



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oakland Promise (OP) Awards a Record 514 Post-Secondary Scholarships to the Class of 2021 High School Seniors

During the second year of the pandemic and contrary to national trends, Oakland HS seniors, especially from BIPOC communities, demonstrate a strong commitment to attend college and career programs.

A record 750 Oakland students applied for Oakland Promise scholarships from the HS Class of 2021 compared to 726 in 2020. Over \$2.2 million in 2-year, 4-year and Career Technical Education scholarships were given to 514 graduating students compared to 398 scholarships granted in 2020. Fifty of the 514 scholarship recipients went through a rigorous selection process and were each awarded OP's Great Expectations scholarships in the amount of \$8,000 - \$16,000. Over 67% and 83% of all scholarship recipients were Black / Latinx and first-generation college students respectively. This is an indication that even after a year of distance learning, adversity and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is renewed interest in pursuing college and career programs for the Fall of 2021.

Mia Bonta, CEO of Oakland Promise states *"At Oakland Promise, although we are encouraged that even in a very tough year for students where many of our BIPOC students and first-generation college students in Oakland are accepting their scholarships and planning to attend college, there's a lot more work to do in creating educational equity"*.

With the pandemic rapidly spreading across the U.S. last year, campus shutdowns, and distance learning, there were nationwide concerns that students could curtail their plans to apply to college entirely. College enrollment had already declined in fall 2019. Undergraduate enrollment fell 4.4% in the fall and included an unprecedented 13% drop in first-year enrollment (Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center). Two-year colleges, an avenue for many BIPOC and first-generation students, even experienced a more significant loss in enrollment. Also, in the Fall of 2020, about 100,000 fewer high school seniors completed the FAFSA/DreamAct financial aid applications. The pandemic brought out more inequities in the educational system for BIPOC and lower-income families.

Oakland Promise's mission is to eliminate those inequities through financial and guidance support to students and families. 83% of newly minted "OP Scholars" are first generation college students who have shown their persistence and resilience to apply to college even with all the obstacles. Imahni Cheeks, a graduating senior at Oakland Tech High School and an OP scholarship recipient, demonstrated her commitment to attend college and she was recently accepted at the University of San Francisco: *"I had the support of my family, counselors and OP College Access team to help me with FAFSA and other financial aid applications. I'm so happy to receive this scholarship since it will help me to pursue my eventual career as a lawyer"*.

OP Senior Manager Jamia Morton and her College Access team have been working diligently with hundreds of Oakland's high school students, such as Imahni, on their college and career preparation throughout this challenging year. *"We've been working with high potential students that just need the opportunity and financial resources support available to them,"* says Ms. Morton. Adds Sandra Ernst, OP's Director of College Access and Completion says, *"It is fulfilling to award all these deserving students with scholarships, but we wish we could offer even more scholarships because of our desire to support more Oakland students achieve their dreams for college and career success"*.

We now welcome Oakland's 2021 graduating high school scholars to the newest class in Oakland Promise's College Completion program. Along with the scholarships, they will be equipped with resources as they enter college or career programs with potential college peer mentors (CREWS) and paired with volunteer mentors if they so choose. OP has advisors that help new college students persist through college so they can complete their programs.

Here is some of the demographic information in this chart.

Indicators	2-year college	%	4-year college	%	College Technical Education (CTE)	%	Total
All applicants							750
OP Scholars (Awarded & Accepted)	128	25%	370	72%	16	3%	514
Ethnicity (# of students and % of Total Awarded)							
Am Indian / Alaska Native	1	0.2%	1	0.2%			2
Asian	24	5%	94	18%			118
African American / Black	24	5%	66	13%			90
Latinx	64	12%	176	34%	14	3%	254
Middle Eastern / N. African	5	1%	10	2%			15
Native HI / Pacific Islander	1	0.2%	2	0.4%			3
White	2	0.4%	5	1%			7
Other	2	0.4%	2	0.4%			4
Multi-Ethnic/Race	4	1%	14	3%	1	0.2%	19
Declined to State	1	0.2%			1	0.2%	2
First Generation college students (88 status unknown)	107	21%	303	59%	16	4%	426

More information about our scholarships and resources for students can be found on Oakland Promise's website at www.oaklandpromise.com.

About [Oakland Promise](#)

Oakland Promise (OP) is available to young learners (from newborns to college students) and their families who reside in Oakland. OP offers every child the financial resources, support, mentorship and incentives they need from birth and throughout their school years to empower them to seek out and thrive in the higher education and career of their choosing. OP provides services through four core cradle-to-career programs at each stage of a young person's development: Brilliant Baby, Kindergarten to College, College Access and College Completion. Through these programs, OP offers college savings accounts (529s), Early College Scholarships, 2-4 year College Scholarships, financial guidance for parents and students, college building culture programs and critical resources to empower students to develop their college and vocational bound identity and persistence.

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