support meant I always knew exactly who I could lean on and what my next steps toward my goals would be.



JAMES MADISON
UNIVERSITY®

Full-Ride Scholarship

Top 10% of Class

TALIYA HARRIS

James Madison University



Four years ago, I knew nothing about secondary education. The only remnant of knowledge I had was the difference between an HBCU and a PWI. I didn't know the difference between a college and a university. With no prior knowledge of secondary education, my career path seemed almost impossible to achieve. My parents had not graduated from college, making me a prospective first-generation graduate.

Although this label has its perks, acquiring knowledge about college has often been a reoccurring struggle. Seeking knowledge, I unexpectedly discovered PFF during my freshman year. In the beginning, PFF seemed overwhelming, but I persevered and, in doing so, learned so many new skills and accomplished so much.

Three years ago, I was a Level 2 PFF Student. The meetings seemed redundant, but they were always useful. VCU felt like a second home to me. I still reminisce about the Randolph-Macon Institute Week experience. It was remarkable how much I learned about college in such a short time. To revise our resume, PFF assisted us with gaining a minimum of 24 hours of community service. At the time, I did not know how valuable those hours were. Those 24 hours followed every resume I created or revised.

Two years ago, I was a Level 3 PFF Student. To believe this was only last year seems unfathomable. My heart yearned to attend an HBCU at the time, but my mind had other plans. When reviewing the cost to attend an HBCU, logic was telling me to not only help myself but my family as well. In addition to community service, PFF allowed me to gain experience in internships. They matched their students as much as they could to their desired career path. Although I could not work as an intern in a hospital, PFF allowed me to help children stay healthy and learn healthy habits.

I am now a Level 4 student and Huguenot High School senior who is confidently preparing to attend James Madison University on a full-ride scholarship. My time with PFF provided me with a solid foundation that will help me transition smoothly to college academics, manage my finances, and maintain my focus.

The exciting thing is that PFF is not done yet. They will continue to follow me throughout my college journey and continue to be that strong foundation that I have always needed. Their financial support will not end and the trips and endless opportunities are not close to ending. Partnership for the Future makes sure all their students are prepared and ready for their lives in and beyond college.



MADISON HARRISON

Old Dominion University

From the first day of Institute Week, being surrounded by strangers, to our Reaching for the Stars ceremony with my closest friends, I have learned first hand that success is more than just academic achievements, honors, or awards. Success lies within the connections you make along the way and the meaningful experiences you carry with you the rest of your life. Although I have a lot more life to live, I feel as if my time in Partnership for the Future (PFF) has allowed me to achieve my version of success.

Over the past few years in PFF, I have truly grown as a person by stepping out of my comfort zone. The first day of institute week being dropped off at Randolph-Macon, I had never been so nervous and uncomfortable in my life, but I knew in my heart that I was accepted into this program for a reason.

Partnership for the Future saw something in me that I didn't see myself. It was at that moment I knew, this was the beginning of a new, special journey for me. I have learned so much from my experience, like-minded people around me, and from myself in this program.

I am now a different person than I was my first summer in PFF, and I am proud of that. I have matured and now feel as if I am ready for the next step in my journey and whatever the future has to hold. Everything I have learned from each interaction with staff, Cultural & Social Capital session, and meeting has and will continue to positively impact me. I am so grateful for my PFF family and forever grateful to be a part of such an impactful program.

**Salutatorian**

KIMYRIE KING

Spelman College



Joining Partnership for the Future (PFF) has been one of the best choices I have ever made. Growing up, college was always the goal, but it felt like a destination without a map. As a first-generation student, I had the drive and the grades, but I didn't know the hidden parts of higher education. I didn't know how to decode financial aid packages, what made a college essay stand out, or how to navigate a corporate environment. I had ambition, but I lacked the blueprint. That changed the moment I was accepted into Partnership for the Future.

PFF didn't just hand me a set of instructions; they gave me a community and a shift in mindset. Through the financial workshops and the guidance through the FAFSA, the overwhelming college admissions process suddenly became manageable. For the first time, the future felt like something I was actively shaping, rather than something just happening to me.

Perhaps the greatest gift PFF offered was the realization that I wasn't walking this path alone. I found myself surrounded by peers who shared my drive, and a mentor who refused to let me settle for anything less than my full potential. In moments of doubt, when the weight of being "the first" felt heavy, this community became my anchor. We celebrated each other's acceptance letters and lifted each other up through the rejections.

PFF didn't just prepare me for the next four years of college; they inducted me into a lifelong network of change makers. I am no longer just aiming for success, I am equipped to keep achieving it while also pulling others up behind me.



RANDOLPH-MACON
COLLEGE



KIRELOS LABIB

Randolph-Macon College

I didn't think much of Partnership for the Future (PFF) at first. Now I'm realizing it is much more than what I thought. From the things you learn and the opportunities they give you, it is an immense pleasure to have been part of it all. I was able to surround myself with students who were as academically successful as I am and who are constantly ready for a challenge.

As someone who was very shy and spoke very little, PFF was a big factor in my coming out of my shell. I was also paired with a mentor to meet with regularly, who helped me stay on the right track and keep my goals set high.

PFF also taught me many great ways to improve my time management, which is very much needed in the modern teenage landscape. They helped me figure out how to manage financial aid from colleges. One of the biggest aspects of the program is the \$2,000 match, which is one of the biggest motivators for all who are in the program. Another thing about PFF is the wide variety of internships they offer, including some very high-end ones.

As someone who was selected for the Capital One internship, I feel I got everything I could ever want from this program. The experience from there will be something I could never pay back. PFF gave me the support and confidence I needed to reach for the stars. Now I am ready to soar into the future.



NORTH CAROLINA
AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL
STATE UNIVERSITY

Full-Ride Scholarship

Top 10% of Class

JASMINE LEWIS

North Carolina A&T



As I entered Partnership for the Future, I would have never guessed how much this program would impact me for the better. This program has taught me a plethora of different lessons that I will take with me through, not only college, but into the work force and life. I learned what it means to dress to impress, how to carry myself in interviews, and the art of networking. However, I feel that the most important lesson I learned was to take up space.

Coming to high school, I was a very introverted person. I never liked big crowds, I almost never spoke to people unless I was spoken to first, and frankly I was just one of the quietest people in the room. I found comfort in being quiet because being quiet felt like less pressure on me. I had often worried that if I did speak, then I might say something wrong.

For the longest time, I lived with such fear inside of me even though I always knew it shouldn't have been. I soon realized that something needed to change especially if I hope to own my own business one day. This is when I heard something that really spoke to me: "introverts take space, extroverts make space." I realized that the world wasn't going to wait for me to gain the confidence to speak to someone first; it will keep moving just as it always has.

So instead of waiting for something to change, I worked for that change. I started doing things that helped me get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I spoke to people without waiting to be spoken to first. I started speaking up more in class to help with my confidence. Doing all of these things and working hard helped me see that taking up space is harder than it seems but so beneficial. I've been able to take this lesson into every space I've been in.

It's helped me in class with being less afraid to speak up and ask questions. It's even helped me with my internship when I needed to present a presentation or when it came to networking to build connections. Although I am not yet fully comfortable with taking up space, I have still come a lot further than where I was when I first joined PFF and for that, I thank you.



Top 10% of Class

JOHNATHAN LOVE

Hampton University



To put it simply, life giveth and taketh away. Life has taken away opportunities from me because that's just what life does. Life has taken people away from me because that's just what life does. But it has given me Partnership for the Future. Life has given me Partnership for the Future and through PFF I've been given my first consistent stream of income. I've had the ability to show up in rooms that I never thought I belonged in. PFF has also given me the opportunity to intern at Podium RVA for seven weeks during the summer. But above all, above the financial literacy lessons, the scholarship opportunities, and the end of year cookouts, PFF has given me lifelong friends.

When you are with people every day for an extended period of time, you are bound to build a connection with them. PFF gave us that gift with its career immersion program. My entire Level 2 class was in career immersion and we enjoyed that time together tremendously. It was hard waking up at 7am during the summer Monday-Thursday but it gave me the chance to bond with people that I never would have met. Those people are incredibly important to me and I will even be attending Hampton University with a few of them.

PFF gave us the chance to bond with our peers on many occasions outside the traditional Friday sessions. Spring break trips where we toured colleges, the cookouts that I mentioned before, and even simple things like trips to museums. Giving us the space to be normal teenagers in times that were extremely stressful is something that I will never be able to truly pay PFF back for.

I recommend anyone who can join PFF to do so. Outside of the cache and opportunities that come with being a part of the organization, putting yourself out there and being rewarded for it is something that can be measured in value. I recommend it beyond comprehension.



MUZGHAN MAJIDI

Virginia Commonwealth University

Not everyone has a roadmap for college, and I certainly didn't either. For many students, the transition from high school to college can feel like standing at the edge of an unfamiliar path without a map. I was one of those students before joining Partnership for the Future (PFF). I had very little knowledge about the college application process and I did not know where to start, what college to apply to, or how to prepare for such an important step in my life. The entire process felt overwhelming and confusing, and I often questioned whether I was making the right decision for my future.

Partnership for the Future helped guide me through every step of the college admissions process. One of the most valuable parts of the program was being assigned a GUIDES mentor who provided me with support, advice, and encouragement whenever I needed it. My mentor answered my questions, helped me stay organized, and made my college application journey much less stressful. It was very helpful to have someone by my side who cared deeply about my success and gave me the confidence and motivation to keep moving forward.

Another experience I truly enjoyed was the opportunity to visit different colleges. The trips allowed me to explore campuses, learn about various academic programs and imagine myself as a future college student. These visits helped me better understand what I wanted in a college and made higher education feel more attainable and exciting. Walking through those campuses, I could picture the dream I once thought were distant becoming a reality. Each visit inspired me to believe in my potential and reminded me that with dedication and perseverance, a brighter future is within reach.

What made PFF special was that it taught us more than just how to apply to college. We also learned about important life skills, including dining etiquette and professional behavior. These lessons helped prepare me for future, academic and professional environments looking back. PFF played a significant role in my growth, and I am grateful for the support experience and opportunities that helped me become more confident about my future. If that day I hesitated to apply to this program I wouldn't get the chance to have these fun and wonderful experiences, looking back it makes me realize what if I didn't apply?

UNIVERSITY
of VIRGINIA

Salutatorian

SONIA MARQUEZ

University of Virginia



Being part of Partnership for the Future has been a meaningful and transformative experience in my life. Before joining, I had goals and ambitions, but I did not always have the confidence, direction, or support system to fully pursue them. PFF changed that by surrounding me with people who believed in my potential and pushed me to aim higher.

Through PFF, I have gained valuable skills that go beyond academics. I have learned how to communicate more effectively, manage my time, and step into leadership roles with confidence. Opportunities that once felt intimidating, like speaking in front of others, taking initiative on projects, or planning for my future, now feel achievable because of the guidance and encouragement I have received.

One of the most meaningful parts of my experience has been my relationship with my GUIDES mentor, Ms. Michelle Wilder. I am truly grateful for her support, especially during the college application process. She was my rock during a time that felt overwhelming and uncertain, always offering guidance, encouragement, and reassurance when I needed it most. Through this experience, we built a strong and lasting relationship that has had a significant impact on my confidence and growth.

One of the biggest impacts PFF has had on me is helping me see my own potential more clearly. It is easy to doubt yourself when you are unsure of what the future holds, but PFF has shown me that success is not just about talent. It is about persistence, growth, and believing in yourself even when things feel uncertain. The mentors and peers I have met have inspired me to stay focused and motivated, even during challenging times.

PFF has also helped shape my future goals. It has encouraged me to think more seriously about my education, career path, and the kind of person I want to become. I now feel more prepared to take on new opportunities and challenges because I know I have the skills and mindset to succeed.

Overall, PFF has made a lasting impact on my life by helping me grow both personally and academically. It has given me confidence, direction, and a strong support system that I will carry with me into the future. Because of PFF, I am not only reaching for the stars, I truly believe I can achieve them.



JOHNSON & WALES
UNIVERSITY

Full-Ride Scholarship

DESTINY MCDONALD

Johnson & Wales University



When I first entered High School, I never knew how hard it would be. I was very quiet, I thought I was invisible to everyone. I felt like a background character. All the friends I had in middle school had split into separate groups but I had not found mine. I thought high school was going to be boring, and a waste of my time. I wanted to hurry and grow up to do so much more than sit in a class for hours. Looking back I was foolish to think that way because I dreamed of going to college. I later realized that there was so much more than just studying in high school and it was only a boring waste of time if I didn't make the most of it.

When I joined Partnership for the Future I was still very quiet, but I somehow still made friends. It was a very big shock and also eye-opening to realize I was not in fact invisible as my extroverted peers made sure they made space for me. I wasn't invisible because the people who could easily talk aloud and talk to other people they meet for the first time, made room for me. I quickly grew very comfortable in that space, then met more kids that were like me, that dreamt big. I knew I found a place I would grow and thrive. I was proud to be myself, to make those accomplishments and to speak out, something I never thought I would do. Partnership for the Future pushed me outside of my comfort zone which helped me also to speak up more in school, make new friends, and build relationships with my teachers. I joined and participated as much as I could with clubs. I didn't feel so invisible.

Then came the summer of my internship, I was able to work at an amazing organization called "Art for the Journey". Again I felt extremely nervous at first but the PFF team was patient with me. I am thankful for the advice and support throughout that summer, and for giving me the opportunity to work more in the community and with others. I am thankful to God, my mom, dad, and sister for all of their support and guidance. Without them I would be stuck and confused. With so much help from everyone in my life, I am proud of where I stand and think. I know I couldn't have made it without their support and patience.



Top 10% of Class

ALANA MCFAIL

Hampton University



Since I was little, I've always known I wanted to pursue higher education. With a mother who always emphasized the importance of education and held me to the highest standard when it came to school, I was already set up to excel academically. Excellent academic performance came naturally, but it wasn't until ninth grade that I realized it takes more than that to get into college.

My perspective changed when I reached high school. My teachers and counselors emphasized the holistic approach that colleges take when selecting students to attend their universities. They reminded us that our future applications would benefit from us participating in various extracurriculars and life experiences ranging from club and sport membership to jobs and leadership roles. This made me anxious as a relatively introverted student who wasn't very involved with anything besides school.

I began searching for ways to get involved in and outside of my school, and I discovered Partnership for the Future. Through Partnership for the Future, I have been able to develop a plethora of skills that not only prepared me for the college application process, but for life and the things I may encounter as a future professional.

Workshops like Dining Etiquette, public speaking, and interview prep have given me a significant advantage in my professional life. The leadership and professional skills that I have learned through this program have helped me land a supervisory role in my current job despite being new to the workforce.

Partnership for the Future has also provided me with opportunities that strengthened my college application. For example, I was able to obtain an internship with FRIENDS Association for Children before my senior year of high school. Opportunities like this have helped put me in positions that I would have never touched without them.

Overall, PFF has worked to transform me from a stellar student to a phenomenal young adult and future business professional. My future is brighter than ever because of the opportunities I have even afforded through Partnership for the Future.

**Full-Ride Scholarship**

JACKIE MEAD

Norfolk State University

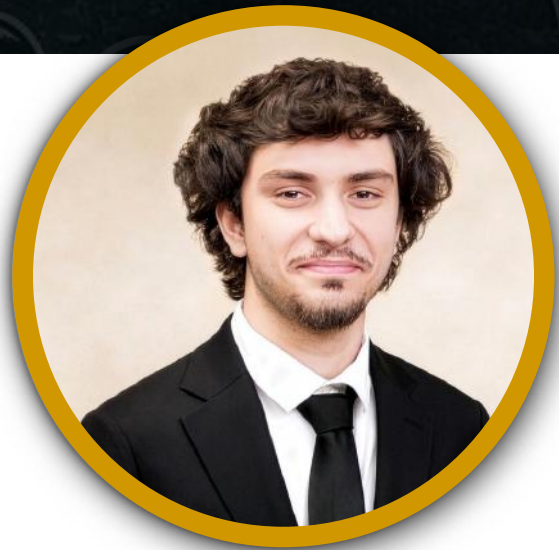


My path toward becoming an insect ecologist had been clear since middle school, and Partnership for the Future (PFF) helped me to find opportunities and resources to succeed in the college admissions process and workplace. Through their college admissions workshops and campus visits, I gained a firsthand understanding of higher education beyond the surface level. I learned that the culture, the expectations, and the opportunities each college offered was unique and important to making the right decision.

PFF's emphasis on professional skills taught me more about how to present myself, communicate in professional settings, and navigate rules of the workplace, ultimately providing me with insights that extended beyond the classroom and prepared me for a career. As a senior in Level 4, PFF paired me with my GUIDES mentor, Ms. Cole, whose guidance on interviews and career development proved invaluable. Her advice helped me approach professional settings with confidence and a clear sense of direction.

That preparation carried over into my internship at the Science Museum of Virginia, where I deepened my knowledge of insects and microorganisms while also broadening my understanding of other scientific fields. Through weekly intern breakfasts and various conversations throughout the day, I had the opportunity to hear directly from scientists and other professionals about their career journeys.

I will be attending Norfolk State University in the fall on a full scholarship to study biology, with plans to earn a PhD in entomology and conduct insect ecology research internationally. Partnership for the Future provided me with the resources to make my goals a reality.



DYLAN MENEVSEOGLU

Virginia Tech

Since I was young, my career goal has been to become an engineer. I knew what I wanted to do but I lacked the direction and guidance to fully understand how to reach my goal. Partnership For the Future guided me along that path and helped me develop the preparation, and all the tools I could ever need along the way.

My first exposure to PFF was at a presentation at school during my Freshman year. I'd never heard of the program and I even debated not showing up to the assembly. I'm so fortunate I did, and if back then I knew what I'd be getting myself into by joining PFF, I'd go to that assembly a million times over. Even after the assembly and hearing what Partnership For the Future was all about, I still could not have known back then just how much of an impact joining PFF would have on my life.

Coming from an immigrant family, I really was not knowledgeable on what it takes to find the right college for me and about the college application process. PFF taught me everything I needed to know about the whole process, and be it through all the college tours and college readiness workshops, I felt prepared for applying to college. I was able to get into my dream college, Virginia Tech, and I owe it to PFF for getting me to that point. Additionally, my goal of becoming an engineer was one that became fully realized and within my reach due to the career-readiness PFF provided. Engineering, being a particularly hard career to break into, is significantly easier to find a career in when you have work experience. I was fortunate enough to have an internship with Dominion Energy, made possible with the help of PFF. So, now after all the career-readiness material and work experience PFF has given me, I realize I have a leg up on becoming an engineer. I am so fortunate to have these experiences and opportunities because of this program.

Another aspect Partnership For the Future gave me unparalleled help in was the process of finding and applying for scholarships. PFF made me realize the importance of applying for more and more scholarships, and their constant notifications about new scholarships truly helped me to afford college. Also, in addition to being able to afford college, PFF has prepared me for the transition from high school to the college life. Where at one point I felt the change would be too drastic and too foreign, I know now that there is nothing to fear and I can thank Partnership for the Future for this.

I feel ready for that next step of my life, all because of PFF. And if on that next part of my journey I ever feel unsure or lost, I know I have the people and resources to guide me back, all because I have PFF.



OLD DOMINION
UNIVERSITY

Full-Ride Scholarship

Top 10% of Class

RAENESHA MOSELEY

Old Dominion University



For a moment something changed for me, and changed my way of thinking then and now. It was when I finally turned 15 years old that I realized that the legendary golden teen years weren't as special as everyone said they would be. Growing up, I always found myself saying, "I can't wait to be older". When I finally had my 15th birthday party, it all clicked that growing up wasn't all that. I really started to notice how much I still enjoyed being young. No sparkles and rainbows, no more playing outside, stomping in the rain puddles with friends, and coming back in, only to soon become sick. I missed playing in the dirt making mud pies when playing in the dirt was still acceptable. All the quirks of still being young. The age where people didn't really judge you for being you, because everyone was still figuring out themselves.

I found myself thinking that being young was the true Golden Years. Life was peaceful, it had a light that just can't be described, looking into a world with eyes full of wonder and ready to learn. I recently just turned 18, and I can't even explain how excited I was to finally be the big 18 but now as I am an adult there are no sparkles and rainbows. I am an "adult" as they say but not quite treated like one the middle age where my parents still worry about me too much. As I think back I don't think I enjoyed my teen years as much as I should've. I am now aware of all the responsibilities that are ahead. I miss doing childish things while still being a child while it was tolerated and accepted. Although I don't feel any different, my judgment became sharper, and my mistakes now feel heavier.

I am nervous for the years that are soon to come, the responsibility of where we can drink or smoke when we are no longer teens. Full-fledged adults, but everyone still considers us young and youthful. The world is ever so bittersweet. Sweet with youth, sweet with childhood memories, sweet with the first time seeing fireworks. But bitter with change, where the world can no longer protect you with "you're still young, you have time." My golden years started young, but that's behind me; I am just getting started. Although the world is ever-changing, I do feel I am ready to be a part of it now, still young but open-minded to the world of opportunities ahead of me. Accepting all my opportunities head on.



LYNETTE MUKISA

James Madison University

Growing up, I remember listening to my parents' stories time and time again. My parents immigrated here Africa, my mother from Liberia, and my father from Uganda. They expressed to me the utmost importance of seeking further education, past high school diploma, because that wasn't something they weren't able to achieve being born in a third world country. They were honest with me about how many opportunities I had been born into in America so when I heard about Partnership for the Future, a nonprofit organization that helps students like me, whose parents didn't get the opportunity to go to college, I rejoiced.

I didn't know about things like the FAFSA, how student loans worked, or even what attending a four-year university would look like. Partnership for the Future (PFF) took me on college tours, sat me through financial aid lessons and even a Dining Etiquette workshop. Partnership for the Future shaped me from my freshman year of high school until today. They brought me out of my shell and taught me that it's ok to be seen, ok to be heard and as Mrs. Dionne would say, to "take up space".

Now as I prepare to go off to James Madison University, I know that I would not be standing where I am today without Partnership for the Future. They show that they care for their students everyday, through every interaction. Entering college I know that I will always have a support system with them and a shoulder to lean on.



WILLIAM MURRAY

Virginia Commonwealth University

Partnership for the Future has had a profound influence on my life and my development. I was sitting in class one day during my freshman year of high school when unexpectedly I was told by my teacher to go to the auditorium. When I got there, what I noticed were the words Partnership for the Future on the board. When everyone sat down, a representative from PFF started a presentation. When the presentation came to a close something sparked in me, like something deep inside was awakened, I just knew that PFF was something that would change my life.

What PFF provided me was an exciting environment and a glimpse into the opportunities college could provide. I was constantly surrounded by other students who were academically focused. We heard speakers from various occupations and companies. We also participated in numerous workshops explaining the personal traits that we needed to build as future college students. I had been on several college campuses before this program, but I was still naive about what a college education could provide. PFF gave me the inspiration and motivation to think beyond high school.

Because of the exposure of Partnership for the Future I know college is not just a place to learn but a place of opportunities, and as a young bi-racial man who identifies as a Black American, higher education will provide me with the route to a solid career. I am forever grateful to Partnership for the Future for putting me in environments where I could focus on my future and see the opportunities and possibilities that I had never seen before. I will cherish every single moment I have had with PFF and the many more to come.



Salutatorian

ADITYA NAIR

Virginia Tech



I first heard about Partnership For the Future through a presentation Mr. Rich did in my freshman year of high school. I wasn't going to apply initially as I thought it sounded too good to be true, but after some careful thought, I decided to take the time and send my application in. A few weeks later, I received an email saying that I was invited to join the program. From the first time I engaged with PFF at Institute Week to our very last Friday session, PFF has given me new found growth and improvement that I have applied here and in my personal endeavors.

To me, the most important lesson I have learned from this organization is to never take any opportunity for granted. PFF has shown me that every opening that you are presented with can lead you to your goal and dream, regardless if you expect it to or not. PFF has instilled the confidence in me to go above and beyond to attain my goals, and they have shown me that the most important steps can start from an unexpected angle. My doubt in the beginning of my journey with this organization has been transformed into success, and if I could go back and tell my freshman year self anything, I would tell myself to apply to PFF every single time.

The workshops, guest speakers and professional experiences have taught me lessons that have extended far beyond the bounds of PFF. I learned to become more proactive and chase opportunities, because opportunity doesn't always just come to you. Throughout my high school career with PFF, I earned several prestigious awards, held leadership positions across multiple different clubs, and graduated in the top of my class, because PFF pushed me to be greater every day.

My peers and mentors have also been pivotal to my growth, as they always support me in my chase in my goal. With PFF backing me up, I know that I can go to university stress-free and ready to take on new challenges.



WILLIAM
& MARY



MIKAELA CRISTINE PERTOS

William & Mary

I heard a loud roar of applause but I wasn't in front of a crowd. I was sitting beside my fellow PFF Level 1 students at the time, and I was taken aback by the opportunity that I had missed. I was supposed to speak. I was supposed to tell the room about my experience that summer, what I was grateful for, and what I learned. I did not. I looked down at the script in front of me and promised myself to never experience that feeling ever again. Allow me to share what I learned during my first summer in Partnership for the Future, a summer that I will carry with me throughout my academic journey. A summer filled with challenges, opportunities, and great people.

I would say that most students' PFF stories started with Institute Week, but mine didn't. Mine started with the first time I skipped school, or at least what felt like skipping school when I left study hall to attend an information session for a program I had never heard of before.

I walked into the auditorium, and I saw Mr. Rich and Ms. Kate for the first time. "You don't have to pay a single penny for college," coming from a man named "Rich"? I knew they had me then. The next thing I knew, I was at Randolph-Macon College for Institute Week.

During that time, one speaker challenged us to make as many mistakes as possible during our time at PFF, to treat it as trial and error rather than not trying at all. She then left us with the task of preparing a brief speech. I looked at my speech, only to be snapped back to reality by the sound of applause. I did not go up front. I did not read my speech. I was too scared to make mistakes but that experience changed something for me. I never wanted to feel that way ever again. I knew that, in order for that to change, I needed to be okay with stepping out of my comfort zone, or as Mrs. Henderson told us, "to take space."

As my sophomore year began, I joined and competed in Mock Trial. I received an award during my very first year. This time the applause didn't come with fear anymore, it became my motivation. I wanted to keep on saying yes, speak in front of others, and participate. I joined clubs, volunteered whenever I could, and began taking opportunities I would have once been too afraid to accept.

College readiness, networking, public speaking, and professionalism are only a handful of the things PFF taught me. We learn them from incredible speakers and volunteers. What makes PFF special isn't that we're only taught these lessons. It's that we're given the opportunity to live them. Somewhere between our shy Level 1 selves and our college-ready Level 4 selves, we become different people. We became young adults that are ready for our future.



WILLIAM
& MARY

Full-Ride Scholarship

MAKAYLA RANKIN

William & Mary



At the beginning of my freshman year, I was scared to speak in front of people, I was worried about the college application process, and overall unprepared for my future. As soon as the opportunity to join PFF was presented to me, I decided to jump in and learn as much as I could about college, finances, possible careers, and more.

At first, I had no idea what to expect from the program and I did not always enjoy being pushed out of my comfort zone. However, I soon realized PFF was helping me learn more about myself and gain confidence in my skills and goals. I learned to speak in front of crowds even when I was nervous, how to set myself up for financial success, and started to formulate goals for my future. I immersed myself in career exploration activities, mock interviews, job shadowing, group projects, and more.

I remember when I first joined PFF as a freshman, Mrs. Dionne told us, “You will get out of the program what you put into it,” and that has always stuck with me. It was a gentle reminder that in order to be successful and get the most experience out of PFF, you have to fully embrace what the program has to offer and step out of your comfort zone to grow. Since hearing these words, I chose to take advantage of every opportunity, connect with as many people as possible, and to always experience things with an open mind. This mindset has allowed me to gain so much knowledge, confidence, and connections I never would have had otherwise.

PFF provides so many resources and opportunities, supporting students in ways we don't always receive from school counselors or family. The mentors and staff have been there for me every step of the way, helping me through every uncertainty and every question I had. I would not have earned a full scholarship to William & Mary without the guidance, encouragement, and opportunities PFF provided me.



ERIC RILEY

Virginia Commonwealth University

When I started my freshman year of high school, I thought I would breeze through it and easily move on to the next chapter of my life. But there was one problem with my plan. First, high school lasted four years, and it wasn't nearly as quick or easy as I expected. Second, I had no idea what I wanted to do after graduation.

As I spent more time thinking about my future, I found something that helped me, Partnership for the Future (PFF).

Before joining PFF, I thought about college, but I didn't think I was smart enough to get there or that my family could afford it. PFF showed me that college was possible. Through the program, I gained a better understanding of the college process, learned important life skills, and realized I was capable of achieving more than I ever imagined.

With that new confidence, I started putting what I learned into practice. I challenged myself to try new things and step outside of my comfort zone. Every time I did, I became a little more confident. Each year in PFF helped me grow into a better version of myself.

Now four years later, I am done with high school, I've been accepted into VCU, and I'm ready to go into the real world. I found my path, and I have Partnership for the Future to thank for helping me get there.



ALAYAH ROANE

Virginia Commonwealth University

PFF has impacted my life by giving me the tools and confidence to prepare for college and succeed beyond high school. Along the way, I've learned financial literacy, built my networking skills, and found myself in places I never imagined I would experience. During my time in the program, I connected with professionals of all ages and met people I can confidently call friends and confide in.

It all started during Institute Week when the only people I knew were Anijah and Chanel. I have always been a pretty socially awkward person, but I instantly clicked with Darrell, Ptah, and Chase. We eventually became something like a friend group and went on "side quests," commonly known as field trips in PFF.

Becoming a Level 4 made me realize just how many people are truly supporting and rooting for my success. I met my GUIDES mentor, Latasha Raspberry, who is the most down-to-earth, understanding, and supportive mentor I've ever had. I've never heard anyone speak life into me besides my mom, grandmother, and her.

As a Level 2 student in Career Immersion, our class faced its share of challenges. We experienced miscommunication, difficult moments, and setbacks, but we never gave up. In school we pushed one another to succeed, and many of us worked toward earning a B or higher, graduating with an Advanced Diploma, and, for some of us, earning an associate degree before receiving our high school diploma.

One lesson that has stayed with me is the importance of financial planning. Through Virginia 529, Capital One workshops, and our Friday sessions, I learned how to save for college and prepare financially for my future. By graduation, I will have approximately \$4,000 saved for college; \$2,000 that I've saved and \$2,000 matched by PFF.

As a Level 4, I hope the younger levels really take a moment to appreciate their time at PFF and recognize the community, family, and support system they've become a part of.



PATRICK SAPINI

Hampton University

When I first joined Partnership for the Future (PFF), I was very anxious. I wasn't able to participate in Institute Week and although I knew several of the students, I felt like I was missing out. Despite missing this important part of the PFF journey, the experiences, and friendships that I have gained from being a part of this program have made me closer to the person I want to be in the future and the person I am today.

These past four years partnered with PFF have given me a new outlook, not only in my journey into college, but in all aspects of my life. From how I navigate myself when obstacles arise to encouraging me to continue reaching for the stars and pursue my future dreams. The struggles that I was forced to overcome pushed me to become more resilient and persevere through times of hardships. As I became more involved in the program, it grew into more than just a college readiness program. It became a support system that encouraged me to become the best version of myself.

Through workshops, mentoring, conversations with advisors and peers, and networking opportunities, I learned to step outside of my comfort zone and trust my abilities. I began to understand that success is not something achieved overnight, but something built through persistence, discipline, and believing in yourself even during difficult moments.

One of the biggest lessons I have learned from PFF is to not give up on myself. There were moments throughout high school when balancing academics, responsibilities, and personal challenges felt overwhelming. However, PFF continuously reminded me that setbacks don't define my future. Instead, they are opportunities to learn, adapt, and continue moving forward. The encouragement I received from the program motivated me to keep reaching higher, even during times when I doubted myself.



MADDISON SCOTT

Old Dominion University

One of the biggest ways Partnership for the Future (PFF) has impacted me is by teaching me the importance of leadership and responsibility. Through workshops, meetings, and events, I became more comfortable communicating with others, stepping outside of my comfort zone, and taking initiative. These experiences strengthened my teamwork and communication skills, which I know will continue to help me in college and throughout my future career.

PFF also changed the way I approached school. Being surrounded by supportive mentors and motivated peers inspired me to take my education more seriously and set higher expectations for myself. I became more focused on my goals and realized that hard work and dedication create opportunities. PFF reminded me that success doesn't happen overnight—it comes through consistency, effort, and perseverance.

One of the most meaningful parts of the program was the sense of community it created. I met people who looked like me and shared similar goals and aspirations, and that support system made a difference during stressful times. Knowing that others believed in my potential gave me the confidence to believe in myself.

Looking back, PFF has helped shape me into a more determined, responsible, and confident person. The lessons I learned, the relationships I built, and the experiences I gained have prepared me for future challenges and opportunities. I am grateful for everything PFF has taught me, and I know the impact it has had on my life will continue to influence me for years to come.



NAIMIR SMITH

Virginia State University

Partnership for the Future (PFF) has done many incredible things for me, giving me experiences I never would have had without them. The most impactful lessons are the ones I learned outside of our summer Friday workshops at the VCU School of Business classrooms. It was the lessons where PFF was honest and blunt about topics that had to be discussed. They taught me that it's better to rip the band-aid off and get through what needs to be done.

For most of my childhood, I was pretty responsible and always handled what needed to be done. But once I started to grow and get older, it became harder to focus like I used to, as I had so many distractions. Life at home changed rapidly. I was around new people and the workload of life became really heavy. I don't believe I would have achieved my level of maturity in handling so many changes without the guidance PFF provided.

All in all, PFF isn't just some program preparing you for life after high school, but one that prepares you for life, period. They teach you about hard topics and choices, and are good people to know in general and in networking.

My sincerest gratitude, and utmost appreciation goes to PFF, they truly help you look towards the future.



VICTORIA SMITH

Hampton University

Partnership for the Future (PFF) has impacted my life in ways I never could have imagined. When I first decided to apply, I saw it as an opportunity to strengthen my resume, but it gave me so much more than that. This program gave me support and guidance from people who genuinely believed in me and who saw the person I could become, even in moments when I doubted myself. It also expanded my horizons by taking me places and introducing me to people I would not have been able to meet on my own. Through PFF, I had the opportunity to meet Cleo Powell, Chief Justice of the Virginia Supreme Court. That experience inspired me and opened my eyes to new possibilities for my future, and for that I will always be grateful.

One of the greatest impacts of this program has been the support system I gained throughout my four years in PFF. Leaders such as Ms. Kate, Mr. Rich, my mentor Ms. April, and even my internship supervisors, Ms. Christine and Ms. Ana, all shared wisdom, advice, and encouragement that helped shape the person I am today. Ms. April, especially, became someone I could truly lean on. Even though I only met her this year, it feels as though I have known her for much longer. She is an incredibly intelligent and strong woman, and I often say I see parts of myself in her. She stood by my side throughout the entire college application process, which was one of the most stressful experiences I have faced. However, with the support of both her and my parents, I was able to let go of unnecessary stress and stay focused. Because of that support, I successfully applied to several institutions and committed to the illustrious Hampton University.

Beyond the support I received, the opportunities this program provided have greatly shaped my experiences and future goals. Through PFF, I interviewed and was fortunate enough to secure an internship with McGuireWoods LLP, the largest law firm in Virginia. Since I plan to become an attorney, this internship was especially meaningful to me. Although I wasn't able to work directly with attorneys every day, working alongside the Human Resources and the Marketing departments taught me what real professional work ethic and communication look like in practice – and the attorneys I had the privilege of interviewing showed me what that same standard looks like at the highest level. Through it all, I learned as much about myself and the kind of professional I hope to become as I did about the firm itself. That entire opportunity was possible because of PFF.

Partnership for the Future may sound like just another program to some people, but to me and to many of my peers, it has been a life-changing opportunity. It has meant far more to me than I ever expected when I first applied. It has given me guidance when I needed support, opportunities that broadened my perspective, and experiences that helped define my goals and ambitions. Overall, this program has impacted me in ways that will stay with me long after my time in Partnership for the Future comes to an end!



AWA SOUMAHORO

Virginia Tech

Looking up at the big screen, watching a current Partnership for the Future student recounting her experience within the program felt like an introduction to a new world colliding at the time. I had always been hesitant to put myself out there, content with my achievements, I rarely stepped outside of what felt familiar or comfortable. So, when I spent one evening waiting for a late bus, the last thing I expected was a ping notifying me of my acceptance into the Partnership for the Future program. I knew of my capabilities, but I don't think I truly believed in the opportunities that could come from them.

Everything about the program felt unfamiliar in a way that intimidated me at first. However, what resonated with me was not the food trucks that made sure were present each Friday at VCU, nor the educational trips that made me feel like I had traveled the world. It was the strong community and support system that Partnership for the Future fostered, giving me countless opportunities to discover myself.

It was the constant encouragement and the reminder to "take space" that became ingrained in me. Through Partnership for the Future, I became more open with others, reconnecting with people I never expected to speak with so freely. The constant interaction acted as a form of exposure therapy, completely changing my perspective on the program from what I had initially expected. Along the way, I experienced new parts of Virginia that I had never explored before and gained a broader perspective than the one I had once confined myself to.

Especially as the child of immigrant parents, there was always a level of uncertainty surrounding college and the future. An unfamiliarity that had often made opportunities felt akin to a distant dream because I had no idea where to start. The program bridged the gap between that uncertainty which held me back from seeing those possibilities as something attainable for myself.

I had seen the ways different nonprofits work alongside one another to create opportunities and support for others, the change they bring around our community. I had also experienced the highs and lows of preparing to pursue my education, witnessing what the program has done for students in similar situations as myself. All of it helped me realize that success isn't a pedestal differentiating one person from the next, but a steady process built through seizing the opportunity of change and improvement.

PFF gave me a clearer vision of where my future would take me, empowering me with the confidence to step toward it without the same uncertainty I once had. I now look toward the future with far more certainty than I once did, treating this chapter as just the beginning.



TIFFANY TAYLOR

Virginia State University

Partnership for the Future has had a huge impact on my high school experience and has helped shape the person I am today. Through this program, I've gained lifelong friendships, incredible opportunities, and a support system that has encouraged me every step of the way. Looking back on these past years, I realize that Partnership for the Future became more than just a program to me—it became a place where I grew, learned, and created memories that I'll carry with me long after graduation.

One of my favorite aspects of this program has been the experiences and field trips we've shared together. We've traveled to North Carolina, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and explored different parts of Virginia. Along the way, we visited historical landmarks, experienced both PWIs and HBCUs, toured places like Coca-Cola World, and were introduced to opportunities and environments many of us had never imagined for ourselves. These experiences opened my eyes and showed me that there are so many possibilities waiting beyond what I once thought was within reach.

What makes this program truly special, though, is the people behind it. The hardworking adults in Partnership for the Future have dedicated so much time, energy, and care into helping us succeed from day one. They believed in us, supported us, challenged us, and continued showing up for us even during difficult moments. I truly appreciate everything each and every one of them has done for me.

Of course, our journey wasn't perfect. We had challenges and moments that tested us, but those experiences helped us grow and led us to this new chapter in our lives. I'll miss sitting in those uncomfortable chairs in the VCU School of Business, laughing and talking with friends, and listening to guest speakers who traveled to share their stories with us.

I am incredibly grateful for Partnership for the Future, and I thank them for never giving up on me.



KELLEN TRAVERS

Virginia Tech

For the longest time, I struggled to answer one simple question: Who am I? Throughout my four years of high school, I felt like I had many different versions of myself. Some days, I was the quiet introvert sitting in the back of class reading novels and staying out of the spotlight. Other days, I was the loud, energetic social butterfly that moved like a walking circus. I spent years trying to figure out which version of me was the “real” one, but I never fully understood myself until I became part of Partnership for the Future.

Looking back, it all started with an unexpected presentation in the auditorium. At first, PFF seemed like just another program offering money, work experience, and college preparation. My classmates and I were unsure about our plans after high school and I never imagined that one meeting would have such a profound impact on my life. That unexpected presentation marked the beginning of my connection with a community that shaped my high school journey. As I became more involved with PFF, my role and experiences grew. What began as a program quickly turned into a supportive environment that fostered opportunities for me to grow personally and professionally. Through my internship, our Social and Cultural Capital workshops that took us beyond the classroom, and summer sessions; I learned valuable skills, connected with other highly motivated students, and discovered a community where every version of me was welcomed.

One of my favorite memories from PFF was Institute week at Randolph-Macon College in June of 2023. Those few days living on campus created bonds and memories that I will never forget.. During the day, we focused on professional development, teamwork, and preparing for a future of ups and downs. At night, we laughed, bonded, and created memories that still connect us to this day. My friends and I still jokingly refer to PFF as “business in the front and party in the back” - a phrase that perfectly describes the program’s ability to balance the importance of preparing us for the future but also making sure we had a little fun along the way.

Throughout my journey in PFF, one quote always stayed with me: “You get out of this program what you put into it.” As a Level 4 Ambassador, I now understand how true those words are. PFF challenged me in ways I never expected, and because of that, I gained experience that many students can only dream about. Even though this program wasn’t always easy, every challenge helped me grow stronger and more mature. I will carry the relationships I’ve built for the rest of my life.

Today, when I think about who I have become over the last four years, I finally have an answer. I am someone who has learned to balance the different sides of myself rather than hide them. I am a leader, a friend, a scholar, and a future Virginia Tech Hokie who is ready to succeed. PFF helped me discover confidence, purpose, and a sense of belonging that I did not have before. No matter where life takes me, PFF will always be one of the biggest reasons I became the person I am today.



JAMES MADISON
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DARRELL VAUGHAN

James Madison University



The Partnership for the Future (PFF) program has greatly influenced my life throughout the last four years. At first, when I became a part of the program, I knew that I would like to pursue higher education; however, I did not have enough knowledge about the necessary procedures and the variety of opportunities that were available to me. Because of PFF, I have gained a number of beneficial experiences and skills that will help me throughout my life. One of the most significant aspects of this program is the Career Immersion. Being involved in Career Immersion, I gained a great opportunity to learn more about various career paths and what it means to become a professional in the workplace.

This helped me realize how important such qualities as communication and professionalism are and gave me ideas about the careers I can pursue in the future. The workforce development programs of PFF help students to gain an understanding of different career opportunities. PFF has also opened my eyes to the possibilities of higher education. Through college visits, I have toured schools such as North Carolina A&T State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Morehouse College, along with many other colleges and universities. Visiting these campuses allowed me to picture myself as a college student and helped me understand what different schools have to offer.

Overall, PFF has helped me grow academically, professionally, and personally. It has given me opportunities that I may not have had otherwise and has shown me that my goals are achievable with hard work and preparation. I am grateful for the experiences, relationships, and lessons I have gained through PFF, and I know they will continue to benefit me long after I leave the program.



OLD DOMINION
UNIVERSITY



CHANEL WASHINGTON

Old Dominion University

Partnership For the Future has impacted my life in many positive ways over the past four years. Through this program, I've gained a lot of experiences and learned many new skills that have helped me grow both personally and professionally. When I first joined, I was not very comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people, but PFF helped me become more confident in myself and my abilities. Over time, I learned how to speak in front of large crowds, communicate more clearly, and present myself in a professional way.

One of the biggest things I gained from PFF was the opportunity to network with many different people. I was able to meet professionals, make connections, and learn how important communication and relationships are for the future. These experiences taught me how to carry myself professionally and be more prepared for opportunities that may come my way later in life.

PFF also gave me the opportunity to have an internship at the FRIENDS Association for Children. During this internship, I was able to grow my leadership skills and gain real-world experience working with others. It helped me become more responsible, independent, and confident in handling different tasks and situations. I learned skills that I know will continue to help me in college, future jobs, and everyday life.

Overall, this program has been preparing me for life after school for the past four years, and I am very grateful that I took the opportunity when it was given to me. PFF has helped shape me into a more confident, prepared, and professional young lady. The experiences, lessons, and connections I gained through this program are things I will carry with me for the rest of my life. It has truly encouraged me to keep reaching for my goals and believing in my future.



MARYMOUNT
UNIVERSITY



ANGENIECE WILKES

Marymount University

Partnership for the Future (PFF) has had a major impact on my life by helping me grow into a more confident, responsible, and goal-oriented person. Before joining PFF, I understood the importance of success, but I did not fully realize how much my mindset, effort, and willingness to step outside of my comfort zone could shape my future. Through the experiences, sessions, and opportunities provided by PFF, I learned that success is not something that simply happens. It is something you build through discipline, initiative, and determination.

One of the biggest lessons PFF taught me is that growth comes from putting yourself out there. Whether it was attending events, participating in professional development sessions, or connecting with new people, PFF constantly encouraged me to challenge myself. At first, stepping into unfamiliar situations felt uncomfortable, but over time I realized those experiences were helping me become more confident and prepared for the future. PFF showed me that networking, communication, and leadership are essential skills that can open doors to new opportunities.

PFF also helped me understand that I have control over the direction of my life. The program pushed me to think proactively about my goals and the decisions I make every day. Instead of waiting for opportunities to come to me, I learned the importance of creating my own through hard work and persistence. This mindset has improved not only my performance as a student, but also my growth as a person and my preparation for the workforce.

Because of PFF, I now approach my future with a stronger sense of purpose and confidence. I have become more motivated to pursue success in college, my career, and my personal life. The guidance and support I received through PFF placed me on a path toward meaningful and calculated success. Most importantly, PFF helped me realize that personal growth begins when you are willing to challenge yourself and take advantage of the opportunities around you.



CAREY WILLIAMS

George Mason University

My first four years in Partnership for the Future have been a journey that I will never forget. Throughout my time in this program PFF has truly lived up to their core values. They have made strides to help students afford college, they have provided students with the opportunity to take college trips and to visit different places surrounding them, lastly they have shared important life lessons with students, like how to manage money or how to write a resume. PFF really cares about their students, and this is demonstrated by the time and effort their staff puts into our events and setting up certain activities. My life has been impacted by this program because of how it has helped me grow as a person and how it has prepared me for college.

Since the first day of PFF's Institute Week at Randolph-Macon College, PFF has always encouraged us to speak up. I can remember vividly standing up in front of 80 other people and introducing myself. It was one of the first times I had to step out of my comfort zone to be able to talk in front of people. Ever since that moment, I have become more confident not only in my public speaking, but also in my ability to lead. I was elected Vice President of my school's Becoming Kings club, a leadership program for young men. I also volunteered to give a speech at our club's graduation ceremony, and I now feel much more comfortable speaking in front of large groups. These experiences have given me a chance to be able to express myself, and they have helped me form new bonds with people I wouldn't have connected with if I didn't learn to use my voice.

Preparing for college is a difficult thing to do. The application process is tedious, there are a lot of questions you have to answer, and a lot of information you have to take in. Because of this, the whole process is very overwhelming for most students. When I first started thinking about college while in high school, I was stressed about all things I had to complete to apply. PFF helped me and gave me the tools to be ready for when it was time to complete my application. Every Friday session we would go over how to write a good college essay, we went over financial aid and what that would look like at certain colleges, and most importantly they taught us how to narrow down our selection when it came time to choose what school you wanted to attend.

Because of these lessons I was more knowledgeable about the application process and it helped me not worry as much.

I am very happy I decided to join this program because it has helped me in the pursuit to become a better person and it has put me on track to pursue my future goals. I am very proud of the progress I've made in this program so far and I can't wait to see what's in store for college!

**Salutatorian**

WAYNE WILLIAMS

Virginia Commonwealth University



In February of 2023 I was called to the library of my school. Inside, there was a presentation about a program called Partnership for the Future. I learned about what the program provided and the requirements to join. The parts of the application process that made me nervous were the essay and interview. I was not confident in my ability to write and speak to others. I did not want to miss this opportunity so I got help. I asked my English teacher to look over my essay and to help me prepare for the interview. I later found out my essay was accepted and that I was moving on to the interview process.

I was still nervous despite the practice I had done. Later on during the interview I was anxious and struggled to answer the questions. Despite this the interviewers were very patient and understanding. I grew more confident during the interview and learned to be more calm when being interviewed. After the interview I was surprised to find out I was accepted into the program.

In May of 2023, during the first orientation, I learned that Institute Week started on the same day my band trip ended. The band trip was to Pennsylvania and was my first time away from home. As soon as I returned to Virginia I had to go home to get my belongings for Institute Week. I was worried about the consequences of being late and I did not know where to go. Fortunately Mr. Rich was there to help me. He made sure I was caught up to speed, I knew where to go, and he provided me with the schedule for the preceding days.

As I entered the cafeteria, I was anxious about meeting the other students. I was an introvert and very nervous to meet new people. So I decided to sit alone. The moment I sat down three students William, Namir, and London greeted me. They asked me to sit with them and their friends. I was surprised, happy and grateful at that moment. I had a great time with them and learned we all had similar interests. Moving ahead, I decided to clean the tables after we finished eating. This small action was repeated every time we finished eating and I did not know it would be rewarded in the future.

Thanks to their kindness I was inspired to introduce myself to others and break out of my shell. I managed to make connections with my peers and grew to be more sociable than I was before joining the program. During this week I also learned to take space through asking more questions, being more proactive, and taking initiative.

In conclusion, over the past 3 years PFF has given me the space to speak, learn, and grow. I am truly thankful for all of the students and staff in this program that make everything possible.



TIANNA WOODSON

Virginia Commonwealth University

Partnership for the Future has truly transformed my life for the better. Initially, when I attended the interest meeting, I was skeptical. The opportunity seemed almost too good to be true, and I even hesitated when it came to completing the application. However, my mom encouraged me to give it a chance, and I am incredibly grateful that I listened. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I have ever made.

When I discovered that I had advanced to the next stage of the application process, I was shocked. During the first meeting, I learned that I had earned a 3.5 GPA in ninth grade. Honestly, I didn't know much about GPAs or their significance as no one in my family had ever taught me about them. Some of my relatives didn't even finish high school, and my grandmother never had the opportunity to even attend middle school. My grandmother's story inspires me every day to pursue an education; and knowing that I could become the first person in my family to attend college is a blessing that motivates me to keep working hard and take advantage of every opportunity.

When it was time for my interview, I was extremely nervous. My mind kept going blank, and I struggled to answer questions the way I wanted to. One of the interviewers kindly reminded me that it was okay to be nervous and encouraged me to stay calm. That simple reassurance helped me feel more confident. After the interview, I ran to my mom and told her I thought I had done terribly. She reminded me that "what is meant for me will always find me", and those words stayed with me.

Soon after, I attended Institute Week, a week-long event where I was immersed into the college experience. It was also my first time being away from home on my own, which made me both nervous and excited. Once I was dropped off, everything suddenly felt real. During the program, several activities pushed me outside my comfort zone. During one of the activities I was introduced to Cristine, another student in my PFF class. She is funny, intelligent, and has become one of the most important people in my growth throughout this program. Another unforgettable moment was introducing myself, sharing about someone I had met, and saying which school I attended in front of a large group. Public speaking had always made me anxious, but I stood up and spoke with confidence. That moment showed me I was capable of more than I believed.

From traveling to two new states during the annual Spring Break trip to visiting colleges, PFF has opened doors I never imagined possible and helped me believe in myself. Most importantly, it has taught me that your background does not determine your future. No matter where you come from or what challenges your family has faced, you can create your own path, make a difference, and become the best version of yourself.

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