

30
YEARS

Detroit Regional
Dollars for
SCHOLARS®
A Program of Scholarship America®

THE SCHOLAR

Fall 2020

SUITED FOR SUCCESS

At the end of each school year, DRDFS hosts a high-energy college decision celebration for our graduating seniors, their friends, and their family members, called Suited for Success. At Suited for Success, each student walks across the stage and very enthusiastically announces where they will be heading to post-secondary education in the fall. This event is unique because it showcases how proud and accomplished our students feel at the end of the three-year program. Throughout Suited for Success, students can be found clapping and cheering for their classmates for making life-changing college decisions.

For the Class of 2020, however, graduation season turned out to be a very different experience. We couldn't gather in person this year, but we were still able to celebrate college decisions with our seniors in a meaningful way. With help from the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN), we were able to assemble individually tailored Suited for Success kits, and mail one to each of their homes. When seniors received their boxes, they found a t-shirt from their selected school, a guide to surviving and thriving in post-secondary education, a gift card for a family pizza night, and more!

While Suited for Success is a special time for our students, it also is an event that many of our supporters and students' families enjoy attending as well. To involve everyone in the event, we asked supporters and families to submit well-wishes and notes of congratulations for our students.

Below are just a few of the many responses we received in support of the Class of 2020.

"We could not be more proud of each and every one of you. We wish nothing but the best for you in furthering your education. Continue to make us proud!"

- DRDFS Supporter, **Frank P.**

"I'm so proud of the Class of 2020 for their hard work and success. I wish them good luck as they move forward to their future."

- Next Level Scholar Parent, **Mario O.**

"Congratulations on achieving a major milestone! Great results come from hard work. Wishing you all the best."

- DRDFS Supporter, **Lydia M.**

On behalf of the entire DRDFS community, **congratulations, Class of 2020!** We are looking forward to working with these dedicated students as they transition into our Alumni program, and ultimately earn their post-secondary degrees.

To learn more about the 2020 Virtual Suited for Success, visit drdfs.org/2020SFS or scan the QR code.



HELPING LOCAL STUDENTS PREPARE FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

When my neighbors and I first gathered in 1990 to discuss helping local students access higher education, we knew there would be many people who shared our passion. With the help of more and more friends and community members each year, we have been able to inspire and prepare nearly 1,000 students to achieve their dreams. Today, we serve more than 360 student participants annually.

Over the last 30 years, I have seen our program grow from one partner high school, to 13 partner high schools reaching across five counties in Southeast Michigan. During that time, our organization has transformed from a grassroots effort to help students realize their potential, to a college access, success *and* scholarship program. I feel proud to look back at our humble beginning, knowing how much we've accomplished together.

This school year, we were forced to transform again, and fast. When schools everywhere began to close their doors to protect students from COVID-19, we knew we needed to adapt to continue to serve students. In just a short time, we were able to provide access to virtual resources, increase one-on-one assistance and advising, and work more closely with partner high schools to make sure students had the support they needed to succeed.

It is important that our students feel supported during times of change. We are dedicated to providing students with the resources and programming they need to succeed and remain on the path to higher education whether they are studying from home or from their classrooms. I know we will continue to grow and adapt to the ever-changing landscape of education and college access, and I'm looking forward to another 30 years of success.

Warm regards,



William C. Young
President



COVID-19

ALUMNI EMERGENCY FUND

This past March, college campuses across the nation began to close down in order to protect the health of their students. In doing this, college students were faced with evacuating their dorms, leaving their on-campus jobs, and losing access to campus dining.

In response, Detroit Regional Dollars for Scholars acted fast to establish an Alumni Emergency Fund to assist DRDFS alumni who are currently enrolled in post-secondary education with food support, housing support, transportation home, and online learning support. An application was sent to alumni the same day the fund was established, and numerous requests for assistance were received.

DRDFS staff members were able to respond in real time to these requests for assistance. The first student to submit a request received a response and solution in less than 15 minutes. Fatou, a student at Howard University responded to the survey with worries that she couldn't find transportation home, and needed a storage unit for some of her belongings she had to leave behind. Numerous other students responded that they could no longer use computer labs, and had no other computer access to complete online coursework.

Souad, who is currently attending Henry Ford College said, "Thanks to the emergency support I am now able to get back to my classes without falling behind and continue online. The laptop from DRDFS has helped me continue my semester without worrying and I'm so grateful." Souad is just one of about 30 students who received support.

Thanks to the Jacob Family Foundation and generous personal gifts from members of our Board of Directors, DRDFS has been able to provide students with laptops, a Wi-Fi hot-spot, gift cards to get groceries, and more. In all, 29 requests have been approved and fulfilled, totaling more than \$3,600 in aid.

Many students replied with thank you messages, like this student who said, **"Thank you so much!! I didn't know how I was going to get my work done. I've been overwhelmed trying to figure out what to do over the past few days and was so relieved when I got the email from DRDFS."**

We are thankful to be able to offer additional support to our alumni in emergency situations like this. The Alumni Emergency Fund is just another way that DRDFS is helping students succeed in higher education.

HIGH SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT: MASON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL



In 2015, Detroit Regional Dollars for Scholars (DRDFS) welcomed a new high school partner. Mason Senior High School (MSHS), with a current enrollment of approximately 360 students, is located in Erie, Michigan, near our state's southern border. Because of its unique proximity, MSHS serves students from surrounding communities of Erie, Luna Pier, LaSalle, and even a few in Northern Ohio.

Principal of MSHS, Brandon Bates, has deep ties to the school and community, having attended elementary, middle, and high school on the same campus of Mason Consolidated Schools. After earning both Bachelors and Masters degrees at the nearby University of Toledo, he returned to teach at

Mason Consolidated Schools, and is now serving in his 7th year as MSHS Principal.

Principal Bates spoke about the impact the DRDFS partnership has had on their participating students, observing that after being involved in DRDFS, students are motivated to work hard and remain focused. Students have a clear understanding of the importance of good grades and SAT scores in pursuing their post-secondary dreams.

Steve Bowers, the Next Level Scholars Program Adviser at MSHS, added that he shares information about the DRDFS program to all sophomore students, which helps to generate excitement, and contributes to the college-going culture within the school.

MSHS is committed to setting students up for success in life after high school in other ways beyond their partnership with DRDFS. MSHS partners with Monroe Community College and Lourdes University to offer its Direct College program to high school students. Beginning as early as Freshman year, students are able to attend college courses, taught by visiting college professors at MSHS. During the Direct College program, students can earn up to 24 college credits in a wide variety of courses at no cost to them.

DRDFS is proud to partner with MSHS in our shared goal to help students succeed in life after high school. We look forward to supporting these students in achieving their post-secondary dreams for years to come.

DETROIT REGIONAL DOLLARS FOR SCHOLARS KEY METRICS

SAT GROWTH

STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 2018-2019 SAT PREPARATION PROGRAM GAINED ON AVERAGE 104 POINTS. **98% STATED THAT THEY FELT MORE CONFIDENT IN TAKING THE SAT AFTER PARTICIPATING IN OUR SAT PREP PROGRAM.**

FAFSA COMPLETION

109 OUT OF 111 STUDENTS HAVE COMPLETED THE FAFSA, UNLOCKING MORE FINANCIAL AID. 91% COMPLETED THE FAFSA BY THE DRDFS EARLY DEADLINE OF JANUARY 31. **AS OF 5/13/2020, THE FAFSA COMPLETION RATE FOR MICHIGAN IS 50.7%.**

ENROLLED IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

91% 67%



PERSIST FROM THEIR 1ST YEAR TO THEIR 2ND YEAR

89% 60%



STUDENTS ENROLLED, COMPLETING AND/OR GRADUATING WITHIN SIX YEARS

76% 51%





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“ DRDFS helped boost my confidence when asking my financial aid advisor questions, allowed me to understand the independence that comes with college, and provided the support that I desperately needed for life after high school. Now that I am a rising junior in college, I realize that I could not have made it this far without DRDFS. ”

*- DRDFS Alumni, **Marketea A.***

