

# THE COLLEGE BOUNDER



## FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE BOUND, INC.

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### MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

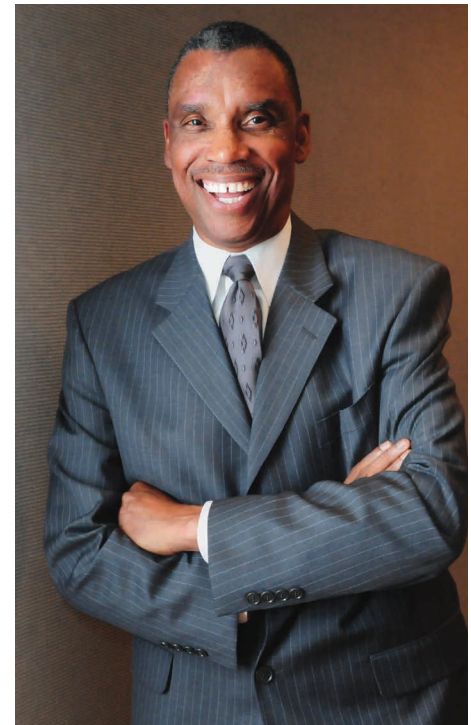
## Getting “The Memo” and the Degree!

First Generation College Bound (FGCB) continues to be successful in providing encouragement, support, and advice to students from low income families who want to obtain a college degree. FGCB is proud of its record-breaking success in assisting more than 200 students from the Class of 2017 who matriculated to college this fall! More than 25 years of commitment and effort have resulted in FGCB’s “**COLLEGE BOUND FORMULA**” for low income students to attend an affordable college and graduate.

In 1990 when FGCB was founded, I hypothesized that low income students could definitely attend college, and that funds existed to make that possible. However, many of those students did not “get the memo” that they could attend an affordable college, based on their financial and academic profile. Why? Because more often than not, the resources to disseminate this vital information were not easily available within in their communities.

For those who did understand this opportunity, they still needed assistance in completing the college bound process, which included filling out applications, financial documents, requesting transcripts, and additional requirements. The paperwork that should’ve been a passport to opportunity, instead became an obstacle. Many students did not have supportive adults/guardians at home, school or in their communities to assist in the process. And if the moral support was there, the experience to understand the process and to guide them through the maze of paperwork was not.

*continued on page 6*



**Joseph Fisher**  
FGCB CEO & FOUNDER

### INTRODUCING FGCB’S NEWEST PROGRAM

## Great Minds Great Futures Academy

Through the **Maryland State Department of Education’s Next Generation Scholars Program initiative**, FGCB received funding to initiate its newest program--**Great Minds Great Futures Academy (GMGFA)**. This program is designed for low income students in the 7th through 9th grade, who are eligible for **Free And Reduced Meals (F.A.R.M.)**. There are seven participating Prince George’s County Public Schools—four high schools,

and three major eligible feeder schools. The pairings are as follows: Fairmont HS will be paired with G. James Gholson Middle School; Suitland HS with Drew Freeman Middle; Duval HS with Thomas Johnson Middle and High Point HS. Within these cohorts GMGFA coaches will support the students with one-on-one coaching, college and career awareness presentations, and workshops. They will also encourage parental education and involvement, while counseling students to successfully matriculate to college with the help of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program.

The GMGFA will make students aware of Maryland’s Howard P. Rawlings Guaranteed Access Grant (GAG) as well as other Maryland Higher Education Commission financial aid programs and will empower them to take advantage of the GA grant, when they become eligible. The staff of GMGFA is confident that they will continue to aid in the success of FGCB, consistent with the 28-year history of helping students matriculate to and succeed in higher education.



## OUR IMPACT ON EDUCATION

**CLASS OF 2017 COLLEGE MATRICULATION: 220**

**COLLEGE GRADUATES: 619**

**FINANCIAL AID AWARDED TO THE CLASS OF 2017: \$3.1 MILLION+**



# "STUDENTS WHO GOT THE MEMO"



KEYONNA BRIGGS

## Keyonna Briggs (Laurel High)

Freshman at Frostburg State University

"I met Mr. Fisher at Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School. My parents did not complete college and found the College Access workshop informative and appealing. This workshop provided insight on preparing for college and studying for SATs; scholarships/grants; and how to apply for FAFSA.

I learned that college is affordable and attending an in-state school saves money. My first semester, I'm doing well, with a 3.8 GPA. The support received from the FGCB staff has been amazing. In the future, giving back to the program is very important to me."

## Steven Berry (Fairmont Heights)

Freshman at Bowie State University

"My guidance counselor suggested that attending a College Access workshop given by FGCB would help me prepare for college. While in the eleventh grade, my dad and I attended the workshop, liked what we heard, and signed up for the program. This program provided assistance with the admissions process, completing applications, applying for grants such as FAFSA and the Maryland Senatorial Scholarship and other support needed to attend college. My first semester is going well, and I am grateful for the experiences with FGCB. Care packages over the holidays were great!"



ISRAEL VELASQUEZ

## Israel Velasquez (Parkdale High)

Freshman at University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Introduced to FGCB by his sister. Israel applied three years later after seeing her success. "College Access made me aware of the requirements to attend college and information on different colleges that were the best fit for me, especially financially. University of Maryland Eastern Shore accepted me, with a four-year EA Grant covering room and board. As a result of completing the FAFSA, my tuition and books were covered. The support from FGCB helped me realize my dream of attending college. This semester my grades are A's and B."



SHANIYA WALKER



DOLAPO WEMIDA

## Dolapo Wemida (Central High)

Freshman at University of Maryland Eastern Shore

"I became aware of the FGCB program through my guidance counselor. I attended a workshop and signed up for the program the same day. I was in the College Access program for one year, and it taught me how to clearly state my needs in order to receive assistance and the importance of the many deadlines in applying to college. Deciding whether I would thrive in a big school or a small school was a major decision based on my needs. The greatest part of being in FGCB was receiving support with my FAFSA and applying for MDCAPs grants. This first semester was an adjustment, but I have adjusted."

## Shaniya Walker (Potomac High)

Freshman at Coppin State University

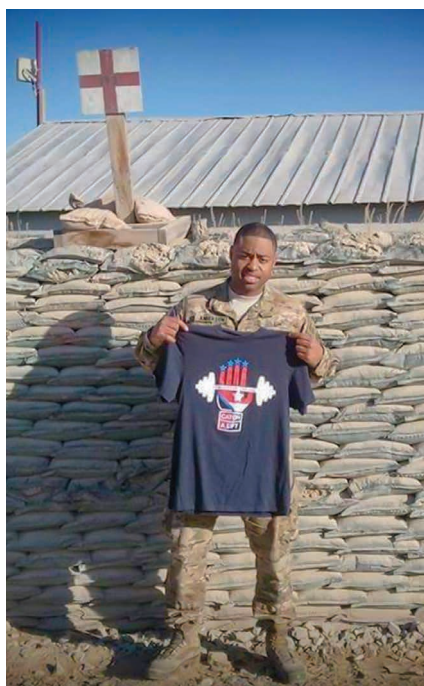
"While in the eleventh grade, I was introduced to FGCB. The College Access program consists of workshops providing guidance and assistance in preparing for college, financial aid, living on campus, and applying for scholarships. My goal was to attend college, and I started attending the workshops after taking the SAT. I applied to eight schools, and was accepted to five. Now, at the end of my first semester I'm at Coppin State University, with A's and B's in my courses. There were a lot of changes this semester, including living on my own, making responsible choices for myself, and focusing on my school work. FGCB prepared me to set goals, see them through, and be responsible. More than anything, I am grateful for their input in this area of my life."

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



## Bernice Danso

"I moved from Africa to live in the U.S. in 2011, and FGCB changed my whole life! Navigating how to function in this country, FGCB helped me to chart my course, and set my goals. In my senior year at Laurel HS, attending a FGCB workshop helped me prepare for college. I was intrigued and excited to be introduced to a program where someone in my family could go to college. In 2013, I decided to attend Towson University majoring in Nursing. One of the most enjoyable parts of being connected to FGCB was receiving care packages. In June of 2016, I started working at Greater Baltimore Medical Center as a Student Nurse. I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in May 2017, with decent grades and NO STUDENT DEBT. In June 2017, I passed my Nursing Board examination and received my nursing license. In August 2017, University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore Maryland offered me a Registered Nursing position. I love my job! My future plan is to go back to school and become a Certified Anesthetic Nurse."



## Dayvon Anderson

"My older cousin participated in the FGCB program and he learned about resources, which helped him enter college—that caught my mother's attention! She enrolled me in the FGCB-sponsored Homework Club in the 3rd grade improving my grades. In the 7th grade, I went on college tours experiencing college life. Having this exposure informed my decision to attend college. Participating in the College Access program learning about the SAT, how to complete applications for college, and how college could be affordable started the journey in the 11th grade.

After being accepted at Morehouse College in 2006, Mr. Fisher visited my home to discuss what to expect over the next four years and the support and guidance from FGCB to ensure a successful graduation. This was the best part of the program for me--having the support of a team to ensure my graduation. FGCB not only gave moral support for 4 years, they assisted with financial aid and obtaining a partial scholarship for books. I also received several care packages from FGCB during college. College was intense, but I maintained above average grades graduating in 2010, with an Economic degree. I spent four years in the military and currently work as a Defense Contractor. Attending the FGCB program created monumental changes in my life. Without the support of the College Access Program and the coaches, going to college would not have been possible.

For the students currently enrolled in the FGCB program, I suggest taking full advantage of the program because it, along with the support of a caring staff who want you to succeed, will change your life."



## Dr. Yolanda Lenzy

"It was through the Guidance Counselor's office in my senior year of high school I learned about FGCB. I signed up to attend workshops to learn how to complete the FAFSA application, select schools that fit my needs, apply for college application waivers, learn about financial aid, and understand the various scholarships and grants. Receiving this information was a blessing, I applied to 9 or 10 universities, and did not have to pay the application fees because of waivers. My grades were among the top high school rankings, and because of this, an invitation was extended to a scholarship day where I was recruited on the spot, and signed up to attend American University. That same day, I qualified for both the Frederick Douglass and Delegate scholarships.

In 1995, I started American University and declared a major in Bio Chemistry and Health Communications. During my four years at school, Mr. Fisher would call to check on me. In 1999, I graduated with a BA and then went directly into medical school to study Dermatology. Next, I attended Harvard University receiving my Master's Degree in Public Health. Finally, becoming the first African American to train in residency at Boston University/ Tufts University Dermatology Program.

For a few years, I worked in other practices but in 2014, started my own Dermatology practice and my niche is hair loss in African American women. FGCB changed my life in so many ways and I hope that current and future students will really take advantage of all the resources, especially the grants and scholarships because they minimize loans. Stay organized, focused and follow through with your goals."

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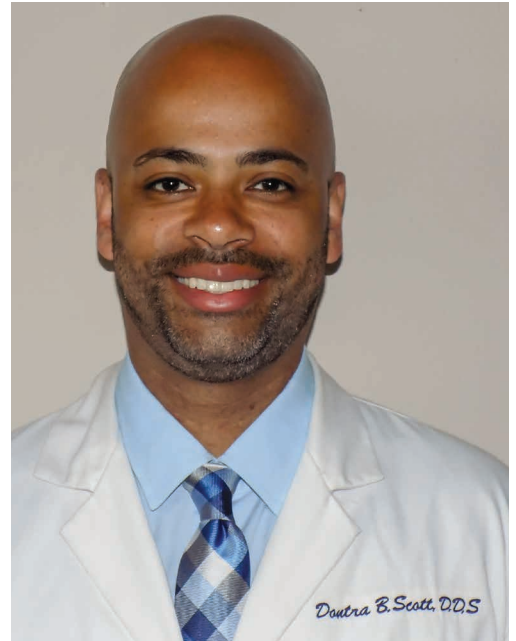


# CONTINUED... WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

## Dr. Dontra Scott

"Mr. Fisher came into my life while attending Harper's Choice Middle School. Attending the Homework Club and then the SAT prep workshops taught me about preparing for college. Although, I had the ability to get good grades I was not focused as a youth. Mr. Fisher saw my potential and became my mentor. I knew early in my life, I wanted to work in the medical field and slowly began to understand that FGCB was teaching me how to make the goal a reality. Once in high school, I took to athletics and continued to thrive academically feeling these two paths would give me a better opportunity to go to college. It made all the difference having someone in my life guiding me in the right direction. Becoming more focused and preparing myself with a 4 year-plan, which was driven by my desire to work in the medical profession.

Mr. Fisher advised me to go to an in-state school versus an out-of-state school to make college affordable. By doing this, I received many more grants and did not incur excess debt. I enrolled at the University of Maryland College Park in 2002, and set my sites on a BS degree in Biology, received it in 2006. My journey to becoming a doctor was becoming a reality. During the next few years, I focused and completed dental school; receiving my Doctorate of Dental Surgery from Howard University. Upon completing this doctorate program, attended NYU specializing in Endodontics, and now practicing in Houston, Texas. Mr. Fisher served as a positive role model for me during the times it was needed the most. For current FGCB students, it's ok to plan, however you must be willing to change and push through to reach your desired goal."



## Kelie Darbouze

"Mr. Fisher taught my mother and her siblings at Harper's Choice Middle School, and he was my seventh-grade teacher. Because of this connection, he knew that I came from a first-generation college family with a profile that fit the criteria for enrolling in the FGCB program. FGCB really changed and impacted my life. Upon entering Wilde Lake High School, I received assistance regarding financial aid and completing the FAFSA and other grants.

Mr. Fisher connected me with Ms. Green, who worked in our community. The support and assistance my family received from her was immense and truly a blessing. During the summer of my sophomore year, FGCB provided an opportunity to visit and stay at Goucher College for a free college preparatory program. This program provided workshops on writing essays that would be submitted with my college applications. With the support and assistance from FGCB, my knowledge on applying to college and getting financial support improved tremendously resulting in waivers for college applications fees.

In 2005, I entered the University of Maryland at College Park through a Summer Transitional Program. This program offered earned college credits and insights into college life and experience. As an undergraduate, in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, I was able to graduate in 2009 with a BA in Criminology and Criminal Justice. Having received a scholarship to attend the University of Pittsburgh, I completed my Master's in Social Work in 2011. I received my license and began my first job as a Social Worker for the Baltimore City Government. I am currently practicing as a licensed social worker at an independent clinical level in Maryland, Washington, DC, and California. I am living in California and recently went through the process of converting my Social Work license to align with California law."



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Your financial partnership with us is not a nameless faceless one, each dollar you give is directly correlated to the success of a student in our community.

While no level of support is too small, your extended generosity changes lives. You can contribute by sending a check made out to "FGCB" in the provided envelope or by clicking the ["Donate"](#) button on our website, [www.fgcb.org](http://www.fgcb.org).

# THE GMGFA STAFF



TROY PRINCE

SHERRIE S. DOWNS

MELISSA MALLORY

CYSCY VALENZUELA

## Sherrie S. Downs Program Coordinator

Sherrie Downs is a 15-year veteran working with youth and adults from early childhood education through workforce development to secondary education. In addition, Sherrie has over 6 years of experience affecting change in the community while working in the Human Services Industry. Sherrie is an experienced and energetic professional with excellent recruitment and organizational skills, expertise in career counseling, and the ability to build a quick rapport with businesses. Sherrie believes in giving her best to whatever she sets her mind to achieve.

## Melissa Mallory GMGFA College Access Coach

Melissa is a bright, energetic professional who has worked as staff in a youth group home, as well as having taught 4th and 5th graders in a private school environment. Her coaching abilities were sharpened as she counseled young adults in their educational, as well as professional careers. As a College Access Coach with First Generation College Bound, her goal is to change futures, one life at a time.

## Troy Prince GMGFA College Access Coach

Troy is skilled in relationship building, and identifying with the student he is assisting. His interest and education in social work has been the springboard to the encouragement he is able to provide, as he helps to cultivate the mind of our youth. As a program director working in a middle school, he has honed his problem solving and counseling abilities along with his ability to establish a great rapport with young people today. These talents will be most beneficial to students enrolled in GMGFA.

## Cyscy Valenzuela GMGFA College Access Coach

Cyscy is an experienced social service provider with demonstrated experience in the health care industry. Skilled in case management, bilingual communications, and mental health counseling, she is a strong community and human services professional. She is also a first-generation college graduate. Her work with The Institute of Family Centered Services (IFCS) as a Family Centered Specialist will certainly augment her new coaching responsibilities.



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

## Getting “The Memo” and the Degree!

With an understanding that low income students could attend an affordable college, based on their financial and academic profile, and knowing that few had this information, FGCB engaged College Access Coaches in these communities to identify and recruit students. In addition to providing guidance throughout the college bound process, FGCB offered assistance in completing one of the most important applications toward obtaining college funds--the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

While there are federal, state, and other grant funds available to make college affordable, many students lack the awareness, guidance, or counsel to apply and complete the process in order to receive these funds. One example the Pell Grant, was created by the Higher Education Act of 1965 as a financial aid option for low income students attending college. However, the burden was placed on the students to learn about the grant and to understand their eligibility for it as well. There was no mechanism in place to provide information to schools throughout communities to those eligible students.

Even now, 52 years after the creation of the Pell Grant, organizations like FGCB are still vital in delivering the necessary information to schools and to eligible students.

According to a new analysis by Nerd Wallet, those who graduated high school in 2013 “left over \$2.9 billion in free federal grant money on the table. Nearly half of graduates from the high school class of 2013 (47%) did not complete the step that could have qualified them for Pell Grant money.” How does this happen? Sadly, many of our high school graduates do not complete the FAFSA. The data supports why First Generation College Bound was initially founded. As a result of our vision and mission, FGCB students regularly receive the Pell Grant and Maryland State Higher Education Commission grants, in addition to financial aid from various colleges. This year’s Class of 2017 received a record **\$3.1 million** in financial aid, making their higher education affordable!

Thank you for your generous financial support. As a result, FGCB and our students continue to see and experience the impact of all the work done by our College Access Coaches who are on the front lines making sure students “**get the memo...and get the degree!**”


Funding Foundations & Partners WEBSITE LINKS

Children and Family Legacy Fund  
 Community Foundation for Prince George’s County  
 Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation  
 Maryland State Department of Education  
 Maryland Higher Education Commission  
 Meyer Foundation  
 National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)  
 Prince George’s County Bar Association  
 Prince George’s County Council  
 Prince George’s County Department of Housing & Community Development  
 Prince George’s County Office of the County Executive  
 Olney Civic Fund  
 Walton Community Fund for Prince George’s County

## FGCB Sponsors 2016-2017

## WEBSITE LINKS

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**The Honorable Alexander Williams Jr.**  
Judge, United States District Court



### Alumni Presentation Social

Representing the Class of 2006,  
FGCB Alumni Roquois presents  
donation check to Joe Fisher.

### A FINAL FAREWELL TO INDIA SMITH WHO LEFT THIS EARTH IN OCTOBER

Gone all too soon, we celebrate her  
accomplishments and a life well-lived.  
Ms. Smith is a graduate of Bowie State  
University, with a degree in Psychology.  
We are proud to claim her as a recent  
alumnus of First Generation College Bound.

*Rest in peace India*

## WELCOMES & FAREWELLS

Farewell to **Roy Gilmore!** Thank you for your services as Chairman of the FGCB's Board of Directors. All of your hard work, commitment, and passion for the mission of FGCB are truly appreciated. We look forward to the work you will do in the future, and wish you well!

Welcome to **Gavin Brown** as our new Chairman and Board Member for FGCB. Gavin is also an alumnus of the program. We are grateful to Mr. Brown for serving in this capacity, and looking forward to his leadership as we move forward at FGCB.

Welcome **Melissa Anoh**, FGCB Collegiate Intern, and a graduate student at Catholic University. She is an advanced year student working to obtain her MSW and has already stepped up to work on many important FGCB projects.





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8101 Sandy Spring Road  
Suite 230  
Laurel, MD 20707  
[www.fgcb.org](http://www.fgcb.org)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*SAVE THE DATE!*

  
**FGCB ALUMNI**  
**CONNECTION**  
INAUGURAL  
Saturday, March 24, 2018  
2-4 PM

*Annual*  
***Celebration***   
Wednesday, June 20, 2018

**Samuel Riggs IV Alumni Center**  
University of Maryland College Park