THE FOUNDATION
THEY BUILT.
THE LEGACY
THEY CREATED.
THE FUTURE
WE HOLD.

PALMER scholars
2018-2019 Annual Report
A NOTE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Reflections on Our Year of Growth

It is so good to be home! Reflecting on my first year back at Palmer Scholars, I can say with absolute certainty that returning to assume the role of Executive Director is the best move I could possibly have made. The warm reception I’ve received from our Scholars, supporters, and community at large has been overwhelming. Over the last year, Palmer Scholars has grown significantly. We’ve nearly doubled in size, formed several new key partnerships, introduced a new initiative targeted at young adults interested in pursuing careers in the trades, and developed a robust strategic plan that will ensure that this growth is sustained and built upon in the years ahead. This year we will serve nearly 200 young adults across Pierce County, providing them with wrap around supports as they enter the next stage in their lives. At Palmer Scholars, we pride ourselves on the family-oriented approach we take to serving our Scholars. We are ever mindful, however, that this work would not be possible without the support of community members like you. Thank you for being a part of our family! I hope that you enjoy this annual report, and that it inspires you to continue engaging in and supporting this important work!

With much love and gratitude,

Jonathan Jackson
Executive Director
Many of our community supporters know the story of Merle Palmer and his life's mission to guide underrepresented students of color through higher education. What few know, however, is that though our organization represents his name each day, Merle was not alone in his work. Rev. Al Davis of the Eastside Community Church played a great role in connecting Merle to the community he sought to help. Merle and Rev. Al's friendship began in fellowship and it was in Rev. Al's Sunday School service where the infamous two young men from Lincoln High School spoke candidly with Merle and Rev. Al about their future. "College?? We're not going to college! We can't afford college!" they said when pressed for their plans post-high school. In partnership, Merle and Rev. Al worked with these young men, seeing them all the way through their college graduation. Nearly 600 Scholars have moved their tassels from right to left since that day in 1983, though with time, Palmer Scholars' relationship with the church has faded. Until now.

"Dr. Alfred C. Davis, Sr. has always believed part of his God given purpose was to take care of those people who couldn’t take care of themselves; especially African American youth. Through the many relationships he cultivated with civic and religious groups, he found Mr. Merle Palmer’s to be the perfect fit in helping him ensure underserved African American youth had an opportunity to higher education. That’s when the Eastside scholarship program began." -Pastor Alex Davis, son of Rev. Al Davis
Over the course of the year, our staff and Board worked to create Palmer Scholars' strategic plan for 2019-2021. Together, the team discussed our organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and from there, identified four pillars of Palmer Scholars' success. Those four pillars, Scholar Experience, Staff/Board Development, Community Presence, and Financial Sustainability encapsulate the areas in which staff and Board will work over the next few years to meet measures and support more Scholars in more impactful ways. Our goals are mighty but we are positive that with hard work and leaning on the wealth of knowledge and goodwill in our greater Pierce County community, we will succeed. We are intentional in making sure our strategic plan doesn't just sit on a shelf. We use it each day to guide our organizational activities. If you would like to read our strategic plan, you can download a copy at PalmerScholars.org.

SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE

COMMUNITY PRESENCE

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
MORE THAN A SCHOLARSHIP ORGANIZATION

Our Scholar-Centered Approach

This year we took a different approach to recruiting promising young adults to join our Palmer Scholars family. Who better, we thought, to conduct recruitment than current Scholars and recent alums? Our four Outreach and Recruitment Specialists Alejandra (top left), Alicia (top right), Bakari (bottom left), and Reece (bottom right) are hard at work, presenting at high schools, hosting workshops, and helping students to complete their Palmer Scholars applications. We are excited to provide our Scholars the opportunity to give back to their community while also gaining skills in public speaking and professionalism!

PALMER CARES: TACKLING ISOLATION FOR CONTINUING COLLEGE SCHOLARS

Continuing college Scholars often feel lonely as they progress through their degree program. Due to finances, many are not able to come back home for holidays or the summer, especially if they are attending Washington State University. Financial barriers often prevent their families and support networks from being able to visit them as well. Our Scholar Engagement Coordinator Davon (Palmer Scholars, ’14) visited each Scholar this Fall. He counseled Scholars and brought those at the same schools together for a meal, providing a small taste of home and tightening the Palmer community on each campus.

“Long known for making immeasurable impacts in the lives of young people, I am excited that Palmer Scholars will be expanding their programs to offer pathways into a broader variety of living wage careers in addition to four-year degrees. The work being done by Palmer Scholars is fundamental to ensuring that all our youth have access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.”

-Victoria Woodards
Mayor of the City of Tacoma
In order to provide the most responsive program possible, we recognize a four-year degree is not our Scholars’ only avenue to success. While we have never precluded our Scholars from going into the trades, we are implementing a new initiative this year, Palmer Pathways, which is designed in partnership with WorkForce Central to serve disconnected young adults between the ages of 16-24 in our community. By providing a second service track in addition to our Legacy track for Scholars entering our program while still in high school, we will not only be filling the growing industry needs in Pierce County but also challenging the narrative that a technical college is inferior to a four-year institution. Through this multi-faceted model, we work to achieve our goal of guiding our Scholars not only into college but through to completion. Pathways Scholars receive the same services as our Legacy Scholars, but with adaptations that are responsive to the needs of disconnected youth.

Interested in hosting a site visit, internship, or informational interview for one of our Pathways Scholars? Contact Christina at crupp@PalmerScholars.org

“With a significant number of jobs currently available and projected growth in all key sectors, it is imperative that we, as a community, support all of our young adults to gain the necessary skills to fully participate in the labor market. Palmer Scholars’ proven model will help us reach this goal.” -Linda Nguyen, CEO of WorkForce Central
"Mentoring a Palmer Scholar provides a wonderful opportunity to learn from someone with a very different set of life experiences than one’s own and to impact a college student’s life in a significant way during a very formative period in the student’s life."

- Bill Weyerhaeuser
Palmer Scholars Mentor

Mentor Adam Owen wanted to buy his mentee a bike. Adam's mentee was going into his second year at the University of Washington and Adam thought a bike would be a perfect way for his mentee to get to class quickly and explore the Seattle area. He researched cycling forums for the best options and even enlisted Palmer Scholars staff to figure out how tall his mentee is, so he could get the correct size bike. After months of deliberating, Adam found the perfect bike and ordered it on Amazon. A few weeks later, he met his mentee and presented his gift. "He could not believe his eyes and was in shock," Adam said about his mentee. "[Now he] can explore Seattle much more than taking just a bus."

We recently entered into a partnership with Amara. Through this partnership, our mentors receive high quality training in trauma-informed care, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
The Palmer Scholars Difference

SERVING THE WHOLE SCHOLAR

Graduation Rates by Group (Nationally)

- Palmer Scholars: 83%
- White Students: 64%
- Not Low-Income/First-Gen: 55%
- Low-Income/First-Gen: 11%

Since 1983, we have served nearly 600 promising students of color from across Pierce County.

In the 2019-2020 academic year we will serve nearly 200 Scholars:
- 117 current college Scholars
- 32 current high school seniors
- 45+ new Scholars

100% of our Scholars graduate from high school with the tools and savvy they need to excel in their post-secondary programs, and are accepted into no less than 75% of the programs to which they apply.

SCHOLARS RECEIVED

100

HOURS OF POSTSECONDARY READINESS TRAINING
“The Palmer Scholars mentorship is best in class. The changed lives are a powerful testament to its effectiveness.”
-Bruce Dammeier, Pierce County Executive

Program Growth

Income Growth

Our all-time graduation rate for all Scholars served is **83%**
Nationally, according to the Pell Institute, this rate is just 11% for low-income first-generation students

$0
in Student Loans
For the 2018-19 school year, 92% of our Scholars took out $0 in loans, with 94% taking out less than $5,000

For the class of 2014, the average loan amount at graduation was **$3,491**
Nationally, according to the College Board, the average student loan burden after a 4-year degree program is $38,500
"Being a Palmer Scholar not only helped me financially, but supported me as I was figuring out who I was and what I wanted to do in college. Now that my sister is also a Scholar, I know that she is in good hands as she navigates her way into college"

-Jose Pacio
Harrison Prep '15, University of Washington '19

THE SIX-YEAR COMMITMENT FACTOR
Celebrating Our Largest Graduating Class!

Ki-Renee Armstrong
Andrea Carcamo-Sanchez
Kevin Castellanos
Jerald (Shawn) Chandler
Breneya Cox
Karen Davila
Bakari Davis-Thomas
Angel Esquivel
Elijah (Kahlil) Gates
Sasheta Green
Ewurama Karikari
Aushenae Matthews
Annalycia Matthews
Karen Martinez Gonzalez
Amoje Moody
Daniella Navarro
India Owens
Jose Pacio
Jalen Robinson McClure
Esperanza Sarmiento
Eunissa Satterwhite
Samantha Saucedo
Tina Van
Fernanda Venegas
Nate Williams

Washington State University
Tacoma Community College
Pacific Lutheran University
University of Washington-Seattle
Western Washington University
Pacific Lutheran University
Evergreen State College
University of Washington-Tacoma
University of Washington-Seattle
Washington State University
University of Washington-Tacoma
University of Washington-Tacoma
Washington State University
Washington State University
Western Washington University
Central Washington University
University of Washington-Seattle
Whitworth University
Washington State University
Pacific Lutheran University
Pacific Lutheran University
University of Washington-Tacoma
Whitworth University

Jose Pacio
Harrison Prep '15
University of Washington '19

Jose applied to the UW Computer Science program and was denied three times. Jose considered leaving the University of Washington, but his mentor encouraged him not to quit. Jose applied again and was accepted into the program. Upon entering his final year at UW, Jose already had a job lined up at a tech company.
In the ten years since she was accepted into our program, Amalia Perez (Spanaway Lake '10, University of Washington-Tacoma '14) has proven that she has a heart for service. In college, she majored in social work and currently works as the Family Support Specialist at the Multicultural Child and Family Hope Center in Tacoma. Through the years, Amalia has seen all sides of Palmer Scholars' operations. As a former Scholar herself, she brings her unique perspective to the table at Board meetings, in the Scholar Experience committee, as well as the Palmer Scholars Alumni Committee, of which she is a founding member. Amalia is committed to helping Scholars who have similar experiences as her through their postsecondary journeys. After a recent board training, Amalia reflected on her role as a board member. "We share the common care for the organization, the mission behind Merle Palmer and know the values it carries out in the everyday operations of the program. But more importantly, we each bring something unique to the table that is necessary to continue Merle’s legacy and contribute to developing our board more and more in the future."
BEING THE CHANGE WE WISH TO SEE

Stand Up & Cheer 2019

HONORING HER LEGACY

Remembering Peggy Palmer

When our founder Merle Palmer's daughter Peggy passed away in January, 2019, our organization felt a great loss. Peggy was a champion for Pierce County youth and touched the lives of many Palmer Scholars throughout the years. In honor of her years of service, we awarded the inaugural Peggy Palmer Award for Excellence in Mentoring to longtime Palmer Scholars Board Member and supporter Steve Schain. Honoring Peggy's life was a call-to-action for Stand Up & Cheer attendees. As a result, 75 guests expressed interest in becoming a mentor.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EVENT

Palmer Scholar alum Austin Colburn (Mt. Tahoma '14, University of Puget Sound '18) served as the event's emcee. Austin is also a member of Palmer Scholars inaugural Alumni Committee.

Keeping with tradition, we kicked the luncheon off with our Scholar parade. Scholars from Lincoln, Mt. Tahoma, Spanaway Lake, Summit, Stadium, Curtis, Bellarmine Prep, Harrison Prep, Clover Park, Washington, Bethel, TCC Fresh Start, Wilson, SAMI, SOTA, Franklin Pierce, and Foss danced into the festivities to Pharrell's "Happy."

Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal's keynote address served as a reminder to all in the room about the importance of preparing our youth for success in our ever-evolving society.

"I walked into this room with all these people and all these students and took a picture to send to my wife. I told her, 'look what grandpa built...Look what mom built.'"

-Jeremy Voigt (Grandson of Merle Palmer, Son of Peggy Palmer)
TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH MORE

The Power of Partnerships

Through our scholarship partnerships, community organizations can amplify the power of their giving. In addition to the scholarship the organization provides, Palmer Scholars tracks each Scholar from their junior year of high school through graduation, providing 100 hours of postsecondary readiness training, a 1:1 adult mentor, a fully-stocked dorm room kit, and ongoing socioemotional services. These partnerships ensure Scholars aren’t just supported for one year, but through all years of their postsecondary journey. Our Scholarship Partners include Sunrise Rotary, Rotary of Tacoma North, and the Tacoma Chapter of the Links, Inc. Interested in becoming a Scholarship Partner? Contact us at info@PalmerScholars.org.

Introducing NEXT MOVE Internships for Palmer Scholars

At Palmer Scholars, we value career-connected learning. Through our newest partnership with NEXT MOVE Internships, our high school Scholars will not only be paired with an internship opportunity in their field of interest, but also receive support and soft skills training to ensure they are participating in their internship with a high level of professionalism. While NEXT MOVE generally only serves students in the Tacoma Public School District, this partnership allows our Scholars from other school districts to also experience this opportunity!

"I wish that I would’ve been privy to this program when I was headed off to college, the transition would have been that much easier. Through my work with Tacoma Public Schools' NEXT MOVE Internship Program, I was lucky enough to get to collaborate [with Palmer Scholars] during a few summer trainings for the Scholars on professionalism & career readiness skills. The planets aligned and before I knew it I was blessed with the opportunity to lead trainings for the class of 2020 cohort! It has been a fun experience and I am looking forward to continuing on my partnership with Palmer Scholars."

-Farrington Cador
NEXT MOVE Internships & Palmer Scholars Training Instructor
GET INVOLVED

Join the Palmer Scholars Family

Become a Scholarship Partner
Like the Tacoma Chapter of the Links, Inc.

Sponsor or Host a Table
Like McGavick Graves

Become a Mentor
Like Ron Culpepper

Host a Job Shadow/Internship
Like Tacoma Public Utilities

INVESTING IN PALMER SCHOLARS MEANS INVESTING IN PIERCE COUNTY'S FUTURE!

For $50, Aaron from Lincoln can get the supplies he needs for his Postsecondary Readiness Training.

For $1,000, Mary at Pacific Lutheran University can reach her goal of becoming a nurse by supplying her with textbooks for one year.

For $100, Manny, Verda, and Norman can get the training and resources to support their mentees.

For $500, Ben will have dorm room necessities for a successful first year at Washington State University.

For $5,000, Toelau will graduate from the University of Washington with minimal student loans.
THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDATION PARTNERS!

Anderson Foundation  
Baker Foundation  
Bamford Foundation  
Charlotte Martin Foundation  
Dimmer Family Foundation  
Discuren Foundation  
Elliott Family Foundation  
Florence B. Kilworth Charitable Trust Foundation  
Forest Foundation  
Gottfried & Mary Fuchs Foundation  
Greater Tacoma Community Foundation  
Lucky Seven Foundation  
Norcliffe Foundation  
Puget Sound College and Career Network  
Puyallup Tribe of Indians  
Rotary Club of Lakewood  
Rotary Club of Tacoma #8  
Rotary Club of Tacoma North  
Russell Family Foundation  
Safeco Insurance Fund  
Sequoia Foundation  
Silver Family Foundation  
Stewardship Foundation  
Stockdale Family Foundation  
Sunrise Rotary Club of Tacoma  
Thompson Family Foundation  
Titus-Will Families Foundation  
Umpqua Bank Charitable Foundation  
Voigt Charitable Foundation  
Wells Fargo Foundation  
William Kilworth Foundation  
Woodworth Family Foundation

"Palmer Scholars understands that it is not only access to resources, networks, and information that ensures a student’s positive journey but also the importance of caring and consistent relationships along the way. The Bamford Foundation is excited about Palmer Scholars leadership and partnerships with other organizations to create a community of support for our young people. We are also excited about the new Palmer Pathways Initiative that will support and guide young adults who have been disconnected and are seeking a pathway to a fulfilling career. Thank you to Palmer Scholars for your leadership!"

- Holly Bamford Hunt
Bamford Foundation
SAVE THE DATE!

STAND UP & CHEER 2020

Tuesday, April 21st
Hotel Murano Bicentennial Room
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

THANK YOU TO OUR 2019 SPONSORS!

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!