Blueprints moves beyond access to success

This year, we changed the name of Blueprints, our signature near-peer college access mentoring program, to the Blueprints College Success Initiative. Low-income, minority, and first-generation college-going students face academic, financial, and social barriers to prepare for college, apply to the best-fit schools, apply for financial aid, enroll and persist in their studies, and ultimately graduate. Access is not enough, and that’s why we committed to advocating for our students’ success on the pathway to a postsecondary degree or credential.

2015-16 Blueprints participants

BY GRADE LEVEL

9th grade 10th grade 11th grade 12th grade
555 33 511 299

BY RACE and ETHNICITY

African American 74%
White 19%
Hispanic, Asian, or Multiracial 7%

BY GENDER

Female 58%
Male 42%

26% First-generation college-going students

$45.5 million in supplementary scholarships

208 College student mentors

College is the attainment of valuable postsecondary credentials beyond high school, including professional/technical certificates and academic degrees.

COLLEGES ACCEPTED TO
Alabama A&M University
Alabama Fire College
Alabama State University
Alabama Southern Community College
Alabama State University
Alcorn State University
American Music & Dramatic Academy
Arkansas Baptist College
Auburn University
Auburn University Montgomery
Austin Peay State University
Benedict College
Berea College
Bethune College
Bethune-Cookman University
Bewell State Community College
Birmingham-Southern College
Bradley University
Carson-Newman University
Clark Atlanta University
Concordia College
Dillard University
East Central Community College
East Los Angeles Community College
East Mississippi College
East Mississippi Community College
Faulkner University
Fisk University
Florida A&M University
Fort Valley State University
Full Sail University
Grambling State University
Huntington College
Itawamba Community College
Jackson State University
Jacksonville State University
Jefferson State Community College
Johnson & Wales University
Johnson C. Smith University
Judson College
Kennesaw State University
Kentucky State University
LaGrange College
Lane College
Lawson State Community College
Loyola University
Lurleen B Wallace Community College
Marion College
Marion Military Institute
Merrim University
Miami Dade College
Middle Tennessee State University
Mississippi College
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State University for Women
Mississippi Valley State
Morehouse College
Morris College
Murray College
North Carolina Central University
Northwest Shoals Community College
Lawson State and Alabama Possible launch peer mentoring partnership

Lawson State Community College and Alabama Possible teamed up to help recent Birmingham City Schools graduates successfully transition to college.

Beginning this fall, second- and third-year Lawson State student mentors are checking in with first-year student mentees every other week. The mentors and mentees also meet each month for professional development workshops. Topics covered include budgeting, decision-making skills, study skills, successful relationships, and connecting academic studies and career success.

“Even though I am in college, there are still some things that are fuzzy to me. If they ask me a question, if I don’t know the answer, then I’ll be able to look it up. Through being a mentor, I have been able to learn so much.”

Yaneliz Fernandez, Northwest-Shoals Community College Student Mentor at Phil Campbell High School

“My Blueprints mentor helped me write my scholarship application essays. A couple of times I even texted my mentor in the middle of the night. I was able to send her my essays, and she edited them and sent them right back to me.”

Miriam Jollah, Woodlawn High School Class of 2016 Lawson State Community College Freshman
Cash for College makes college more affordable by boosting Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion through a combination of direct services in the Birmingham City Schools and a statewide FAFSA completion network.

The FAFSA is required for any student seeking federal and state financial aid, including grants and loans at all 2- and 4-year colleges. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 9 out of 10 students who complete a FAFSA attend college the following fall.

Low-income, minority, and first-generation college-going students are the least likely to know that financial aid, including Pell Grants of up to $5,920 annually, is available by completing their FAFSA. Alabama students left $63.8 million Pell Grants dollars on the table in 2013, and the state ranked 44th in FAFSA completion.

What’s new for 2017?

- FAFSA filing began on October 1, 2016, instead of January 1, 2017
- Families use their 2015 taxes to complete their financial aid form
- 55 percent of Birmingham’s Class of 2017 should have their FAFSA completed by June 2017
- 205 high schools statewide prioritized FAFSA completion by participating in Cash for College Alabama

“A full list of schools participating in Cash for College is available at cashforcollegealabama.org

“The FAFSA will help my parents and me with finances for college. It helps take the pressure off me.”

Destiny Hicks
Wenonah High School Class of 2016
North Carolina Central University Freshman

“Cash for College is an easy way for an adult to provide support and encouragement to students. I think the FAFSA is such a concrete way to help a student who has the potential to access the next level of education.”

Kristan Walker
Director of Outreach Ministries
Trinity United Methodist Church
**Cash for College Birmingham**

Cash for College’s key partnership is in the Birmingham City Schools, where we aim to boost the FAFSA completion rate from 36 percent in 2013 to 70 percent by 2020 through direct services with Birmingham City Schools seniors and their families. Cash for College shares FAFSA completion data with local educators, holds FAFSA workshops, and connects families with tax prep workshops and FAFSA events.

| 1,233  | STUDENTS SERVED |
| 132    | VOLUNTEERS      |
| 60     | FINANCIAL AID WORKSHOPS |
| 54%    | OF BIRMINGHAM’S CLASS OF 2016 THAT COMPLETED THEIR FAFSA BY JULY 1, 2016 |

**Cash for College Alabama**

Cash for College Alabama builds a college-going culture by encouraging students and their families to complete their FAFSA. Participating high schools completed a short application, set a FAFSA completion goal, and agreed to make FAFSA completion a local priority.

Participating educators got professional development and technical assistance to promote FAFSA completion at their school, and Alabama Possible shared FAFSA completion data and best practices gathered from partners both in and out of Alabama.

| 121    | PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS |
| 17,751 | HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS |
| 7,574  | FAFSAS COMPLETED AS OF JULY 1, 2016 |

“I want to be able to go to college to become a nurse. I am happiest when I am helping others. Without FAFSA, I wouldn’t be able to go to college.”

Tamara Fletcher
Montevallo High School Class of 2016
University of South Alabama Freshman

“Being the only counselor in a school can be challenging when undertaking big projects such as FAFSA completion. Cash for College gave me a network of resources and people to connect with.”

Kathryn McElvy
School Counselor
Wadley High School
Alabama college students are hungry for justice

Conference equips students to advocate to end poverty and hunger

More than 900,000 Alabamians, including 300,000 children, are impacted by poverty and/or food insecurity. On February 19, 2016, 80 students, educators, and community leaders gathered at Troy University-Montgomery to share information and plan for the future.

Students presented their advocacy projects, which ranged from mapping poverty in Montgomery, to student-run meal recovery programs and near-peer college access mentoring.

What did students take away?

Troy University students discussed the need for student-to-student outreach across Troy’s three campuses to connect to community organizations already involved in issues of poverty and hunger.

Alabama State University students and faculty discussed how to use university resources to cultivate broader engagement with low-income and food-insecure communities near their Montgomery campus.

Auburn University students committed to collaboration among similar groups to overcome apathy caused by an overwhelming number of engagement opportunities.

Birmingham-area students from the University of Montevallo and UAB agreed that there is value in starting with a small, concerted group rather than waiting for critical mass.
Lifetime of Learning conference encourages civic engagement

Higher education network members participate in issues-based discourse on poverty and social justice

Nearly 100 faculty, staff, students, and community partners gathered at UAB on Friday, October 7, to share best practices among Alabama colleges and universities to use engaged learning initiatives as a foundation for justice learning. Justice learning teaches students about reasoned debate and the often-conflicting values inherent in American democracy.

UAB Institute of Human Rights Director Dr. Tina Kempin Reuter started the day with a talk about the purposes and potential of human rights education. Educators from disciplines including the arts, nursing, English, social work, and student leadership shared best practices learned from their on-the-ground experiences.

Lunch included a panel discussion about lessons learned in equipping students to lead with equity based on 2011 Tornado Recovery, and the day ended with a poverty simulation.

In order to continue the conversation beyond the boundaries of the conference, participants were invited to contribute to the #AP2016LOL Learning Wheel, pictured below.
Could you survive a month in poverty?

More than 1,200 Alabamians had the opportunity to learn about the barriers that low-income families face by participating in poverty simulations facilitated by Alabama Possible.

Poverty simulation participants role-play a month in the life of a low-income family and grapple with challenges as they try to get to work, get the kids to school, feed their families, and keep their homes safe. As a result, participants report they have greater impact in their volunteerism, philanthropy, and advocacy efforts.

What do participants say?

“How do we help poor people without making it harder on them?”

“The simulation gives people a realistic view of poverty.”

“People from low income families really want to do better, but things help to prevent it.”

“I will have more compassion and empathy with my clients.”

“My agency is going to rethink our processes regarding required documentation and rescheduling appointments.”

“I will tell people about the various problems that feed into poverty: transportation, keeping a job, feeding your family, and paying utilities.”

“I learned not to pre-judge people and will listen to why they need assistance.”

“I’ll try to help people without referring them to another agency.”

2016 POVERTY SIMULATION PARTNERS INCLUDE

Alabama Association of School Boards
Alabama Partnership for Children
Alabama State Bar Association
Auburn First Baptist Church
Auburn University
Avondale Samaritan Center
Canterbury United Methodist Church
Chambers County Schools
Community Action Association of Alabama
Faulkner University
Leadership Alabama
Leadership Birmingham
Leadership Montgomery
NAACP – Alabama Chapter
National Association of Social Workers – Alabama
Roanoke City Schools
Tarrant City Schools
Trinity United Methodist Church
Troy University
United Way of West Alabama
UAB
University of Montevallo
Utah Community Action Partnership
Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church
Walker County Youth Leadership Forum
Wallace State Community College – Hanceville
Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham

To bring a poverty simulation to your campus, civic organization, business, or faith community, please contact Kristina Scott at kscott@alabamapossible.org
Clockwise from top: Roanoke City Schools educators experienced the impact poverty has on their students; child development and community service workers from North Alabama Community Action Agencies learn about the roles they will play during a simulation at a JCCEO Head Start center; youth at Auburn First Baptist Church think about the choices single moms must make to provide for their kids; Shoals-area Leadership Alabama alumni teamed up with local leaders, educators, and social service agencies to host a poverty simulation in Florence; a participant in the Florence simulation got information about payday loans at the Quick Cash; applying for public benefits like food stamps provided a lifeline for a participant in a simulation at the Avondale Samaritan Center.
2016 Honors
Outstanding Small Nonprofit

Many thanks to the foundations, higher education institutions, faith communities, business and community organizations, and individuals who supported our work and made financial contributions.

FAITH COMMUNITIES
Auburn First Baptist Church
Ardmore Samaritan Place
Canterbury United Methodist Church
Christian Service Mission
Church of the Nativity, Episcopal
Independent Presbyterian Church
Faith Chapel Christian Center
Southside Baptist Church
Vestavia Hills Baptist Church
Trinity United Methodist Church

COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice
Alabama ARISE
Alabama Partnership for Children
Alabama School Readiness Alliance
Alabama State Conference of the NAACP
Alabama State Department of Education
Birmingham City Schools
Birmingham Education Foundation
Blount County Joint School Board
Gold Goal Coalition
Chambers County Board of Education
Community Action Agencies of Alabama
Daniel Foundation of Alabama
David Mathews Center for Civic Life
EAT South
End Child Hunger in Alabama Taskforce
Equal Justice Initiative
Florence Housing Authority
Franklin County Schools
GEARUP Alabama
Habitat for Humanity Tuscaloosa
Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama
Holy Family Cristo Rey Catholic High School
Jones Valley Teaching Farm
National Association of Social Work - Alabama
National College Access Network
Perry County Schools
Rosa Parks City Board of Education
Shelby County Schools
Thompson Foundation
Tuscaloosa City Schools
Tuscaloosa County Schools
United Way of Central Alabama
United Way of West Alabama
VOICES for Alabama's Children
Women's Network

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National Bank of Commerce
National Capital of Commerce
Noble Hour
Progress Bank
Roosevelt Prifier, Jr. Memorial Foundation
Regions Bank
Taco Bell Foundation
Team Taca Charities
VPH Health
Vowell & Associates
Vulcan Materials Company Foundation
Walker Area Community Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation
Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham
Youthserve – Youth Philanthropy Council

HIGHER EDUCATION ALLIANCE CORNERSTONE MEMBERS
Auburn University
Auburn University at Montgomery
Birmingham-Southern College
Northeast-Shoals Community College
Samford University
University of Alabama at Birmingham

HIGHER EDUCATION ALLIANCE MEMBERS
Alabama Community College System
Athens State University
Calhoun Community College
Enterprise State Community College
Faulkner University
Jacksonville State University
Judson College
Lawson State Community College
Northeast Alabama Community College
Shelton State Community College
Tennessee State Community College
Troy University
University of Montevallo
University of West Alabama
Walsworth State Community College

INDIVIDUALS
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Adam Bishop
Adam Hoese
Adrie Arlins
Aisha Henry
Albert Brewer
Alexa Vasser
Alexis Robinson
Alice Bowsher
Alica Scott
Allison Muenkendorf
Allison Nanni
Alyson King
Alyson Butts
Alyson Ray
Amal Abab
Amanda & Edward Wilson
Amanda Faye Currie
Amanda Steele
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Amy Clayton
Amy Kaiser
Amy Knight
Ana Rasmay
Ana Valeriano
Andrew Anderson
Andrew Duffy
Angela Bishop
Angela Nolan
Angela Smith
Anej Roney
Ann Floll
Anna Patterson
Anne & Mike Warren
Anne & Neil Bertle
Anne Mitchell
Anne Wilson
Annette Allen
Anthony Betancourt
Antonio Comeans
April Hoge
Ariel Bilingis
Ariel Smith

University Conway
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Alyson King
Andrew Duffey
Andrew Anderson
Ana Valeriano
Ana Ramsay
Amy Knight
Amy Badham
Amanda Faye Currie
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Jim & Donna Sisson
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More than 900,000 Alabamians - including 300,000 children - live in poverty. Together, we can ensure that all Alabamians have the opportunity to lead prosperous lives.