

2020 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY CLEARING THE PATH



College Now
Greater Cleveland

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND CEO

When students first start working with College Now, many cannot envision their postsecondary pathway. Everything from applying to a college, university, or certificate program to thinking about a major and eventual career path can seem like a daunting task, with obstacles to overcome and challenges to face. Sometimes, those challenges seem insurmountable and their dreams unachievable.

At College Now, we work diligently every day to educate our students – of all ages – on the opportunities available to them in postsecondary and beyond. Through our traditional high school advising, scholarships and financial aid, adult programs and services, and the College Now Mentoring Program, we help students navigate the often-complicated path to achieve their goals.

College Now has been doing this – clearing the path – for students for over 50 years, starting in 1967 with a small group of students from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD). What started as small scholarships for this group (one of whom, Philip Thompson, you will read more about later in this report) quickly grew into advising services for students throughout the CMSD, then the suburbs and parochial schools, followed by adult advising. This has grown into the organization College Now is today, with advisors in 185 school and community buildings throughout Northeast Ohio, advising students as young as middle school through 65 year-olds looking to return to college.

Over the past year, College Now's work has gone deeper than ever before to help more students realize their postsecondary dreams. Now in five counties, College Now is serving 30,000 individuals each year, and awarding \$3.78 million in scholarships to 1,900 high school graduates and adult learners. With Say Yes Cleveland now a reality for CMSD students, a huge roadblock has been cleared for graduates to pursue a pathway beyond high school, and College Now has been on the front lines of this work, administering the Say Yes scholarship.

College Now also has been able to help more adult learners across the state by leading the Degrees When Due initiative for eight Ohio colleges and universities, aimed at helping students with some college credit get back on track and graduate. This builds on the success of College Now's (Re)Connect to College collaboration with Cleveland State University (CSU), which is focused on recruiting, retaining, and graduating stopped-out students at CSU. The program has been so successful that, this year, (Re)Connect to College received the "To & Through Award of Excellence" at the National College Attainment Network's 2019 National Conference!

One of the most exciting pieces of growth this year has been the expansion of the College Now Mentoring Program, which has nearly doubled in size as College Now began to pair every Say Yes Cleveland scholarship recipient with a mentor, as well. While College Now scholarships provide financial support for students attending postsecondary programs, the Mentoring Program's "secret sauce" is the social capital it provides for scholarship recipients to help them succeed in college and beyond. Currently, the program has over 1,600 mentor/mentee pairs and the growth will continue, particularly as Say Yes is fully implemented here in Cleveland.

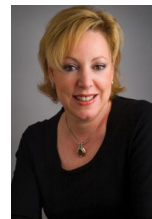
Clearing the path isn't always easy, but College Now is committed to ensuring that students of all ages, from all communities, have the resources and support necessary to access their own postsecondary path for success. And none of this work would be doable without the deep support and commitment from you, College Now's donors, funders, supporters, mentors, and advocates. Because of you, College Now has been able to remove more obstacles and make more opportunities available to our students than ever before. We look forward to continuing to do this important work with your support and partnership.

Sincerely,



Mark D. Ross

Mark Ross
Chair, Board of Directors



Lee A. Friedman

Lee A. Friedman
Chief Executive Officer

MISSION

College Now's mission is to increase postsecondary educational attainment in Greater Cleveland through college and career access advising, financial aid counseling, and scholarship and retention services.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

Operational Revenue

Ending July 31, 2019

Foundations	\$4,203,039
Corporations	\$2,211,369
Individuals and Organizations	\$416,688
Government Grants	\$4,908,572
Fee for Service	\$1,375,820
Special Events	\$578,184

\$13,693,672

Operational Expenses

Ending July 31, 2019

Advising and Counseling Services	\$7,512,452
Scholarship Awards	\$3,775,735
Scholarship and Retention Services	\$1,172,417
General Administration	\$640,180
Fundraising	\$565,864

\$13,666,648

COLLEGE NOW AT A GLANCE

30,000

Number of individuals served by College Now

\$3.78 Million

Total amount of College Now scholarships awarded

\$79 Million

Scholarship dollars awarded to Greater Cleveland students since inception

\$160 Million

Amount of financial aid the more than 10,000 current college students served by College Now have received

\$70,000

A \$500 investment in College Now advising services results in an average of \$70,000 in financial aid awarded per student over four years of college

1,900

High school graduates and adult learners who receive College Now scholarships

\$2,200

Average College Now renewable scholarship award

4 Stars

College Now's ranking, and highest ranking awarded, by Charity Navigator, the nation's largest independent charity evaluator

185

Venues in Northeast Ohio where College Now provides services

1,600+

Number of community members from over 500 companies paired as volunteer mentors for College Now and Say Yes scholarship recipients

\$126 Million

Total estimated amount saved by 1,400 individuals who received College Now's student loan restructuring services over the last five years

92%

First- to second-year average retention rate among College Now scholarship recipients, compared to the national average of 74% for all students



Say Yes Cleveland scholarships will enable two generations of Cleveland students to more easily afford postsecondary education. Photo by Kevin Kopanski Photo

THE PATH FROM SMALL SCHOLARSHIPS TO SAY YES CLEVELAND

Howard Steindler can still remember the first meeting of the Cleveland Scholarship Program in 1967. A young lawyer, Howard had become close with Robert Coplan, a founder of the law firm Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff LLP and a mind behind the organization that today is known as College Now Greater Cleveland.

In the mid-1960s, after the passing of an anonymous donor who was a client of the firm, a fund was established to provide scholarships for students graduating from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD). Robert Coplan hosted the first meeting with the group that would become early trustees, supporters, and organizers of College Now.

Robert had visited students at Glenville High School one spring and met with a number of them, all of whom had taken a college preparatory curriculum. Robert asked these students where they were going to college. None could answer. None had applied. None even knew they had to apply.

“It hit me like a thunderbolt that here were these young people who had sacrificed taking a technical curriculum, which would lead to employment after high school, in favor of taking a college preparatory curriculum but had no idea how to go to college,” Robert wrote in 1994.

From this realization, the model for College Now as we know it today was born. Howard joined Robert and other early supporters in advocating for the work to be done by College Now. Soon the small group added individuals to work as advisors in John Adams High School and, quickly, all the other CMSD high schools had College Now advisors in their buildings. The advisors were tasked with helping students navigate the postsecondary planning process and clearing the path for College Now to become what it is today, the nation’s oldest, and one of the largest, college access organizations.

“The underlying direction [of College Now] was always to help those students with financial need who were very dedicated and industrious,” said Howard.

And such has been true in the over 50 years that College Now has awarded scholarships to students in CMSD and beyond. Since its inception in 1967, College Now has awarded \$79 million in scholarships to Greater Cleveland students, both traditional and adult; in the past year alone, 1,900 students received \$3.78 million to pursue their postsecondary dreams – a truly exceptional total!

Over the past year, College Now has taken on a new endeavor that addresses the real need of students in the region – administering the scholarship program for the new organization Say Yes to Education Cleveland (“Say Yes Cleveland”).

College Now has long run multiple types of scholarships, including four-year renewable scholarships for traditional high school students and adult learners as well as managed funds, which are funded by outside organizations for their own purposes but for whom College Now provides all administrative services. It is due to this long history of successful scholarship management that College Now was chosen to administer the Say Yes Cleveland scholarships.

College Now, the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland Foundation, CMSD, Cuyahoga County, and United Way of Greater Cleveland spent nearly three years working together to bring Say Yes to Cleveland. Say Yes Cleveland not only provides CMSD students with support services from Pre-K through 12th grade, such as legal and health supports, but also eligible students receive a tuition gap-closing scholarship, upon graduation, to an Ohio public four-year university, two-year college, or Pell-eligible trade/certificate program, or to one of over 120 private colleges in the national Say Yes Higher Education Compact. These collective efforts will expand CMSD students’ postsecondary educational access and attainment.

“College Now has found wonderful people who are really committed to help those in need.”

– Howard Steindler, College Now Board Member Emeritus

College Now is managing these scholarships and assisting Say Yes Cleveland in ensuring that CMSD students understand the Say Yes program and the eligibility requirements for the scholarships. Though it will take years to measure the full impact of Say Yes Cleveland – the initiative is designed to provide scholarships for 25 years, or two generations – early numbers are in line with initial predictions. As reported in December 2019, about 44 percent of the students that graduated from CMSD high schools in the spring of 2019 started college in fall 2019, which is up four percent from the average annual enrollment rate of CMSD graduates over the last three years.

College Now also works with students at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) who are eligible for Say Yes funding, but do not receive it since the students’ Pell Grant covers the entire cost of tuition at Tri-C. This program, known as the Tri-C Say Yes Scholars Program, ensures that students at Tri-C who would have been awarded a Say Yes scholarship receive direct, on-campus support from Tri-C Success Coaches who help students register for classes, maintain their academic progress, and have their questions answered about postsecondary life. These students also are paired with mentors in the College Now Mentoring Program to provide them with additional guidance throughout their college journeys.

College Now will continue to provide scholarships and other retention services to students throughout Northeast Ohio, serving students, particularly those in high-need communities, in schools, and at other partner locations across five counties in the region. The reach of College Now’s scholarship services has never been broader or able to assist more students in financial need than it is today.



Students await the announcement of Say Yes to Education Cleveland in January 2019



impact! students at Longfellow Middle School visit the Stanley Black & Decker facility in Highland Heights, Ohio

ROBUST WORK IN LORAIN COUNTY CLEARS THE PATH FOR STUDENTS AS EARLY AS MIDDLE SCHOOL

In 2005, College Now expanded its services into Lorain County through a federally funded program in partnership with the Ohio Department of Higher Education (formerly Ohio Board of Regents). Since that time, College Now has maintained its services in Lorain with the support of other funding sources, notably, the Nordson Corporation and the Ohio Department of Education, and now serves students in nine Lorain County school buildings to help clear the path for Lorain students. Advisors are placed in Avon, Clearview, Columbia, Elyria, Firelands, Lorain, and Wellington high schools, and Lorain County JVS as well as Longfellow Middle School. Students also are served through College Now's 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school program (named "impact!") at Clearview, Longfellow, and Wellington.

Like many of the communities in which College Now serves, the work being done by advisors in Lorain County not only directly impacts the students that are served in schools, but the community as a whole. As more students develop plans for their postsecondary pathways, more students will be able to give back to their communities by having careers with livable wages and possessing the talent necessary to fill open jobs.

This year, College Now advisors in Lorain County are hosting a series of workshops, thanks to designated support from the Youth Fund of the Community Foundation of Lorain County. These workshops focus on teaching Lorain County high schoolers about every step of the college process, from choosing a postsecondary institution to determining a major, securing financial aid, and evaluating postsecondary options.

But College Now's work in Lorain County isn't just focused on supporting high school students. Aligning with College Now's strategic plan and ensuring that the path is clear for students to pursue postsecondary endeavors starting at a young age, College Now also works with students at Longfellow Middle School to give them an early introduction to life after high school. Working with College Now advisor Emily Pietrasz, Longfellow Middle School students can participate in College Now's impact! program, which, at the middle school level, focuses on intensive PSAT preparation as well as college and career lessons.

While middle school students may know some things about college, such as big name schools, college sports teams, or the fact that they will live in dorms, Emily has found that many of them don't realize that there are an immense number of other opportunities available to them. Through impact!, Emily takes her students on a deep dive into understanding college tuition (which reaffirms the importance of standardized test scores). Talking about and visiting various campuses helps students gain a more robust understanding of what going to college looks and feels like.

To introduce them to more options, students in the impact! program also complete a college and career presentation which requires them to investigate possible careers. Students have researched careers ranging from hyperbaric welding to FBI special agents. To further expose students to these various career options, students in impact! at Longfellow Middle School have visited Lorain County Community College Makers' Lab, The University of Toledo, Kentucky State University, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and the Stanley Black & Decker facility in Highland Heights, Ohio.

"impact! provides more than just test preparation and tutoring services to students," Emily said of the work College Now is doing with middle school students in Lorain. "It provides a safe and collaborative environment where students can learn about their potential futures."

College Now is grateful to the Community Foundation of Lorain County, the Youth Fund of the Community Foundation of Lorain County, Ohio Department of Education (21st Century Community Learning Centers), and Nordson Corporation for their collective and generous support of our work in Lorain County.



Dave Newman, a career educator, has been a College Now advisor in Lorain County since 2010 and works primarily with Lorain High School students, guiding them on their postsecondary pathways and opportunities. Known as "The College Guy" or "The Money Man" to his Lorain students, he helps students learn about their opportunities after high school and make informed, good choices about their next steps – and assists them in securing the financial support they need to make those decisions realities.

ADULT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES EXPAND AS NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS BECOME THE “NEW NORMAL”

Across the country, institutions of higher education are progressively recognizing adult learners as the “new normal.” Many adults are returning to college to increase their employment opportunities, and, in turn, meet the needs of the future workforce. However, these “non-traditional” students face similar obstacles as traditional students and likewise need additional support to clear their paths in much the same way.

In 1991, anticipating the growing need for adults to access postsecondary education, the Cleveland Foundation awarded College Now \$100,000 from the Jane D. White Fund No. 2 to establish the Adult Student Counseling Program. Nearly 30 years later, College Now’s Adult Programs and Services maintains the same commitment to narrowing the degree attainment gap in Ohio; however, a large gap remains across the state.

Currently, only 32% of Cuyahoga County residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, lagging behind the projected needs of the state’s 2025 economy, which will require a 65% attainment rate. As degree attainment increasingly becomes a statewide and national priority, College Now’s Adult Programs and Services team is addressing this issue, working and expanding to reach adult learners where they are across Northeast Ohio.

In 2019, College Now was selected as Ohio’s lead applicant for Degrees When Due, an initiative of the Institute for Higher Education Policy. Degrees When Due scales efforts to serve adults with some college education, but no degree, through collaboration and capacity-building between states and educational institutions.



Two College Now adult learner scholarship recipients meet at the inaugural Adult Scholars Summit. Photo by I. George Bilyk

The Jane D. White Fund No. 2 has had incredible results:

\$4,342,659
Scholarship Funding

813
Students
Awarded

574
Graduates
and counting

College Now is leading eight Ohio colleges and universities in helping over 136,000 potential completers return to college to complete their degrees. This initiative will build upon College Now’s success with (Re)Connect to College, which has grown from an initial partnership with Cleveland State University to also include work with Cuyahoga Community College, the University of Akron, and the Ohio Department of Education to re-enroll students who have stopped out before graduating. Since the program’s 2017 inception, 420 stopped-out students have re-enrolled, and 68 have completed their degrees!

College Now has long seen how the support of mentors helps traditional students make connections and build social capital after college graduation; this year, College Now worked to bring similar supports to adult students. At the first Adult Scholars Summit, recipients of the Adult Learner Scholarship gathered at the Brooklyn Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library to receive feedback on their résumés and LinkedIn profiles, and to practice networking strategies, working toward their next goal – meaningful employment. One participant, Patricia Gray, shared, “For the adult learner, there are so many barriers that have to be addressed. You need that support. I’m so grateful this is being recognized.”

While College Now remains dedicated to direct service with adult learners, the progress toward degree attainment expands beyond student preparation – it also requires buy-in from employers. In 2020, College Now will grow its partnerships with local employers through College Now @ Work, an initiative to provide educational, career, and financial advising to employees, ultimately ensuring that Northeast Ohio’s workforce is prepared to meet the needs of an ever-evolving economy.



Upward Bound students visit Google’s headquarters



Upward Bound students visit YouTube’s headquarters

UPWARD BOUND HELPS CHART PATHS TO LIMITLESS FUTURES

In August of 2019, 12 of College Now’s Upward Bound students were presented with a life-changing opportunity. After participating in programming throughout the school year and summer, they boarded a plane – a first for many – and traveled to America’s hub of technology innovation – California’s Silicon Valley.

The trip aimed to expose students to education and career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. During several tours of start-ups and technology companies, students heard from employee panels about career paths, perseverance, and preparing for success. Students also enjoyed visits to the NASA Ames Research Center, Stanford University, and – most popular among the group – the headquarters of Google and YouTube.

Though the trip to Silicon Valley was memorable, Upward Bound students were exposed to a variety of other opportunities throughout the 2018-2019 academic year and summer, including a spring break tour of several Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the greater Atlanta area and a trip to visit schools in Chicago, as well.

Utilizing a case-management approach, Upward Bound is designed to help low-income and first-generation college students access and complete postsecondary education. In addition to exposure opportunities, students participate in specialized school-based activities, such

as ACT and SAT prep, as well as English, math, science, and foreign language tutoring, to ensure that they are prepared for graduation and a postsecondary program.

Upward Bound keeps students engaged in the summer through a six-week academic program, including one week of residency on Case Western Reserve University’s (CWRU) campus. Students attend classes and practice skills such as laser-cutting, soldering, drone-flying, and 3-D printing at CWRU’s Sears think[box].

College Now has facilitated Upward Bound programming since 2012 when the organization first received this competitive federal grant funding for East Cleveland’s Shaw High School. In 2017, College Now garnered a second grant to also provide this intensive programming at Warrensville Heights High School. Though results at Warrensville are still early, success rates at Shaw demonstrate promise – 72 percent of 2018 program graduates enrolled in postsecondary education upon graduating high school.

Upward Bound challenges students to think of their futures as limitless. College Now’s Chief Program Officer, Dr. Michele Scott Taylor, noted, “In the communities where these students live, bachelor’s degree attainment or higher is under 20 percent. By exposing students to career pathways and opportunities, they will gain the tools and experiences needed to set off on a productive educational path to achieve their dreams.”

COLLEGE NOW MENTORS WALK WITH STUDENTS ALONG THE PATH TO POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Taylor Jones thought she didn't need a mentor. She was used to doing things on her own and was, in her words, "stubbornly independent." A first-generation college student, Taylor figured she was going to handle her postsecondary experience the same way she handled most everything else in her life – on her own. When she was paired with her mentor, Margie Glick, through the College Now Mentoring Program, Taylor figured the support wasn't something she was going to need.

But Taylor soon realized, "Margie has been everything I didn't know I needed when I left for undergrad." It was this surprising support that encouraged Taylor to nominate Margie as one of College Now's two 2020 "Mentor of the Year" awardees.

The College Now Mentoring Program is designed to inspire such interactions – to create bonds and relationships between mentors and students who may not realize what support they will need during their undergraduate years. For most students, especially

first-generation college students, postsecondary education can be daunting. Students don't always know what to expect, how to address certain situations or problems, or how to adapt to life on campus. Mentors can provide the insight these students may not always receive from family members or friends who have not been through the college-going process.

Though the College Now Mentoring Program has only officially been in existence since 2011, the idea of supporting students with others who had "been there, done that" during their college journeys started early in College Now's history. As College Now developed in the late 1960s and the 1970s, founder Robert Coplan and early organizational leadership concluded that college freshmen needed help when they got on campus for their first semester; they needed someone who had walked the path before them to help show them the way. The idea was developed to create a "big brothers and big sisters" program on state university campuses in Ohio, where upperclassmen scholarship recipients would greet first-year

students and provide them with support. The program, which came to be known as the "Campus Representative Program," was a precursor to the modern Mentoring Program, and had equally exciting results: in 1993, over 80 percent of first-year students who started at a state university that had a College Now Campus Representative returned for their sophomore year.

Today, 92 percent of College Now scholarship recipients return to college for their second year, a remarkable achievement compared to the national average of 74 percent for all students. The Mentoring Program has become the secret for College Now scholarship recipients – the part of their academic experience they didn't know they needed in order to succeed.

It is this sort of success that encouraged the expansion of the College Now Mentoring Program for the 2019-2020 cohort to include not just College Now scholarship recipients, but Say Yes scholarship recipients, as well. Cleveland is the only Say Yes city in the country to require mentoring as part of its Say Yes scholarship requirements. As the program grows, College Now must recruit approximately 1,200 mentors each year to match with all eligible College Now and Say Yes scholarship recipients.

Currently, over 1,600 community members volunteer as mentors, and that number will only grow in coming years as more community members take the pledge to make the difference in the life of a student and help them succeed in their postsecondary careers.



A mentor and mentee pair laughs at the MentorInCLE Connect event. Photo by Breakforth Studio



"[Margie] adapted to the best ways to be in my corner, cheer me on, and get me to where I wanted to go, offering help through all the times when I couldn't see that I needed it," Taylor concluded in her Mentor of the Year nomination. "Her support left an indelible mark on my journey through college."

Mentor Margie Glick (left) and Mentee Taylor Jones (right) at the MentorInCLE Connect event. Photo by Breakforth Studio



Mentoring pair at the annual August Mentoring Kick-off event. Photo by the Cleveland Photographic Society

To learn more about the Mentoring Program and apply to be a mentor, visit College Now's website at www.collegenowgc.org/become-a-mentor.

AFTER RECEIVING SCHOLARSHIP IN 1967, PHILIP THOMPSON GIVES BACK TO CLEAR THE PATH FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

Philip Thompson had all his bases covered. A graduate of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's East Technical High School in 1967, Phil spent his high school career taking a combination of vocational training and college preparatory curriculum, preparing himself for whatever postsecondary pathway he could feasibly pursue after high school. He was fifth in his class at East Tech and knew that college was an option for him but, even after applying to and being accepted at two institutions – Tennessee State and the University of Akron – there had been no discussion of how he would fund postsecondary education. Sure, the combination curriculum gave him a full schedule – “I had no summers!” Phil laughed – but it also gave him options. It wasn't until the spring of 1967, when Phil received a surprise letter from College Now Greater Cleveland (then the Cleveland Scholarship Program), that his postsecondary path began to take shape.

In the letter, Phil learned that he was to be one of the first recipients of a scholarship from College Now.

“When we got the letter, it took my mother and me a good hour to stop crying and get over it. We were in such delight that I had been selected,” said Phil. “It was one of those divine things where you get a blessing and you have to make the most of it.”

With the help of his scholarship funding, Phil was able to enroll in an engineering program at the University of Akron. Due to his late enrollment, he spent his first semester living with family members in the Akron area.

“It was a hard first semester,” Phil remembered. But he was able to move into a dorm the following semester and improve his academic performance, leading to a successful postsecondary journey.

Phil received letters throughout his education from College Now that were motivational and supportive, checking in with him to see what else the organization could do to be helpful and ensuring that Phil was receiving the resources he needed to be successful in his education.

Once he graduated, Phil knew he needed to find a way to give back and help clear the path for others the same way College Now cleared his own path to attend college.



“I thought to myself, if I could ever do that, I'm in.”

College Now scholarship recipient Phil Thompson. Photo courtesy of Phil Thompson

“I came from a loving, sharing culture,” Phil said of his family. “You shared what you had with those less fortunate. My scholarship came with a quiet stipulation to give back half of it, which I didn't need a whole lot of explanation on; it was the next natural thing to do for legacy-building, so [College Now] could continue and support those following me who needed help.”

Phil subsequently set up a scholarship fund at the University of Akron, called the Philip S. Thompson Award for Diversity in Engineering and Business, which is awarded to a Black American undergraduate student of any engineering discipline or, if engineering candidates are not available, to a Black American student enrolled in the College of Business Administration.

“The notion hit me, with [College Now founder] Mr. Coplan, that he was taking time out of his life to create a scholarship avenue for young Black Americans on the east side of Cleveland to go to college and have a transformational change in their lives,” said Phil. “He could have been doing any number of other things with his time, with his money, and with the resources that his friends were contributing to the endeavor, especially for a bunch of strangers whom he knew nothing about, nothing about their commitments or their success. It was a bold leap.”

“I thought to myself, if I could ever do that, I'm in. I need to touch people who I will never see, who I will probably never know,” Phil explained. “That is the ultimate in giving. It creates a sense of hope and helps make our community better. And I can attribute that desire within me to [Robert] Coplan.”

AMERICORPS MEMBERS GIVE AND RECEIVE THROUGH SERVICE

Like many first-generation college students, Jonah Duran wasn't thinking much about his postsecondary plans at the beginning of his high school career. But, with some encouragement from a math teacher, he eventually discovered a love for helping others and an appreciation for science, which set him on a postsecondary path to become a physician.

After receiving his bachelor's degree from Grand Valley State University and his master's from Case Western Reserve University, Jonah decided to pursue a year of service with College Now's AmeriCorps program while he applied to medical school. “I looked into several AmeriCorps programs and felt like College Now was a good match because of the approach and mission. I'm from a rural area, and my parents didn't go to college, so there weren't a lot of resources. I see a lot of similarities, in terms of barriers, with my life and what this program does for people like me,” he shared.

Through his service as a Career Pathway Coach at the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's (CMSD) Jane Addams Business Careers Center, Jonah appreciates the connection between the support he once received as a high school student and its influence on his AmeriCorps service. For example, Jonah's high school math teacher introduced him to shadowing opportunities and volunteering with the Red Cross, which eventually opened up two college scholarship opportunities for him. Now, Jonah enjoys guiding students on their own paths toward discovering interests and passions that will create opportunities to lead to bright futures.

Now in its 11th year, College Now's AmeriCorps program continues to draw members from diverse backgrounds who go on to positively impact their communities. In 2014, College Now began managing the statewide AmeriCorps College Guides Program, partnering with peer organizations in seven cities across the state. The program at College Now expanded in 2016 to include 10 Career Pathway Coaches who support career services in CMSD's career academies.

The benefits of the AmeriCorps program are two-fold: College Now can increase access to its services in Northeast Ohio, while simultaneously developing AmeriCorps members into leaders who will generate positive change throughout their careers.

For College Guide MiKayla Thomas, who eventually hopes to work closely with the community as a lawyer, serving at CMSD's John Hay Campus helps her recognize the importance of education and clearing the path for students. A former College Now scholarship recipient, MiKayla also knows first-hand the importance of having a mentor or trusted advisor who has “been there, done that.” “The mentoring aspect of my College Now scholarship really helped me. At some point in my life, I want to become that person to someone,” MiKayla shared.

During her service, MiKayla observed that one promising student's attendance at school was concerningly inconsistent. She learned that the student was struggling to feel supported within the school's environment. With patience and encouragement from MiKayla, the student began feeling more connected at school.

“Now, he comes to school more consistently and makes time to work on college applications every day,” says MiKayla. “He even received his first acceptance letter and could hardly believe that college was actually an option for him.”

AmeriCorps develops public leaders across the country to meet critical community needs and has been doing so nationally since 1994. In celebration of AmeriCorps' 25th national anniversary, College Now members traveled to Columbus for a statewide conference in October 2019. This was a unique opportunity for members to network and hear from public service leaders, including elected officials, about the value of their service. In recognition of this milestone, College Now continues to reflect on how its work is enriched by the members who serve and, more importantly, how the community flourishes as a result.



College Now AmeriCorps Career Pathway Coaches and College Guides at the start of the 2019-2020 school year

BAG LADY 2019 WAS OUT OF THIS WORLD

On Thursday, September 12, 2019, the NASA Glenn Visitor Center at the Great Lakes Science Center underwent an out-of-this-world transformation. The exhibit became home to over 300 brand new and vintage designer handbags, as well as displays of unique experiences, accessories, and men's items for College Now's fourth biennial Bag Lady event. This year's event, co-chaired by College Now Board Members Suzanne Aral-Boutros and Trina Evans, was the most extraordinary yet, as guests were immersed in the exhibit while also mingling, shopping, and supporting College Now.

Bag Lady, made possible through the generous support of exclusive title sponsor KeyBank, is a silent auction event that raises funds to help sustain and grow the College Now Mentoring Program's services. At this year's Bag Lady event, over 600 attendees spent the afternoon shopping, networking, and learning about the ways in which their support of Bag Lady would benefit College Now. For the first time ever, a Preview Night was hosted for Bag Lady event sponsors and their guests on the evening prior to the event. Nearly 100 guests enjoyed cocktails, appetizers, and an exclusive sneak preview of the auction items.

New to Bag Lady this year was a beautiful vintage collection, featuring pieces ranging from a 1970s Valentino Garavani Valent Saddle Bag directly from Rome to a mid-60s classic Gucci Jackie handbag. This exclusive vintage collection was housed in an immaculate display crafted singularly for Bag Lady 2019 by sponsor California Closets. The display also was home to Bag Lady's brand new luxury collection and, front and center, on a rotating, illuminated platform, sat 2019's KeyBank red handbag: a gorgeous red caviar leather Chanel Coco top handle bag, which attendees could win by purchasing raffle tickets throughout the event.

Raffle tickets also could be purchased to win one of two \$5,000 gift cards to Nordstrom as part of the "Fill Your Closet" raffle, sponsored by California Closets. But a closet wasn't the only thing guests could fill at Bag Lady. Thanks to generous donations, attendees had the opportunity to bid on nine exclusive experiences, such as tropical vacations, behind-the-scenes tours, and exclusive event tickets.

To bring home the mission of Bag Lady, attendees were fortunate enough to hear from Margot Copeland, former Chair and CEO of the KeyBank Foundation, and two College Now scholarship recipients, Leah Hudnall and Shelby Roberts, who spoke about the importance of education and the impact that College Now had on their educational journeys.

Shelby, a recent graduate of Cleveland State University's Washkewicz College of Engineering, shared her story of perseverance and the resources she leaned on, like College Now, while transferring schools and remaining enrolled during the loss of a close family member. Leah, a Howard University alumna, inspired attendees while speaking about intentionally remaining tied to Cleveland during college because resources like College Now were critical to her postsecondary success.

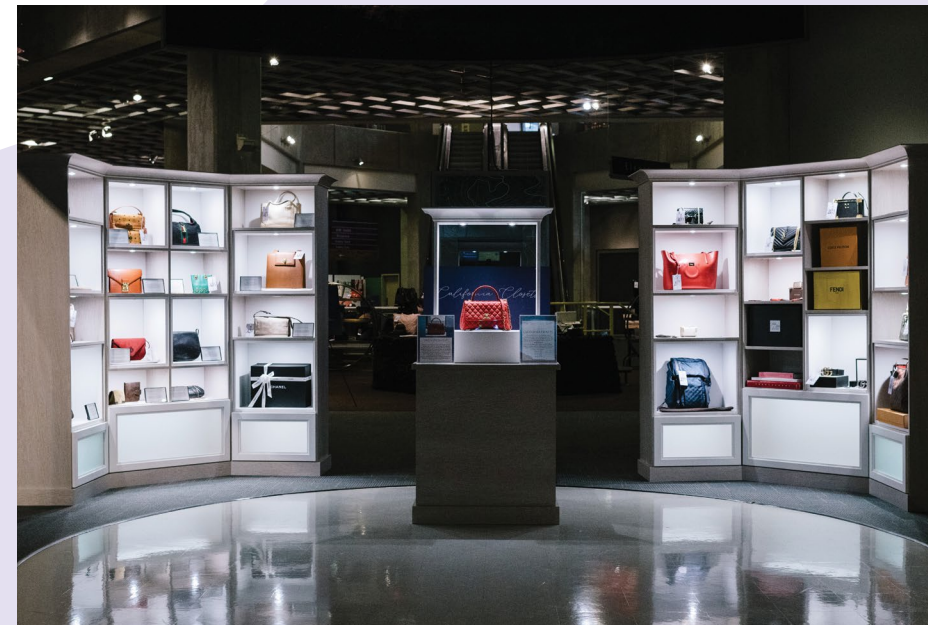
Following Margot's panel discussion with Shelby and Leah, auctioneer Bob Hale orchestrated an enthusiastic Fund-A-Need campaign, which raised over \$37,000, on top of the funds already raised during the auction!

In total, Bag Lady 2019 raised over \$425,000 to benefit College Now's Mentoring Program; funding will provide support for the program over two years. College Now would like to extend its sincere thanks to Bag Lady 2019's exclusive title sponsor, KeyBank; co-chairs Suzanne Aral-Boutros and Trina Evans; all of the event's incredible sponsors, including Hyatt Legal Plans, the 2019 Men's Committee, chaired by Akram Boutros, California Closets, and Judith Embrescia; and all event attendees, donors, and supporters of the Mentoring Program.

Since Bag Lady was first held in 2013, the event has raised over \$1.3 million in total for the College Now Mentoring Program.



Panelists, L to R, Margot Coplan, Shelby Roberts, and Leah Hudnall. Photo by Breakforth Studio



California Closets built an incredible display for merchandise at Bag Lady, including this year's KeyBank red bag. Photo by Breakforth Studio



Bag Lady 2019 co-chairs Trina Evans (left) and Suzanne Aral-Boutros (right). Photo by Breakforth Studio

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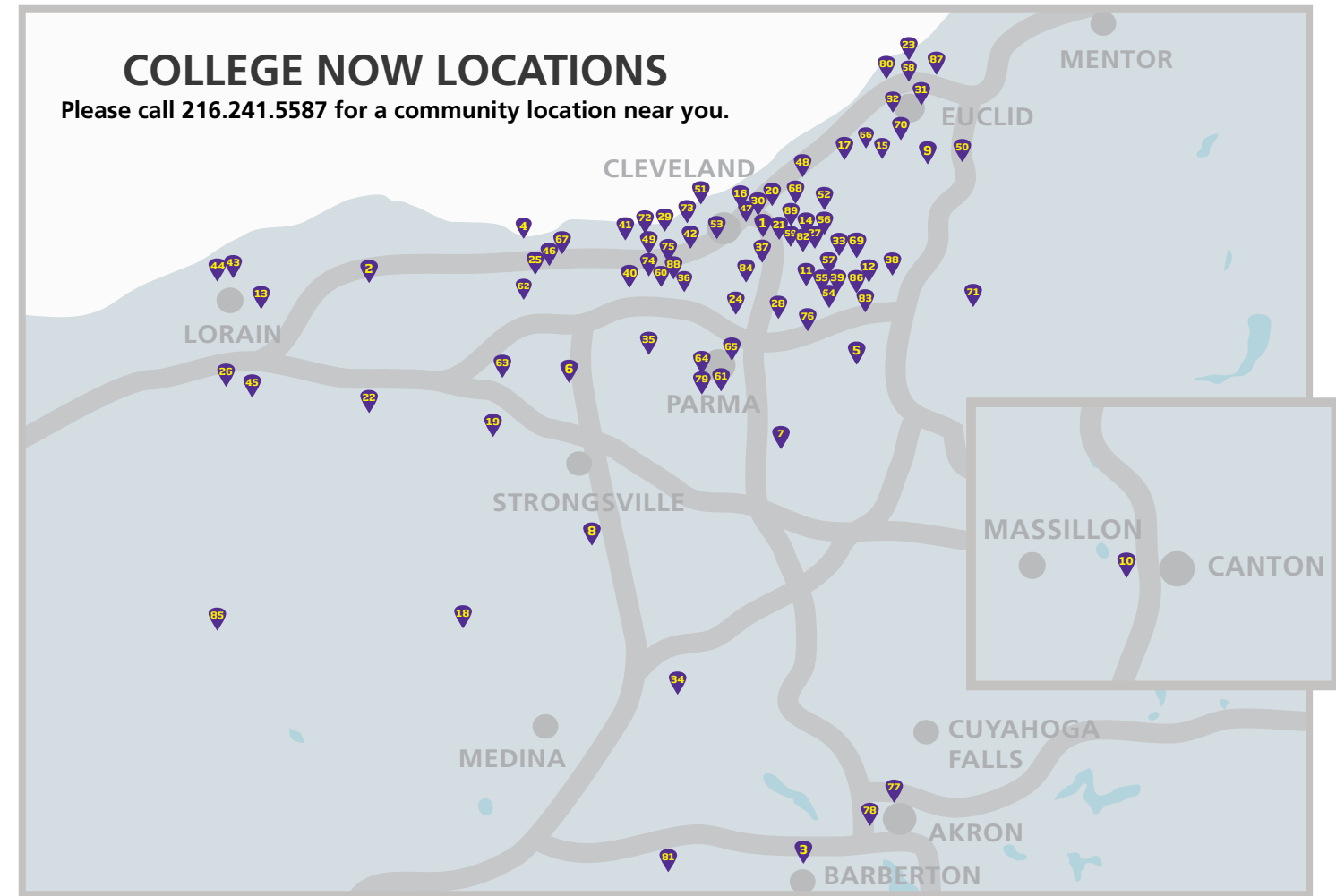
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| 4 Bay High School | 34 Highland High School | 66 Patrick Henry K-8 School |
| 5 Bedford High School | 35 Holy Name High School | 67 Rocky River High School |
| 6 Berea-Midpark High School | 36 James Ford Rhodes High School | 68 Saint Martin de Porres High School |
| 7 Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School | 37 Jane Addams Business Careers Academy | 69 Shaker Heights High School |
| 8 Brunswick High School | 38 JFK High School (2 schools) | 70 Shaw High School |
| 9 Brush High School | 39 John Adams High School (2 schools) | 71 Solon High School |
| 10 Canton Adult Education Resource Center | 40 John Marshall High School (3 schools) | 72 St. Edward High School |
| 11 Charles Dickens K-8 School | 41 Lakewood High School | 73 St. Ignatius High School |
| 12 Charles Eliot K-8 School | 42 Lincoln-West High School (2 schools) | 74 St. Joseph Academy |
| 13 Clearview High School | 43 Longfellow Middle School | 75 Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy |
| 14 Cleveland Central Catholic High School | 44 Lorain High School | 76 Trinity High School |
| 15 Cleveland Heights High School | 45 Lorain County JVS | 77 United Way of Summit County Financial Empowerment Center |
| 16 Cleveland High School for Digital Arts | 46 Magnificat High School | 78 University of Akron Resource Center |
| 17 Cleveland School of the Arts | 47 Marion-Sterling K-8 School | 79 Valley Forge High School |
| 18 Cloverleaf High School | 48 Martin Luther King Jr. Career Campus | 80 Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School |
| 19 Columbia High School | 49 Max S. Hayes High School | 81 Wadsworth High School |
| 20 Design Lab Early College | 50 Mayfield High School | 82 Warner Girls Leadership Academy |
| 21 East Technical High School | 51 MC2STEM-9th Grade | 83 Warrensville Heights High School |
| 22 Elyria High School | 52 MC2STEM-10th Grade | 84 Washington Park Environmental Studies Academy |
| 23 Euclid High School | 53 MC2STEM-11th and 12th Grades | 85 Wellington High School |
| 24 Facing History New Tech High School | 54 Miles K-8 School | 86 Whitney M. Young Leadership Academy |
| 25 Fairview Park High School | 55 Miles Park K-8 School | 87 Wickliffe High School |
| 26 Firelands High School | 56 Mound Middle School | 88 Wilbur Wright K-8 School |
| 27 Fullerton Middle School | 57 Nathan Hale K-8 School | 89 Willow Middle School |
| 28 Garfield Heights High School | 58 New Tech Collinwood | |
| 29 Garrett Morgan High School | 59 New Tech East | |
| 30 George Washington Carver K-8 | 60 New Tech West | |
| | 61 Normandy High School | |
| | 62 North Olmsted High School | |



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