

2020  
2021

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THE PITTSBURGH PROMISE  
MAGAZINE

## Navigating Education

In A Changing World

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

If You Don't Have It,  
You Ain't Got It

THEN AND NOW



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**P<sup>2</sup>** is completely funded through advertisements placed by Promise eligible post-secondary institutions

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## CONNECT WITH THE PROMISE



## 1ST WORD

A few months ago, I wrote a letter to Pittsburgh's kids which was printed in TribLive. You can read the letter in full here: [bit.ly/3hTjrXg](https://bit.ly/3hTjrXg).

Here are excerpts:

During these strange times, and always, I want you to know that you are special and you are loved. There is nothing you need to do to become special or to earn love. And there is nothing you can do to lose either. In you just being you, you are special and loved.

As dearly loved humans who are endowed by their creator with rights, talents and responsibilities, we the adults in this world owe you — all of you — some things:

- **You should not be tolerated.**

You should instead be treated with the utmost of care.

- **You should not be hurried.**

You should have the time needed to be a child and an adolescent before you have adult worries and responsibilities.

- **You should not be afraid.**

You should be secure in the knowledge that you are physically and emotionally safe at home, at school and in every neighborhood throughout the land.

- **You should not be uncertain.**

You should be confident that your parents and relatives, your teachers and bus drivers, your police officers and mentors see you as precious humans, and look out for you as treasures to be guarded.

- **You should not be taken for granted.**

You should be able to count on your school to inspire and equip you to flourish.

- **You should not be passive.**

You should be engaged in service, helping to create and build a city that is good and just for all.

Thankfully, some of you have all these things. It breaks my heart that not all of you can say that. If we as a community have failed some of you, we have failed. I hold to the view that all kids are our kids.

I don't know how many good years I have left, but I pledge to you that I will spend them using whatever influence I have to get the grownups in our city to do better until we do right by all of you. ■

Sincerely,

**Saleem Ghubril** Executive Director | The Pittsburgh Promise



1

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The Pittsburgh Promise is a partnership between Pittsburgh Public Schools, the City of Pittsburgh, UPMC, and other key funders.





A STUDENT-CENTERED ORGANIZATION THAT SUPPORTS IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE YOUTH IN BECOMING ENGAGED, CONFIDENT, AND CELEBRATED MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY.



THROUGH OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAMMING COMBINING CREATIVE EXPRESSION WORKSHOPS, LITERACY-RICH ACTIVITIES, ONE-ON-ONE ACADEMIC SUPPORT, CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS CURRICULUM, AND STORYTELLING FOR SOCIAL HEALING, **ARYSE (Alliance for Refugee Youth Support and Education)** GIVES IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE YOUTH THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO TAKE THEIR PLACE AS LEADERS WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND OUR WORLD.

*Every summer, ARYSE hosts PRYSE Academy to help immigrant youth become more comfortable in American culture and the school system.*

After hosting PRYSE Academy on a volunteer basis for five summers, in 2017, ARYSE realized that having the summer camp wasn't enough support for their students. So, they started other programs such as the after school clubs to help with homework and provide a safe place for children to come, hang out, and build community. ARYSE also started a girls art group where the goal is to empower young immigrant girls to be creative through art.

I began as a camper with ARYSE in 2013, when they first started their summer program called PRYSE (Program of Alliance for Refugee Youth Support and Education) Academy. There were times when I did not want to attend, but then there was a spark. The summer camp was not only about improving my abilities in writing and speaking English; I realized there was something else happening, too. The eleven-year-old Niraj was completely engulfed by American culture, and I had no interest in understanding who I really was. This "useless" summer camp was helping me realize and understand the importance of my culture through the work the counselors were doing. There were other Bhutanese and Nepali kids at this camp, and I really connected with them, more than I did at the beginning of the camp.

*I attended PRYSE Academy as a camper in its inaugural year, 2013, and again in 2015. Being part of PRYSE Academy was such an amazing opportunity. I felt a deepened connection to my culture and appreciation for being with others from different cultures.*

So why did I choose eventually to volunteer? Because ARYSE is doing something that I have not seen in any other summer camps before; they not only help immigrant children get used to American life, they also encourage the kids to be open and freely share their culture, so they don't lose it. ARYSE is very important to me. There is a personal aspect to it as I, myself, have been positively influenced by its programs. I now volunteer as a mentor with ARYSE and serve on its youth steering committee so I can continue to help other kids grow in the ways that I did during the years I attended the summer program.

*Volunteering at ARYSE has played a huge part in who I am now.*

My first year I had a hard time speaking in front of crowds, but now it's like nothing. I've improved my communication skills. I am shaping and shifting a child's life if you think about it; they'll remember camp and think, "Wow, Niraj was a very nice and thoughtful person." That is one of my greatest goals: to have a positive impact on others' lives. There are times when I see kids just like the eleven-year-old me, and it makes me happy to see how they change from the start of PRYSE Academy to the end of the program. They come out of their shells and become a whole different person! Volunteering with ARYSE really helps me connect to my roots and thank the world for giving me this amazing opportunity of having a beautiful life in America. I hope to continue to give back and have the same influence on these children! ■



*During the summer of 2018, I volunteered as a counselor where I planned classroom activities and ran workshops. I also became a member of the Youth Steering Committee where we planned the future of the summer program. In 2019, I became a lead counselor at PRYSE Academy, where I was paid for my time, during the summer of 2020 I volunteered all the time I could.*

## LEARN MORE

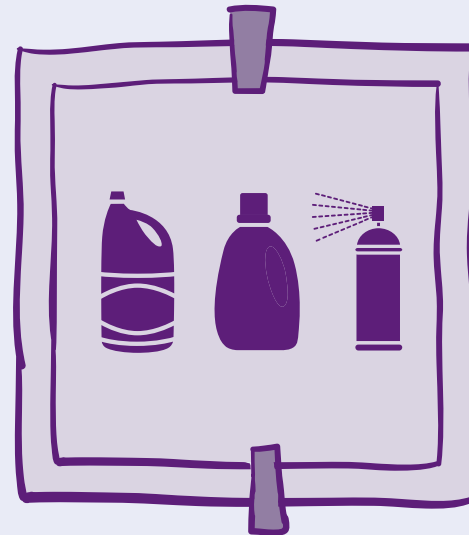
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**Or contact**  
Jenna Baron  
Executive Director  
[jenna@arysepgh.org](mailto:jenna@arysepgh.org)

**Niraj Nepal** is a 2020 graduate of Pittsburgh Carrick and former Promise Ambassador. He is currently a freshman at Duquesne University studying computer science.







### Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I am a 20-year-old college student and graduate of PPS Obama Academy in 2018. I am currently a junior at Lincoln University majoring in biology. My hope is to become either a physician's assistant or a zoologist. On-campus, I am the treasurer of Lincoln's Gentlemen's Qualities organization and a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success.

### Can you tell us about your nonprofit and why you started it?

The purpose of HBCU Majority is to promote HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) among high school students and support current HBCU students that reside in Allegheny County. Our goal is to create an awareness of Historically Black Colleges and Universities as an option. We also pair high school students with current HBCU students as a resource and to provide trusting relationships. Within the campuses, we will develop a support system with students from Pittsburgh. We also want to build a network between HBCU alumni and HBCU students.

In December of 2019, I participated in a panel discussion that was attended by at least 50 Black high school and college students. During the breakout session, I had only two students come to ask me questions about my college experience. Neither of them knew what an HBCU was! After that, I realized that HBCUs were a foreign concept for most students in this area. That is when I decided to create HBCU Majority to bring awareness about benefits of attending a Historically Black College or University.

### Can you give us the details of the Hamper Drive and the results from it?

My initial idea was to have a free store for HBCU students. As a freshman, I was able to get essential items that were offered by NEED. I wanted to duplicate the concept and open it to all HBCU students. Due to the pandemic, I had to adjust my ideas.

The purpose of the Hamper Drive was to make back to school shopping a little easier for students returning in the fall. I also wanted to get the community involved in the effort. There would be a meaningful and purposeful feeling for the giver, as well as the receiver. As for me, I was overwhelmed with the support we received. Knowing that I was doing something that would positively affect other students was pretty great too!

In preparing for the drive we solicited local businesses and corporations. Donations were made by Walmart, Home Depot, CVS, Costco, and The Pittsburgh Promise. The Cheyney Alumni Chapter of Pittsburgh also made a generous donation

for the cause. A drop-off day for the community was held on July 19. Individual donors pulled up to Lincoln K-5 with bags and boxes full of cleaning products, toiletries, and bathroom essentials. Principal Pam Parks was helpful getting items dropped off from the PPS Lincoln Staff. The collection would not have run efficiently without the help of Nyabingi Michi, (Lincoln University) and Erica Johnson, (Hampton University). They both are high school friends from Obama Academy and attend HBCUs.

Enough items were collected to fill 26 hampers for the HBCU students that registered to participate. Nine of the recipients are Promise Scholars and are upperclassmen at Lincoln University. Twelve of the participants are Promise eligible; however, they will be attending an HBCU outside of Pennsylvania.

A pickup event was held Saturday, August 1. HBCU students gathered, socialized, and took home a hamper filled with useful items: detergent, soap, toothpaste, tooth brushes, deodorant, body wash, lotion, hand sanitizer, bandages, blankets, bedding, towels, and much more.

The turnout was awesome! This was my first real event, so I was pretty nervous. People donated more than I expected. We will do this event again next year. My hope is to reach more community members and students.

### What are your future plans for your nonprofit?

I have so many ideas and plans. Generally, I plan to connect with more HBCU college students. I want to create a network within the city that also includes HBCU alumni. I'd like to do a photo contest on the HBCU campuses. This will give high school students a better point of reference; especially if college tours continue to be on hold for a while. Scholarships are a part of my longer-term plan because HBCUs don't always have the financial means to support students during their freshman year.

Post pandemic, we plan to provide transportation for Cheyney and Lincoln students to return home during breaks. In September, we will collaborate with other education agencies to conduct a FAFSA workshop with parents. We will also be conducting a HBCU Day at Lincoln K-5 in the spring. It is never too early to introduce the concept of college to children. Avery Day will be our first anniversary celebration, to acknowledge Avery College, a HBCU that was located in Pittsburgh in the 1800s. This will be a community event with food and entertainment. Of course information about HBCUs from across the nation will be available. ■



Reed Rankin is a 2018 graduate Pittsburgh Obama Academy and junior at Lincoln University. He is the Executive Director of HBCU Majority.

## Creating Awareness and a Network of Support



*With community support, Reed turned his dream of helping HBCU (Historically Black College or University) students into a reality.*



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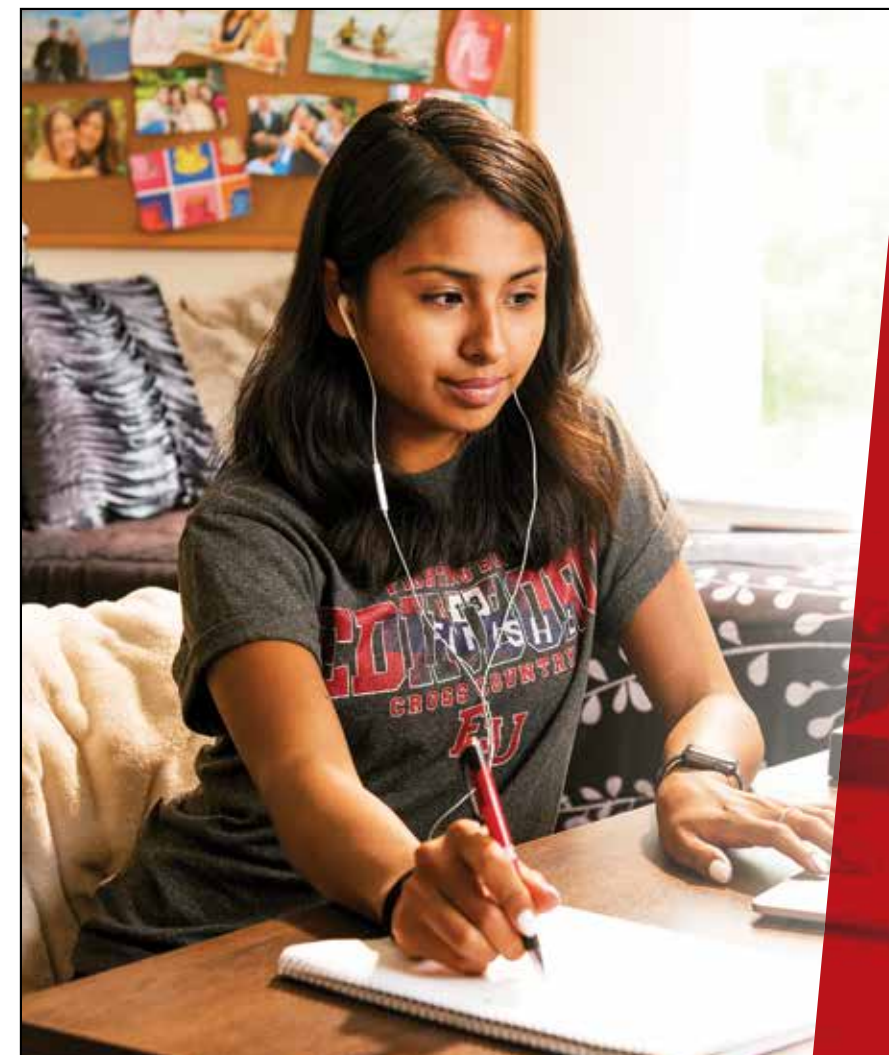
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BJ Durham, a former Yellow Jacket basketball player, earned a bachelor's degree in psychology in 2016 and a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling in 2018. Currently, he is a doctoral student at NC State University.



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## It was my freshman year of college. First trip to the bookstore.

Apart from the excitement of everything being brand new, I most remember how the bag that the cashier gave me contained a collection of credit card brochures. By the time I left the student center, a guy with a round face and big voice offered me a slick thermos to sign up for my first Visa. Took less than five minutes.

What the gentleman didn't tell me - what my parents didn't think to put up there with the birds and the bees - was how much that card would affect my adult life. No one told me the first few secrets to being a consumer in today's world of fancy doodads and easy plastic:

If You Don't Have It,  
You Ain't Got It



The best way to use a credit card, if at all, is as a substitute for "real" money (i.e. cash in your pocket or bank account).

=

?

If you don't have it, you ain't got it: Too often, I used mine when I didn't really have the money - the fellas were starting a Madden tournament in the dorm and we surely needed a proper TV set. Here's the thing - you should know how you're going to pay within no more than 30 days before you swipe the plastic. Because...

\$

?

Credit Cards aren't free



**Credit Cards aren't free. In fact, they're pretty expensive:**

Take that TV of mine. \$300 - shiny and new. I made the \$10 minimum payment requested in my monthly credit card bill. Simple as that. But it would take me until after my graduation to really pay for that one purchase. By then, I had spent over \$400 on that TV, which had been left behind with my college days. You see - a credit card comes with an APR (annual percentage rate), which is a confusing way of saying that you have to pay it back with interest. I didn't care at the time, but as it turns out...

**Credit cards affect credit score.**

And your credit score matters: Who knew that I was being graded for everything I did with my credit card? Not paying it off each month - oh, that gave me a B credit score. Not paying on time - slipping down to a C, a D, an F! Meanwhile, the places where I applied for jobs were checking my credit score to check me out. Years later, when my wife and I bought our house, our credit scores were the first thing we had to bring to the table.

Credit cards affect credit score



ABCDEF

If I could do it over again, I'd ask that guy with the round face - why do I need this credit card? I suspect he'd tell me because every grown-up has one. Maybe he'd say that it's good to have the plastic in case you need something you can't afford.

I'd say to him, in a voice as big as his - if I don't have it, I don't need it. Then, I'd buy my own thermos - with cash! 🍷

This article is reprinted from our Spring 2010 magazine and was written by Felix Brandon Lloyd, Co-Founder and CEO of ZooBean.





# Navigating Education In A Changing World



If this is your first experience with virtual learning and you're unsure of how to structure your days for success, you'll want to adopt good habits to succeed in online learning. **To the right are some tips to help ensure your success. They can be incorporated across subjects and grade levels, as well as in both virtual and non-virtual settings.** You may just need to tweak things here and there. Hopefully these ideas can give you a starting place for making your virtual experience a positive one!

Following these tips will help you get the most out of your education. With these suggestions, virtual school or blended learning school students will become independent learners and gain valuable time-management skills that will serve you well—in high school, in college, and in the workforce!

Citation of the 8 tips: Stephanie Becker | "8 Tips for Middle and High Schoolers to Get Started in Online School" [www.connectionsacademy.com](http://www.connectionsacademy.com)

## 8. Learn to deal with setbacks.

Everyone has them! Every person who succeeds has had to struggle to get there. When you get a bad grade, have an argument with a friend, or experience other frustrations, realize that this is a learning experience. Talk to someone to get another point of view—you could be worried about something that's pretty small in the long run. To move forward, you must take responsibility for what you've done (or not done) and decide to change your behavior in the future. Making a plan for achieving greater success in the future will help you build confidence too!

## 7. Exercise with friends online.

Middle and high school students will spend a lot of time online—completing lessons, chatting with peers, and touching base with their online teachers. So scheduling physical fitness into the day is also important. Physical exercise can boost mood, energy, and brainpower. You won't even have to leave the living room with the many online exercise videos available on social channels like Instagram and YouTube.

## 6. Start on track and stay on track.

It's always better to be ahead than to be struggling at the last minute! Break down big projects into small, manageable parts—and give each one a deadline. Don't drag your feet—make yourself do things on time and you'll be better off in the long run.

## 1. Be Positive.

Thriving through a change is tough but doable with a positive attitude. A positive attitude about online learning is the best gift you can give yourself. Everything you learn, whether it's your most favorite or least favorite subject, will help you grow as a person.

## 2. Get organized—and stay organized.

Creating an orderly learning space to do schoolwork will put you ahead of the game. Be sure you have room for your books, computer, pens, paper, and other supplies. Label folders to hold papers and notes for each subject. Go ahead and create electronic folders for each class on your computer and in your email program. If your virtual school provides an online planner, use it to schedule your personal appointments and create your "to do" list, with items ranked in order of urgency.

## 3. Establish a flexible routine.

While online school and blended learning school do give you a more flexible schedule, having a routine will help keep you on track with your schoolwork. It's a good idea to find out when your teachers have their office hours, so you can arrange your schedule to overlap with when they are available. Naturally, you can vary your schedule when needed.

## 4. Set personal goals.

To make great things happen in your life, it helps to set goals for yourself. Think about what you'd like to accomplish, both short and long term. Is there a class you want to ace this semester? Maybe you want to get a certain grade point average or achieve a certain score on the SAT exams. Preparing for college and getting admission into a specific college might also be on your list. Be sure to put your goals in writing and post the list where you'll see it often.

## 5. Make the most of your resources.

As an online or blended learning student, you have many helpful resources available. Naturally, your texts, the library, online instructional tools, and trusted websites come to mind. But don't forget the many human resources you can use: parents, teachers, school counselors, and principals are great sources of information. A good rule of thumb is if you've been looking for an answer for more than five minutes, reach out for help!





# Navigating Education

In A Changing World

**For students preparing to transition out of the K-12 school system, the COVID-19 pandemic is as much a time of uncertainty as it is for adults.**

Whatever the 2020–21 school year may bring, rising juniors and seniors will need continued support while they work towards goals and aspirations during such tremendous uncertainty. Fortunately, schools and educators serve as the places and people who provide stability and continuity in students' lives, especially those students whose families may be currently experiencing incredibly challenging circumstances.

**Staying connected is critical.** The adults with whom students interact in schools play a key role in sharing information and guidance to help students select and pursue postsecondary pathways. To the extent feasible, schools should find ways to help students remain connected to resources like counselors and to ensure that students know where to go to find information about key milestones, requirements, and postgraduation opportunities when they're not in school.

## The Promise is starting something new this year!

We now have Promise Coaches working in partnership with PPS staff and the community to focus on providing career exploration, mental strengthening, and interventions to every high school student starting in the 9th grade.

**We are starting this work inside three high schools: Carrick, Milliones/UPrep, and Perry.**

Too few PPS 9th graders graduate from high school, enroll in education after high school, and earn a credential. This deprives students from being able to compete for jobs in today's workforce. It also creates a challenge for employers who are looking for new workers to grow their businesses and replace workers as they retire.

**The goal of the Promise Coaches is to increase the number of 9th graders who enroll in post-secondary education and earn a post-secondary credential.**

Our coaches' talents are many and varied! They bring experience working with youth, college students, families, higher education administration and K-12 colleagues. They are all passionate, dedicated professionals eager to serve Pittsburgh public school students.

As they spent the summer attending a myriad of webinars and information sessions to prepare themselves to support students, they also began strategizing best practices in virtual support. They are prepared to offer

virtual workshops to 9th through 12th grade students that will help them begin to explore their own interests, learn about the options that lay before them and map out their post-secondary plans. They're prepared to walk students through the college and career search process, to support them as they complete college applications and to assist families in completing the FAFSA.

The Coaches are eager to begin building individual relationships with the students and staff of Perry, Carrick and Milliones/UPrep High Schools – even if it must happen on a screen instead of in a school building. ■



## Promise Coaches Will Help Students:





Meet the Promise Coaches

**“What advice do you have for kids as they navigate this school year?”**



There is no way you will let us down; you're here, you're amazing, and we are so excited to support you as you seize this year!

**Kelcey Bailey**



Stay diligent, focus on one thing at a time, and communicate with your teachers.

**Kameron Branson**



Asking for help is a sign of strength, and there are so many people rooting for you this year, so don't be afraid to reach out for help when you need it!

**Vanessa Dunn**



Learn to roll with the punches.

**Paul Johnson**



Considering everything that has happened in 2020, never lose sight of yourself and the goals you can achieve.

**Sean Spencer**



Take care of yourself and ask for help.

**Schazz Lee**



The only way you succeed in our ever-changing world is to learn how to truly embrace changes as they come.

**Dalontai Pond**



Don't be afraid to ask for help.

**Marna Owens-Bailey**

**Coaches Contact Info:**

**CarrickCoaches@pittsburghpromise.org**

**PerryCoaches@pittsburghpromise.org**

**UPrepCoaches@pittsburghpromise.org**



Kristin Koerner is the Communications Manager at The Pittsburgh Promise.

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PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
PARTNERS WITH MORE THAN  
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TO PLAN FOR SCHOOL IN THE FALL

**PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PITTSBURGH FEDERATION OF TEACHERS (PFT) AND ONE PA LAUNCHED ALL-IN TO REOPEN OUR SCHOOLS, AN EFFORT TO BRING THE PITTSBURGH COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO PLAN THE SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL REOPENING OF SCHOOLS THIS FALL.**

“During this global pandemic, the health and safety of our students, teachers, and staff is a top priority for the 2020-2021 school year,” said Dr. Anthony Hamlet, Superintendent. “As a caregiver to tens of thousands of children, we see the plan for reopening our schools essential to the effective reopening of the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County as a whole.”

The All-In to Reopen Our Schools plan was developed by 14 subcommittees, composed of a cross-section of stakeholders, within four categories: Academic Programming and Instructional Support, Family Support & Wellbeing, School Operations for a Safe and Healthy Environment, Communications, Outreach and Community Coordination.

From foundations to local businesses, more than 50 organizations have collaborated as All-In to Reopen Schools partners. These partners have provided valuable input within the 14 subcommittees and yielded a total of 407 recommendations for Executive Cabinet to review.

In July, members of the All-In to Reopen Our Schools subcommittees highlighted vital recommendations during a virtual event held on Zoom and live streamed on the District’s Facebook page and website. More than 300 subcommittee members and staff participated in the event, and 16,000 individuals viewed it online. Viewers asked questions that were answered in real-time or placed on the District website under All-In Frequently Asked Questions.

**SOME IMMEDIATE ACTIONS FOR THE REOPENING WE HAVE ANNOUNCED INCLUDE:**

- The switch to Schoology as the District’s online Learning Management System, with the integrated use of Microsoft Teams to support communications. Schoology, currently used at the Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy, rated high for its ease of use, accessibility, technical integration, and content management.
- All Pittsburgh Gifted Center classes will be held virtually.
- A change in the school calendar to provide additional days for teacher and staff professional development.

As for fall sports, the Board of Education approved the Athletics Resocialization Health and Safety Plan. This 12-page plan outlines how the District will provide a safe space of fun, learning and camaraderie for PPS students and covers procedures for conditioning, daily safety checks for athletes, coaches and staff, and the use of masks. The plan was developed with input from coaches, principals, parents, athletic trainers and other medical personnel to ensure alignment to guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), and the Pennsylvania Department of Health. ■

**LEARN  
MORE**

**For more information about All-In to Reopen Schools, please visit [www.pghschools.org/allin](http://www.pghschools.org/allin).**



*“The PFT has been eager to work with the Pittsburgh Public Schools on a plan that will bring our students and staff back to school safely,” said Nina Esposito Visgitis, President Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers. “Teachers have valiantly embraced our remote learning reality, but of course, they are eager to get back inside of the classroom, where teaching and learning flourish best.”*

Since 2003, in many different capacities, **Mercedes J. Williams** has worked in over 20 Pittsburgh public schools. Currently, she works for the district’s Office of Public Information as Media Manager where she handles social media, event planning, good news stories, and serves as a liaison between the media and school district. Mercedes is a proud Pittsburgh Public Schools alumni, employee, and parent.





# SlipperyRock University<sup>SM</sup>

The Pittsburgh Promise

Preferred College Partners

## EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE



CIVIL ENGINEERING  
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
MBA  
HUMANITIES  
EXERCISE SCIENCE  
CYBERSECURITY



STEM  
PHYSICAL THERAPY  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
COMPUTING  
TEACHER EDUCATION  
INDUSTRIAL AND SYSTEMS ENGINEERING  
PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS ENGINEERING



[www.SRU.edu](http://www.SRU.edu)

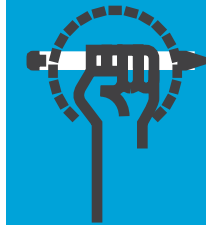
A member of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT  
MUSIC THERAPY  
BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION  
HOMELAND SECURITY  
SAFETY MANAGEMENT  
SOCIAL SCIENCES  
PERFORMING ARTS

## Preferred College Partners

The **Preferred College Partners** program is intended to strengthen relationships between The Pittsburgh Promise and certain post-secondary institutions that provide additional financial aid and robust support services for Promise Scholars. **Preferred College Partners** will provide grants for room and board to Promise-eligible students who are accepted to the institution and live in on-campus housing.

These **Preferred College Partners** will extend program benefits to Promise Scholars who enter as freshmen in fall 2021:



Allegheny College

California University of Pennsylvania

Carlow University

Carnegie Mellon University

Chatham University

Cheyney University

Clarion University

Duquesne University

Edinboro University

Geneva College

Grove City College

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Juniata College

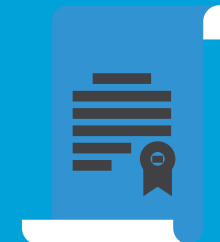
Kutztown University

La Roche University

Mansfield University

Mercyhurst University

Mount Aloysius College



Penn State (Beaver, Greater Allegheny, Hazleton, Mont Alto, and Schuylkill campuses)

Pittsburgh Technical College

Point Park University

Robert Morris University

Rosedale Technical College

Saint Vincent College

Seton Hill University

Shippensburg University

Slippery Rock University

Susquehanna University

Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology

Thiel College

Washington & Jefferson College

Waynesburg University

Westminster College

Williamson College of the Trades



Our thanks to these Preferred College Partners, who share The Pittsburgh Promise's commitment to helping make post-secondary education more accessible and affordable.

### NEXT STEPS FOR FUTURE PROMISE SCHOLARS:

- 1 Be certain to consider Preferred College Partners during your post-secondary school search.
- 2 Visit the schools and ask about financial aid and support services for Promise Scholars.
- 3 Apply to all schools of your choice.
- 4 Complete the FAFSA (FAFSA.gov) and PA State Grant Form (Pheaa.org) as early as possible (Oct. 1st) and no later than May 1st.
- 5 Once accepted to a Preferred College Partner school, reach out to the school's financial aid office to learn more about your individual financial aid package. Financial aid packages will vary by school and by student.



# THEN and NOW

## MICHAEL WARREN

### THEN

#### Greetings parents and students of the Pittsburgh Public Schools,

My name is Michael Warren, and I am a 2011 graduate of the Pittsburgh School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) 6-12. Formerly from the Southside area of Pittsburgh, I previously attended Knoxville Elementary and Rogers CAPA Middle School. From the moment it was introduced to me, The Pittsburgh Promise was more than just money or a scholarship; it has represented that little bit of hope that someone such as myself needed to know that I can, and now will, make it.

Financially, college never seemed possible for me. Still, college was a definite goal. I've been dedicated to my big dreams of becoming a musical educator here in the Pittsburgh Public School District. This dream started partly because of the influence of a teacher I had in the fifth grade. Ms. Flick didn't just invite me into the choir; she invested in me and revealed to me the nature of my vocal gift, which I hadn't even noticed in myself. It is because Ms. Flick recognized and nurtured my gift that I was afforded the opportunity to attend Rogers CAPA Middle School. It was there that I met the "teacher for me." Thanks to Mr. Biggs, I was able to successfully complete my college auditions, and was even accepted into not only one, nor two, but three colleges.

I leave our students with the following advice: take advantage of what your teachers have to offer. Keep in mind The Promise, not only because of the money, but because it can help you reach your dreams. Each and every person has something great to offer to the world, now do the things necessary to offer them.

**Michael Warren | 2011 Graduate of CAPA**

*(Reprinted from our Fall 2011 Magazine)*



### NOW

Almost 10 years after receiving "The Pittsburgh Promise" I can truly say I am still a direct beneficiary of the vision that was sown back in 2008. I'm still being granted opportunities, I'm still pursuing dreams, I'm still making connections, and I'm still just as grateful to have been a recipient. Since 2011, I have endured my fair share of struggle and success. I've been challenged to an uncomfortable degree, and I've been ready to give up a number of times. Every time, however, I remembered the "Promise" made to me on behalf of people who believed that I could succeed. Currently:

- I serve as Assistant Principal at Pittsburgh King PreK-8.
- I am a music director at 2 churches in the city of Pittsburgh.
- I am employed by the Pittsburgh Penguins where I serve as an occasional National Anthem Singer.
- I am married and we own a home up the street from Langley High School where my brother attended and was one of the first Pittsburgh Promise recipients.
- I've obtained a bachelor's degree in Music Education and a master's degree in K-12 Administration.
- I am in pursuit of a doctorate degree at Duquesne University.

When I graduated from Pittsburgh CAPA in 2011, I had no idea of where I would go, what I'd go on to do, or if I'd make an impact at all, but I know one thing for certain: The Promise was the **Push, Reassurance, Opportunity, Momentum, Investment, Service,** and **Experience** I needed to help get me where I am today. The Pittsburgh Promise helped me to go to school thanks to the financial scholarship, but it gave me a chance to become the **Persistent, Resilient, Optimistic, Motivational, Intentional, Secure,** and **Educated** young man I am today. Just as I was unsure of where I'd go 10 years ago, I am unsettled as to where I will go in my near future, but I am eternally grateful for what The Promise was to me, and I'm hopeful that others will have the chance to experience the same in the years to come!

As I reflect on what The Promise was to me, I am encouraged "to be" for someone else, whatever that might mean. I plan to be a person of **Peace, Respect, Obedience, Mindfulness, Inspiration, Safety,** and **Energy** for all the students who will come after me with hopes and aspirations to achieve the unimaginable. I want to help remind all people that no matter what, all things are truly possible, and when we work together, we will be able to accomplish anything we put our minds to. Yes, it sounds so cliché, but I've lived it, and can attest that collaboration and community are key ingredients to the success of an individual.

To those who were key in founding this wonderful initiative, I thank you! To those who are going to be fortunate enough to receive support from this organization, I congratulate you and extend well wishes as you embark on your educational journey. Finally, to those who have received support from The Promise AND to those who believe in the mission of The Promise, I implore you to give! Your support is a large part of what helps the visionaries fulfill a promise to the young scholars of the Pittsburgh Public Schools and what helps those same young people fulfill a promise to themselves: to not let anything interfere with them accomplishing their goals, no matter the circumstance.

Thank you, Pittsburgh Public Schools, Pittsburgh Promise, and thanks to everyone who helped me become the best me, despite the many challenges I've faced. Now, let's continue changing lives and offering "Promise" to many more! ■



**Michael J. Warren** is a Pittsburgh Promise Recipient, 2011 and a graduate of Pittsburgh School for the Creative and Performing Arts. Currently, Michael is Assistant Principal and a 2011 graduate at Pittsburgh King PreK-8 and Pittsburgh Penguins National Anthem Singer. He was a recipient of the 2020 Young, Gifted and Black award.



## Seton Hill University is proud to be a Pittsburgh Promise Preferred Partner.

Seton Hill University, a Catholic, liberal arts university, has been educating students in the best tradition of the Sisters of Charity since 1918. With new programs in Nursing, Cybersecurity, Global Studies, Data Analytics, Digital Humanities and flexible online Master's and Adult Degree offerings, Seton Hill is preparing students *"for that world in which they are destined to live."*

For more information on Seton Hill University's academic programs, visit [www.setonhill.edu](http://www.setonhill.edu), email [admit@setonhill.edu](mailto:admit@setonhill.edu) or call **724.838.4281**.

## STRIVING TODAY TOWARD A BETTER TOMORROW

The challenges the world faces are continually evolving. Today's young people — relentlessly curious and creative — will lead the way in solving tomorrow's problems.

Carnegie Mellon University's collaborative environment cultivates critical thinking, communication and problem-solving — skills that are essential to tackle our most pressing issues. Even in these extraordinary times, CMU's research continues to make a positive global impact on humanity.

We are proud to partner with the Pittsburgh Promise in supporting young dreamers and strivers as they set forth on a journey of change, opportunity and lifelong learning.

*"Carnegie Mellon University is positioned like no other institution to define and lead the space where technology and humanity intersect."*

- Farnam Jahanian  
President, Carnegie Mellon University

Carnegie  
Mellon  
University

"Walking To The Sky", © Jonathan Borofsky, (2006)  
Jonathan Borofsky is a graduate of CMU's College of Fine Arts (CFA). "Walking To The Sky" was donated to the university by Jill Kraus, a CFA alumna, and her husband, Peter.



# The Pittsburgh Promise Executive Scholars

WE ARE PROUD TO INTRODUCE  
OUR 2020 CLASS OF  
EXECUTIVE SCHOLARS.

**THE EXECUTIVE SCHOLARS PROGRAM BUILDS A PIPELINE BETWEEN HIGH-PERFORMING STUDENTS AND OUR MAJOR CORPORATE DONORS.**

The program provides students with the chance to connect with the prestigious company with which they are matched and pursue professional development opportunities and relationships during their college years. High school seniors with a strong academic performance, a commitment to community service, and leadership skills are encouraged to apply. The Executive Scholars Program is one of the ways that The Promise can help students transition not only from high school to college, but also from college to a career. We are very proud of our 2020 Executive Scholar Class. Congratulations!

## UPMC Scholars of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Haajar Ahmad** While attending high school at Pittsburgh Online Academy, Haajar participated as a research mentee at Pitt. Her assistance on a project to find a cheap, biodegrade alternative to plastic inspired her to pursue biomedical engineering at University of Pittsburgh to promote environmental conservation.



**Chloe Blair** Over her four years at Pittsburgh Allderdice, Chloe is proud to have grown into a strongly educated and well-rounded individual. Through community service she has learned gratitude and leadership skills. At Duquesne University, Chloe is studying to become a dentist with goals of operating her own practice.



**Glenn Patton** As valedictorian at Pittsburgh Brashear, Glenn has been awarded a scholarship to attend University of Pittsburgh where he is studying physical therapy. Glenn's biggest aspirations in life are to work hard and help others. During high school Glenn played soccer and served as a Promise Student Ambassador.



**Sean'dre Reid** As a Challenge Program participant at Pittsburgh CAPA, Sean'dre won an award for most community service hours. Sean'dre also participated on the track and cross-country teams and as a Promise Student Ambassador. He is attending Temple University where he is pursuing a degree in public relations.



**Valeria Silva Yopez** Along with Global Minds, French Club, and Social Justice Club, Valeria participated in Manchester Craftsmen's Guild Apprenticeship Training Program. She is most proud of her journey learning English during her years at Pittsburgh Allderdice. Valeria is attending University of Pittsburgh where she studies bioengineering.

## Highmark Scholars of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Eli Anish** Eli is a dedicated runner having won many competitions and awards, including back-to-back District Individual Cross Country Championships. Building upon his athletic success at Pittsburgh Allderdice, Eli runs competitively for University of Pittsburgh where he is studying health sciences.



**Janine Kwizera** Janine is studying biology at Duquesne University with aspirations of becoming an OB/GYN. This profession will allow her to fulfill her goals of caring for others and making a positive impact on society. As a graduate of Pittsburgh Allderdice Janine received an award for perfect attendance.



**Julie Piasecki** In addition to being valedictorian at Pittsburgh Brashear, Julie participated in Drama Club, school musicals, International Thespian Society, and was president of National Honor Society. Julie also worked as a Promise Student Ambassador. Julie is studying health care administration at Slippery Rock University.



**Sachin Thiagarajan** Driven by a passion for learning and a desire to become a physician, Sachin is a pre-med major at University of Pittsburgh. He hopes to work with Doctors Without Borders and serve as a trauma surgeon in the U.S. Military.



**Aaliyah Thomas** Aaliyah is pursuing a nursing degree at Chatham University. She plans to work as a travel nurse before training to be a nurse anesthetist. As a Global Leadership Council Member at Pittsburgh CAPA, she earned a scholarship to participate in an immersion program in Japan.

## PNC Scholars of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Mikeiya Bennett** Mikeiya is passionate about empowering others and ensuring everyone's voice is heard. She helped create Student Council at Pittsburgh CAPA, and was elected Class President. At Temple University she studies political science. She aspires to become a lawyer to advocate for justice in our political systems.



**Niraj Nepal** Motivated by helping others and the importance of culture, Niraj volunteers with ARYSE working with refugee and immigrant youths. At Pittsburgh Carrick he was active in sports, National Honor Society, and International Thespian Society. Niraj studies computer science at Duquesne University.



**Amila Niksic** As valedictorian at Pittsburgh Obama, Amila was awarded a scholarship to attend University of Pittsburgh where she is studying biomedical engineering. Amila founded the Obama Academy Speaker Series, taught English at SOS Children's Village International, and was a research assistant at Pitt.



**Isabella Sciulli** Isabella strives to be a successful businesswoman full of the confidence and motivation needed to excel in her career. As a Pittsburgh Allderdice student she was a member of National Honor Society and participated in a Breast Cancer Awareness Fundraiser. She is majoring in business at La Roche University.



**Steven Tsoukalas** Steven studies mechanical engineering at University of Pittsburgh and has dreams to design and manufacture aerospace technology. At Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy he participated in BotsIQ Robotics competition, Math League, and was president of National Honor Society.

## BNY Mellon Scholars of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Dylan Blum** As a vocal major at Pittsburgh CAPA, Dylan received numerous awards including American Mathematics competition winner, AP Scholar, and Outstanding Vocalist award. He was also a member of the Junior Mendelssohn Choir. Dylan studies statistics at Temple University.



**Shakur Bowles** Shakur is a graduate of Pittsburgh Millions where he achieved high honor roll. At Indiana University of Pennsylvania he majors in business and hopes to one day become a real estate agent. He enjoys acting, the arts, and entertainment technology. Shakur is active in volunteering at his church.



**Casmair Frison** Casmair attends Indiana University of Pennsylvania and is studying business management and human resources. At Pittsburgh Brashear she was the treasurer of Future is Mine, a member of Black Student Union, Rock Climbing Club, National Honor Society, and African American History Bowl Team. Casmair also worked as a Promise Student Ambassador.



**Christos Mavrogeorgis** His passions for playing music, being active, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, led Christos to participate in musicals, cross country, track, volleyball, and basketball while a student at Pittsburgh CAPA. Christos studies industrial engineering at St. Vincent University.



**Eva Mischler** While attending Pittsburgh Allderdice, Eva was named Society of Women Engineers Student of the Year. Eva hopes to work for the WHO in public health. She is also enthusiastic about social justice and women's rights. Eva studies bioengineering at University of Pittsburgh.

# 352

**PROMISE SCHOLARS TO DATE  
HAVE BEEN RECOGNIZED AS  
EXECUTIVE SCHOLARS**

**"THE EXECUTIVE SCHOLAR PROGRAM  
HELPED ME LEARN HOW TO CONDUCT  
MYSELF IN A PROFESSIONAL MANNER.  
I'VE DEVELOPED NEW AND EFFECTIVE  
WAYS TO MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL  
MINDSET AND APPEARANCE THAT WILL  
BE BENEFICIAL IN MY FUTURE CAREER.  
ANAI'YA JONES, 2018 KEYBANK SCHOLAR**



## American Eagle Outfitters Scholars of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Jeremiah Davis** At Pittsburgh City Charter, Jeremiah was a member of Social Justice Club and Digital Media Club. He was also an Urban Eco steward, Promise Student Ambassador, intern at Office of Councilman LaVelle, and founder of Student Government. He attends Chatham University where he studies sustainability.



**Unique Dixon** At Pittsburgh Millionaires, Unique served as a Student Envoy, and participated in African American Center for Advanced Studies and African American Achievement Trust. She attends CCAC on a pre-med track with expectations of becoming a neurosurgeon.



**Emilio Loya** An avid lover of baseball, Emilio has played on several teams. At Pittsburgh Allderdice, he also participated in Swim Team and Ski Club. He attends Penn State University where he studies business, innovation, and entrepreneurship. He hopes to one day own his own business.



**Frankie Tomic** A graduate of Pittsburgh Carrick, Frankie was a member of National Honor Society and Campus to Career Crossroads. Currently, Frankie attends Pittsburgh Technical College where he studies filmmaking. He hopes to share his authentic self and artistry with the world.



**Alyssa Zito** Alyssa is a dedicated student who has received numerous honors and awards for her work in the STEM field, including top honors from PA Junior Academy of Science. She studies biomedical engineering at University of Pittsburgh. Alyssa is a graduate of Pittsburgh Allderdice.

## Giant Eagle Scholars of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Ava Cook** Ava founded the Asian Student Union to provide support to her peers and was a member of National Honor Society at Pittsburgh CAPA. Currently, she is majoring in education at Point Park University and aspires to be a teacher. She is passionate about education and hopes to have an impact on many young lives.



**Jonathan Grabowski** Jonathan is a graduate of Pittsburgh Carrick where he earned an award for his work in the STEM field. He was a member of the baseball and soccer teams. He studies chemistry at Washington and Jefferson College. In his free time, he enjoys playing video games and swimming.



**Nicole Gurvich** Nicole attends University of Pittsburgh and is driven by her desire for a career in medicine. Volunteering at A Safe Haven has inspired her to want to give back to her community. While a student at Pittsburgh Allderdice, Nicole played varsity lacrosse, was a member of Critical Thinking Club, Outdoors Club, and achieved high honor roll.



**Joseph Jones** Joseph attends Gettysburg College where he studies history. Joseph is a graduate of Pittsburgh Allderdice where he participated in Japanese and Anime Clubs, and was a research assistant in the Stephen F. Babylak Lab at the McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine.



**Chloe Shorkey** At Pittsburgh Allderdice Chloe was captain of the cross country and track and field teams. She was also a member of National Honor Society, Global Minds, and Students Against Destructive Decisions. Chloe studies psychology and criminal sciences at Penn State University and strives to support criminal justice reform.

## KeyBank Scholars of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Elijah Terry** Elijah is interested in studying how the universe works, particularly the makeup of planets and formation of meteors. These interests have led him to University of Pittsburgh where he studies astrophysics. At Pittsburgh Brashear, Elijah received Citizenship, President's, and High Honor awards.



**Amari Turner-Ford** Among the top graduates of Pittsburgh Westinghouse, Amari was a vocal advocate for her school. She served as class secretary, participated in the PACT Program, and earned a semester's worth of college credits by taking dual enrollment courses. Amari studies psychology at Duquesne University with plans to become a child and family psychologist.



**Dominic Victoria** Dominic dreams of a career advocating for Pittsburgh's residents. At Pittsburgh Obama he participated in Youth and Government, the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, Obama Eagle newspaper, A+ School's TeenBloc, and was a Promise Student Ambassador. He attends University of Pittsburgh where he studies politics and philosophy.



**Jacob Voelker** Jacob aspires to earn a medical degree and have a fulfilling career aiding in the health of others. At Pittsburgh CAPA he was editor of the school newspaper, vice president of National Honor Society, and a member of Student Council. Jacob attends University of Pittsburgh where he majors in biology.



**Mya Ziegler** Mya is an avid reader who enjoys drawing, painting, and sculpting. While a student at Pittsburgh Carrick, she participated in volleyball, track, and swimming, as well as church mission. Mya has chosen to study nursing at Carlow University with hopes of becoming a nurse practitioner and helping others.

## McGuinn Family Foundation Scholars of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Mara Cohen** At Pittsburgh CAPA, Mara participated in Asian Student Union, Jewish Student Union, UPMC Teen Facilitator Program, and tennis. Driven by her experiences as a child, Mara aims to become an art therapist to help children express their feelings creatively. She studies art therapy at Temple University.



**Zaire Giles** Zaire's academic success earned him several scholarships to attend Penn State University to study mechanical engineering. As a student at Pittsburgh Obama, he participated in Youth and Government, National Honor Society, Volunteering Community Gardeners, elementary school tutoring, and volleyball.



**Zaki Khouri** With dreams of becoming a forensic scientist or pharmacologist, Zaki studies biochemistry at La Roche University. He enjoys physical fitness, music, and the sciences. At Pittsburgh Allderdice, Zaki participated in soccer, track and field, National Honor Society, Social Justice Club, and Dice TV Productions.



**Katelin Kostelnik** Katelin attends Slippery Rock University where she studies early childhood and special education. She values education and hopes to build a strong foundation for her students so that they may flourish. At Pittsburgh City Charter she was involved in National Honor Society, Student Assembly, and Eco-stewards.



**Ericka Morton** Dance has been a major part of Ericka's life. Ericka graduated as a dance major from Pittsburgh CAPA where she participated in Student Council, National Honor Society for Dance Arts, and Black Student Union. She has taken her love of dance to Slippery Rock University to study the art form.

## LA ROCHE UNIVERSITY

*The Pittsburgh Promise and La Roche University made an investment in me because they believed I am worth it. Because of The Promise, in addition to the welcoming, encouraging and positive atmosphere of La Roche, I can proudly say that I am a college graduate.*

— NICOLE LINKES '16



Engaging Minds, Embracing the World.

# THE WORLD NEEDS STRIVERS DRIVERS AND DOERS



RMU.EDU/PROMISE



**Mylan Scholars** of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Sophia Catanzaro** As an environmental engineering student at University of Pittsburgh, Sophia believes that our duty as a society is to take care of the planet. At Pittsburgh Carrick, Sophia was a member of National Honor Society, valedictorian, and was recognized by Society of Women Engineers for her performance in science and math.



**Shreyo Das** Pursuing his interest in bioengineering at University of Pittsburgh, Shreyo hopes to specialize in regenerative medicine. He is a graduate of Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy where he won Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science awards. Shreyo enjoys academia, soccer, and storytelling.



**Kurt Englehardt** While attending Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy, Kurt participated in Pitt's Gene Team, SeaPerch Robotics, and volunteered with American Red Cross. Kurt attends University of Pittsburgh and aspires to become a chemical engineer with hopes of developing solutions for climate change.



**Olivia Helms** While attending Pittsburgh Carrick Olivia participated in The Future Is Mine, National Honor Society, GSA, and school plays. At Thiel College she studies communications sciences and disorders and hopes to become a speech language pathologist and work with children.



**McKenzie Thompson** McKenzie studies biomedical engineering at Temple University. She is a graduate of Pittsburgh Allderdice where she immersed herself in advanced course work, participated in African American Center for Academic Success, Investing NOW at Pitt, and the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council.

**Thermo Fisher Scientific Scholars** of The Pittsburgh Promise



**Caio Gomes** While attending Pittsburgh Milliones, Caio participated in the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, Student and Government Council, and served as a Student Envoy and Promise Student Ambassador. At Indiana University of Pennsylvania he studies political science.



**Audrey Leong** A strong interest in the intersection of biology, data, and computation has led Audrey to study computational biology at University of Pittsburgh. While a student at Pittsburgh Allderdice, Audrey completed a biological research project with a professor at Pitt's Graduate School of Public Health.



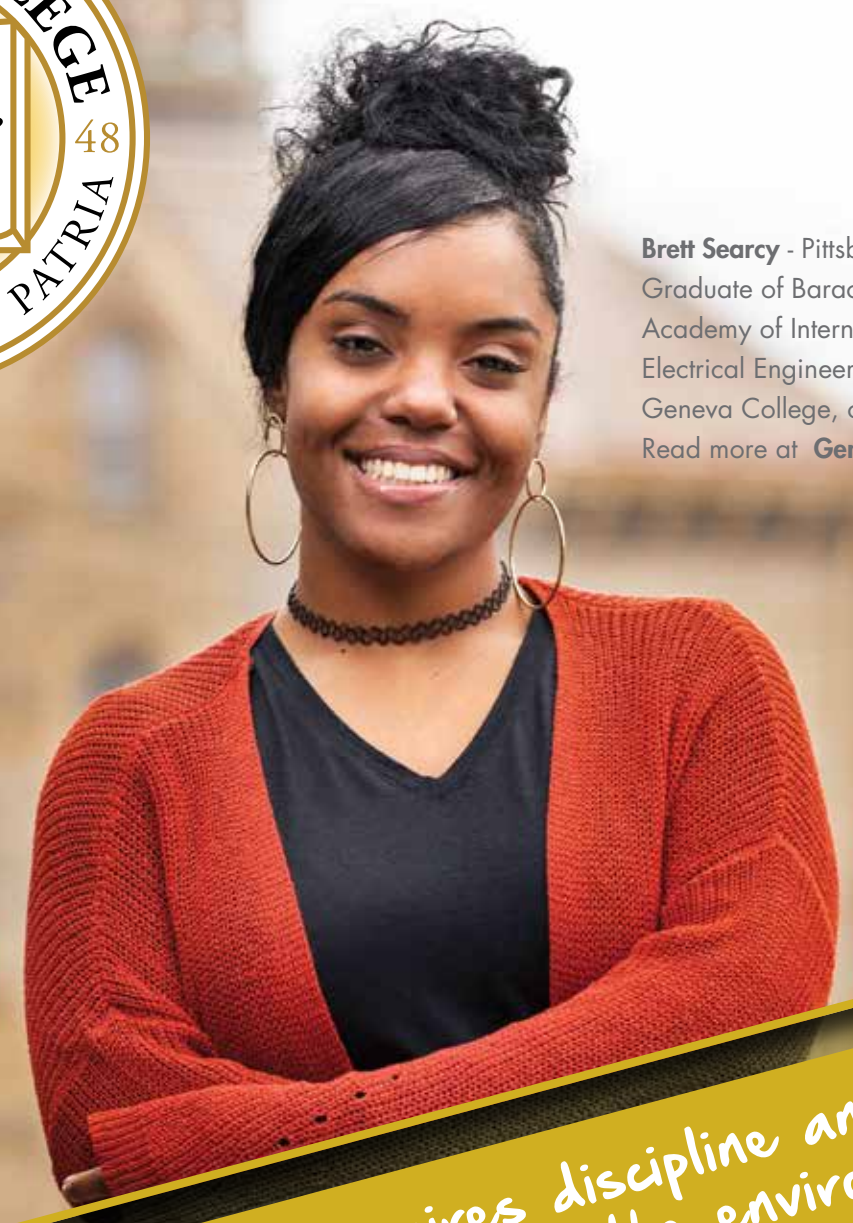
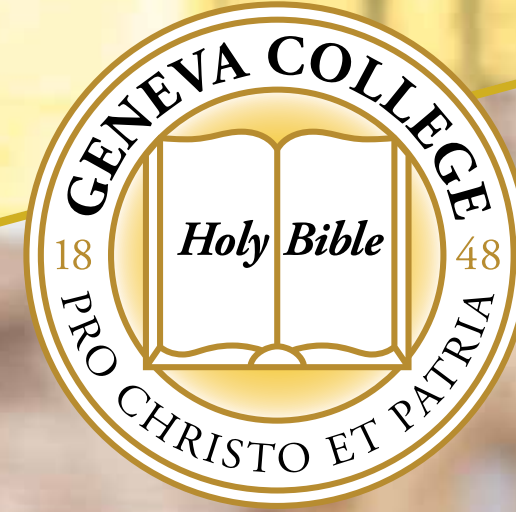
**David Missry** At Lehigh University, David is pursuing business and engineering. As a student at Pittsburgh Allderdice David won multiple awards for his academic achievements in science. David founded Students Against Destructive Decisions and Dragons Against Drugs to support his peers in making positive choices.



**Nikki Nguyen** Nikki participated in many activities at Pittsburgh Brashear including Student Council, National Honor Society, The Future is Mine, Rock Climbing Club, soccer, volleyball, and softball. Nikki studies engineering at Penn State University. She attributes her success to the female role models in her life.



**Chloe Ruben** A Pittsburgh Allderdice graduate, Chloe was active in National Honor Society, Jewish Student Union, Global Minds, and tennis. Currently, she is a Penn State University student studying criminology with aspirations of becoming a divorce lawyer. Chloe has a love of traveling and pursuing educational experiences.



**Brett Searcy** - Pittsburgh, PA  
Graduate of Barack Obama  
Academy of International Studies 6-12,  
Electrical Engineering major at  
Geneva College, class of 2020;  
Read more at [Geneva.edu/brett](https://www.geneva.edu/brett)

*"Studying engineering requires discipline and faith. Geneva College provides me with the environment to stay grounded and grow spiritually."*

Brett uses Geneva's Pittsburgh Promise match to double the money she can use for her education. With caring professors and friendly classmates, she gets plenty of support and sees God continue His work in her life.

over  
**145**  
majors and  
programs

**Geneva.edu/promise**  
Geneva Room and Board Grant of up to **\$40,000** over four years!  
Geneva College is a member of the **Pittsburgh Promise Preferred College Partners Program.**

## EXECUTIVE COMPANIES

Currently, ten organizations are members of The Pittsburgh Promise Executive Scholars program.

UPMC | Highmark | PNC | BNY Mellon  
American Eagle Outfitters | Giant Eagle  
KeyBank | McGuinn Family Foundation  
Mylan | Thermo Fisher Scientific

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE  
EXECUTIVE SCHOLARS PROGRAM? EMAIL  
[executivescholars@pittsburghpromise.org](mailto:executivescholars@pittsburghpromise.org).



# TOGETHER, WE RISE.

Saint Vincent College attracts high-achieving students who place me ahead of me.

98% of recent alumni are employed or furthering their education

100% of freshmen receive scholarship aid

Up to \$32,000 in renewable scholarships



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*U.S. News & World Report*

## Experience your city from a different view.

**Walk to internships, jobs, community partnership opportunities and all that the city has to offer.**

**Conduct research alongside renowned faculty who are changing the world.**

99% of freshmen receive financial assistance

80 undergraduate majors

14:1 student-faculty ratio

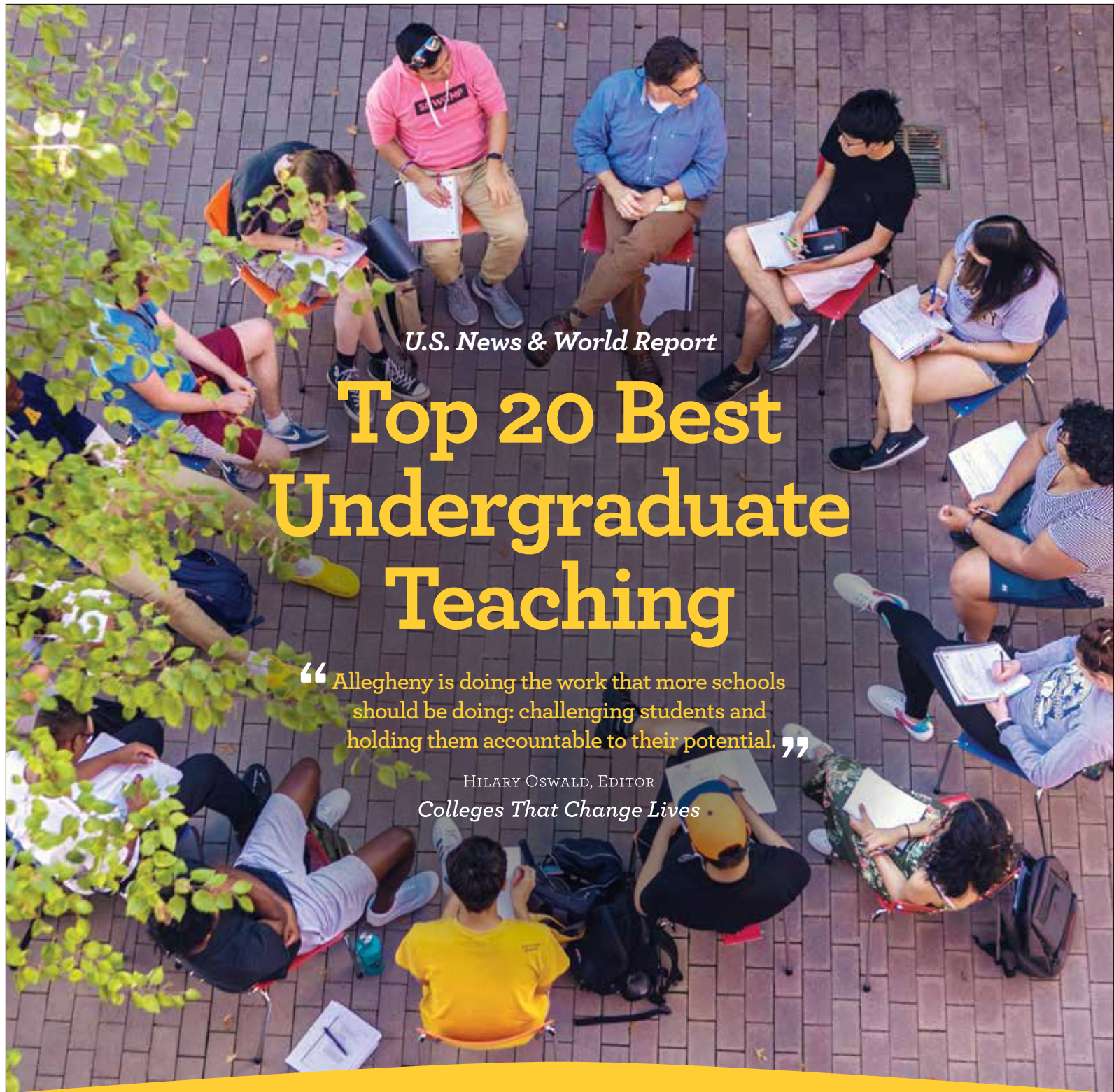
250+ student organizations



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Duquesne University is pleased to be a Preferred College Partner of The Pittsburgh Promise.





U.S. News & World Report

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HILARY OSWALD, EDITOR  
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# ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

*Distinctive Major-Minor Combinations*

# BUILD YOU



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We believe in your abilities to rise up and achieve.  
And we give you the tools and teaching to actually do it.

**DON'T SETTLE. BUILD YOU.**

# CAL U



# Ask The PRESIDENT

WE ASKED PRESIDENTS  
OF PROMISE-ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS  
A QUESTION

What advice do you have for students who are preparing to enter the workforce?



**Dr. Hilary L. Link** *President Allegheny College*

Follow your creative interests and your “gut” instincts as much as possible. Think about what environments make you happy and feel satisfying — solitary, collaborative, fast-paced, multi-task oriented, research-based, etc. — and then talk to anyone you can in that type of environment about their roles, their career paths, the first position they held. Use the alumni networks at your institution (high school and university-level), contact friends of friends, be willing to put yourself out there humbly to ask people to share their insights and experiences, and ask them if

they can put you in touch with others to do the same. You might be surprised what people are willing to share and what opportunities might eventually arise. Most people will be happy to share their stories and help those starting out, if they can. Do not fear changing paths at any time; you will learn and shift focus as you go. Even if it means changing careers and trying and failing, remember this is an evolving journey. Finally, when you do find your path, remember to look back and help others trying to get there in the way that people will have helped you.



**Geraldine Jones** *President California University of Pennsylvania*

Our world has changed dramatically in a few short months, and those changes will continue to reverberate. Your job search may look a little different from what you planned, but your education and hands-on experience are still the keys to unlocking a bright future. Start with the basics: Work with your college’s career center to polish your resume and format it for sharing online. Scour your social media posts and make sure that your online presence reflects a positive “personal brand.” Assess your skills realistically, and practice giving concise, confident answers to typical interview questions.

Next, reach out to potential employers. Check company websites for employment opportunities and post your resume to online jobs boards. At Cal U, for example, students can use the Handshake platform to connect with thousands of businesses, large and small. Share news of your job search widely—networking is still an effective way to get tips and job referrals, whether you’re searching in person or making contact remotely. Finally, remember that your first job won’t be your last. An opportunity that moves you one step closer to your “dream job” might be worth pursuing. Be brave. Be persistent. You can do this!



**Farnam Jahanian, Ph. D.** *President Carnegie Mellon University*

Today’s students are pursuing their ambitions at a pivotal time for humanity. The challenges we face as a global society as a result of COVID-19 are unprecedented, and when combined with accelerating advances in technology, the future seems to be constantly evolving. To prepare for this era of unrelenting change, I would encourage students to seek opportunities to develop the essential “human” skills that will always be in demand, even as automation pervades our world — skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and collaboration. At CMU, we have embedded these competencies throughout our curriculum

and have invested in interdisciplinary programs that better reflect society’s needs. I would also urge students to embrace lifelong learning and expand their horizons throughout their lives. This includes leveraging all opportunities that come their way, even if they are non-traditional pathways. They should get comfortable with the notion that the job they have at twenty-two may be different than their career later in life— and that’s OK! By constantly rekindling the fires of their own curiosity, they will be prepared when the landscape shifts beneath them and they will also develop a stronger sense of their own passions.



**Ken Gormley** *President Duquesne University*

The benefits of a university education extend far beyond the hard-earned degree. There are countless resources at students’ fingertips, available throughout their education and long after graduation. As early as their freshman year, students should begin to make good use of their universities’ career development resources. At Duquesne, for instance, our Center for Career Development offers extensive support and guidance, both in person and virtually. It ranges from lining up internships and job shadowing to career consultation, interview practice and creating direct lines to recruiters and hiring managers. Students quickly learn the importance of the trusted networks they’re developing — including academic advisors

and professors who are eager to help them succeed, and who have many professional connections that can be leveraged. They also benefit greatly from volunteer experiences that foster networking opportunities — both on campus, and throughout the greater community. And they’ll be forever connected to one of the university’s most valued networks: university alumni, who remember what it’s like to look for that first job and want to help. I can’t tell you how many solid careers are built from alumni-student relationships. All these crucial networks last a lifetime. They’re vital in helping graduates go forth on exciting paths, achieve great success, and make a difference in our world.



**Dr. Calvin L. Troup** *President Geneva College*

Here are three pieces of advice among many for students today to consider:

First, pursue studies that provide deep knowledge in an area that equips you for a variety of professional paths. For example, degrees in the sciences, business, liberal arts, medicine, etc., open a range of opportunities in the workplace. A good college education prepares people to adapt professionally in a world bound to change in ways over the course of one’s working life. Second, include internships in your plan of studies

from the start. Internships help you understand the nature of the work and the culture of different workplaces firsthand, before you commit to a longer term of service. Third, always ask, “Whom would I serve with this degree?” Remember that service to other human beings is a prime motive for meaningful work. What are the places and people you would like to serve and what human needs will you be working to meet? A lifetime of rewarding work is most likely when your interests, passions, and service to others intersect.





What advice do you have for students who are preparing to enter the workforce?



**Rev. Paul A. Taylor, O.S.B.** *President Saint Vincent College*

Students graduating from high school, together with their families, are faced with an overwhelming number of choices for higher education. There are many schools and many types of schools that offer the opportunity to prepare for a career. Each one will tell you that they are the best in email, direct mail, television ads, digital marketing and many other ways. Here is one succinct recommendation: "Don't bring checkers to a chess match." Life is a long-term game; don't plan for the year after you graduate from college, plan for each job thereafter. Every school will tell you that you can get a job. Listen

to the ones that offer the opportunity to build a successful career and a meaningful life. Liberal Arts colleges with rigorous programs and strong values that build character provide the path to that worthy goal, as you will learn how to think, not what to think. Saint Vincent College does indeed provide that opportunity in a community that offers support in the challenging times a student will encounter. Choose wisely and choose to win the match with a "checkmate" at the end of a fulfilling, successful, meaningful career; one in which your job rarely ever felt like just work.



**Mary C. Finger, Ed.D.** *President Seton Hill University*

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, students preparing to enter the workforce face enormous challenges as economic uncertainty has led to downsizing and hiring freezes at organizations large and small. In these times especially, it is important for students to build a network of contacts and mentors within a company or industry. Seton Hill University's nationally recognized Fit for the World career preparation program provides students with robust career development services that are integrated into their classes starting in their freshman year. The Fit for the World program includes required internships or other experiential learning, career survey opportunities and resume writing workshops. Our Career Connections program

connects Seton Hill alumni working in a variety of industries with current students to help answer questions and offer guidance. Seton Hill's professional coursework and career preparation services are undergirded by the university's liberal arts curriculum, which offers students the communication, critical thinking and leadership skills employers are seeking. As a result, 98 percent of bachelor's degree recipients in the Seton Hill Class of 2019 were employed or enrolled in graduate school within six months of graduation while 100 percent of master's degree recipients were employed. Seton Hill continues to support our students and recent alumni who are entering a changed workforce.



**William J. Behre, Ph.D.** *President Slippery Rock University*

Remember the power of the word, "Yes." Few people land their "dream job" immediately after college. It is important to accept what is available and continue the process of building your skills as well as your professional network. If you are offered more responsibility, say "Yes." Say "Yes" even if the new responsibilities don't

come with an increase in pay. In the long run, doing more or higher skilled work without proper compensation is not a good strategy. But early in your professional life, doing whatever you need to do in order to build your competencies, and to set yourself apart from others in the same field, can be beneficial. In time, the money will follow.



**Dr. Kathy B. Richardson** *President Westminster College*

The advice I would offer is similar to how I guide Westminster students:

- Seek opportunities to widen and deepen your technical skills and "soft skills" like communication, collaboration, critical thinking and "coachability."
- Explore options to see how your specific set of skills aligns with various job opportunities.
- Engage in the career development opportunities provided through your school or volunteer organizations.
- Ask your school counselor about self-assessments that help you gain insight into your talents, gifts and abilities. Similarly, teachers or coaches can help identify your strengths.

- Document your achievements in and out of school, thinking about how you would describe a particular task you completed, in a school assignment, athletic team, leadership program, or a family, work or volunteer setting. Analyzing and describing how you accomplished this task strengthens your resume and preparation for a job interview.
- Identify mentors who can provide support as you begin your job search and as you take your initial job. Effective mentors can review your resume, help you improve your interview skills, and give you tips on being a successful employee.
- Offering your best during the first job prepares you to offer your best throughout your career and at your final job, too.

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**LAST  
LOOK**

**#PromiseSummerofSupport 2020** replaced Walk for One Promise, a one-day 5K trek, as a safe alternative during the Coronavirus restrictions. Many teams were formed throughout the Summer of Support including those representing The Promise's Board of Directors, PPS schools and staff, Promise Alumni, Scholars and Ambassadors and community advocates. Many thanks to the more than 125 walkers who crisscrossed all of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods as they raised vital grassroots dollars and surpassed both a \$10,000 and a \$25,000 challenge grant, while masked and staying safe!





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A young woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a dark t-shirt, is smiling and looking down at a project she is working on. She is holding a blue pen. The background is blurred, showing other people in a classroom or workshop setting.

## ***The Pittsburgh Promise is on Instagram!***

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is helpful to students.

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