

College Planning Program Guides First-Generation Students into Brown, MIT, and Williams

Program Welcomes a New Cohort on June 1

MARIETTA, GA, UNITED STATES, April 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Three Pinellas County Schools first generation graduating seniors are headed to prestigious colleges on full scholarships. Jocelyne Lioe from the IB Program at St. Petersburg High School is headed to Brown University, Arshia Alipour from Palm Harbor University High School is headed to MIT, and Josiah Walker from Boca Ciega High School is headed to Williams College. What do these students have in common besides being offered full scholarships to 3 of the country's most prestigious and selective colleges? They are first-generation students who joined the [Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity College Planning Cohort](#) program while in middle school.



College cohort students from Florida and South Carolina take a photo during the Williams College pre-frosh admitted students day

When each of these students was in middle school, Pinellas County Schools Minority Achievement Officer, Dr. Lewis Brinson, searched the country for a program specifically focused on providing comprehensive college planning guidance for first-generation students and students from under-resourced families with the simple goals of landing full scholarships and avoiding student loan debt. Brinson found the perfect program, developed by Mychal and Nina Wynn at the Georgia-based nonprofit, The Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity. Their research-based and curriculum-focused program was the only program he could find that was intentional in helping students earn full scholarships and avoid or minimize student loan debt.

Now retired from the district, Brinson recounts, "In my 50+ years in education, the Wynns' College Planning College Cohort Program did more for first-generation students and students from under-resourced backgrounds than any other program in the history of the school district.

There is no other program that can lay claim to helping such students be offered debt-free pathways to such schools as Amherst, Brown, Caltech, Dartmouth, Johns Hopkins, Macalester, MIT, Northeastern, Swarthmore, The University of Chicago, Washington & Lee, or Williams. Most of the students the Wynn's program guided into those schools had no prior knowledge of the school, the scholarship opportunity, or how they should navigate high school to make themselves competitive candidates for being offered admission to such schools. In essence, for these students, there was no person or resource available to assist them in developing a plan. When I retired from the district in 2024, the district chose to retire the program without any consideration of supporting Jocelyne, Arshia, or Josiah, who were rising high school seniors. However, even

without being paid for their support, the Wynns did not abandon these students, which speaks volumes about their character. People would pay thousands of dollars for the Wynns' expertise and personalized college planning guidance, yet each of these families received hands-on

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Josiah Walker (Boca Ciega High School)

guidance throughout the college admissions and financial aid processes for free. I doubt if we will ever see another program in Pinellas County Schools provide the type of support that the Wynns provided for first-generation students and students served by Title I Federal Programs.”

On June 1, the all-virtual program welcomes a new group of students from throughout the United States. Wynn notes, “During the current political and economic climate, school districts are cutting back funding and support for college planning support programs like ours. Our three largest school district partners, Guilford County Schools

(NC), Pinellas County Schools (FL), and Judson ISD (TX), no longer provide funding. Since our curriculum is completely online and our monthly meetings are virtual, students from anywhere in the country may register for our program. The program provides in-depth guidance along the following 4 strands:



First generation student from St. Petersburg High School is Brown Bound

- College/Career Planning
- Essay Writing
- College/Career Planning for Athletes
- Study Skills & Learning Strategies

Without the support of school districts, students will be responsible for paying the registration fee. Unfortunately, many students will not be able to afford the \$899.95 annual registration fee, which includes books, 24/7 access to our online curriculum, and personalized guidance and support from June 1 through May 1, so we are offering a discounted registration fee for individuals with the financial means to sponsor a student."

The program has successfully guided students into top colleges and full scholarships since 2012, when the Wynns worked with their first cohort of students as Education Ministry Leaders at the Turner Chapel AME Church in Marietta, Georgia. Each year, participating students are awarded admission to top colleges and receive full scholarships at over 20 times the national average.

Josiah Walker, who was offered full scholarships to Boston University, Macalester College, Washington & Lee University, and Williams College, commented, "My dad and I were evicted from our apartment in the midst of applying to colleges and writing essays. As a result, I could not provide all of the required documents for Northeastern University, the first school to which I was offered admission, so I never received a financial aid award letter. I honestly could not have made it through this process without the support of Mr. and Mrs. Wynn. Not only did they support me every step of the way, but their son, Mychal-David, reviewed and edited all of my essays, as well as guided my communication with admissions and financial aid officers at each of my schools. When I had a problem with some of my parents' documents, they even reached out to Williams College on my behalf to ensure that I received my financial aid award letter. While I am overjoyed to be heading off to Williams College on a full scholarship, I am saddened for other students in the program who will no longer have the support of the Wynns since our district stopped funding the program."

The 2025-26 College Cohort Program kicks off on June 1, 2025, and runs through May 1, 2026 (college enrollment decision day). Interested students or sponsors may register online at: <https://www.accessandequity.org/product/2025-26-cohort-registration/>



First generation student from Palm Harbor University High School is MIT Bound

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