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ACCESS promises to be a guiding light, encouraging and supporting students through college completion and beyond.

Looking back on the 2015-16 school year, so many moments served as a reminder that our work is having a real impact in schools everyday. I’m also reminded of the important challenges that our students are up against, as well as the amazing power we have as a collective community to bring about greater change in their lives.

As President and CEO of ACCESS, my job is to make sure we are using our resources—our endowment, the knowledge of our staff, and the generous support of our donors and volunteers—responsibly, so that we can fulfill our mission. We work hard each and every day for the students we serve—young people who work, strive, and aspire to realize success.

That’s why our focus at ACCESS is a promise to these students and their families. We promise to help them succeed, offering comprehensive college advising services and financial aid assistance to help them achieve their goals.

From our Early Awareness Program in 26 middle schools to our High School Program in 30 high schools, and our College Success Program on 13 college campuses, nearly 30,000 students counted on ACCESS last school year to help them achieve their educational dreams.

ACCESS promises to be a guiding light, encouraging and supporting students through college completion and beyond. This is the ACCESS Promise.

From our President and CEO

“We promise to continue to grow the ACCESS program and continue to foster a team that will allow us to help every student who needs us.”

Bonnie
Bonnie B. Sutton,
President and CEO
From Our Chairman

“I promise to support and sustain the ACCESS mission with that same level of enthusiasm to serve our students and their families for the betterment of the entire community.”

Ran Randolph
Chairman, ACCESS
Board of Directors

The number of young people across our community whose lives are forever changed by the ACCESS College Foundation grows every year. And by every measure, this 2016 Annual Report demonstrates the continued success of ACCESS.

Last school year alone, the ACCESS Advisors helped over 4,000 high school graduates pursue their college dreams, and 90% of ACCESS Scholars already in college continued to graduation.

That’s why I have been a longtime supporter and board member of ACCESS. I have witnessed firsthand the hard work and dedication of the ACCESS staff, as well as the loyal and enthusiastic devotion of the entire family of ACCESS supporters. And now, as the new Board Chairman, I promise to support and sustain the ACCESS mission with that same level of enthusiasm to serve our students and their families for the betterment of the entire community.

ACCESS will work hard in the coming year to fulfill this promise because every student’s success is a victory for us and for our community. Together we will ensure that the Class of 2017 and future generations of students are able to overcome the barriers to access higher education and achieve their dreams. Thank you for your continued support of the ACCESS College Foundation and its mission.

Highlights

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On the Cover Israel Guerrero is a Class of 2016 ACCESS Scholar and recipient of the first-ever Chesapeake Bay Wine Classic ACCESS Scholarship. Meet Israel’s mom, Kimberly Adams, and read her inspiring words of gratitude.
Kimberly Adams

I have always been active in my son’s academic journey, partnering with Israel’s guidance counselors and teachers to ensure his success in school.

Although I was aware of the ACCESS Advisor at Churchland High School, I didn’t quite understand what the program was and how it could help Israel. The ACCESS program didn’t really jump to the foreground of my mind until Israel’s junior year when I attended a financial aid session presented by ACCESS Advisor, Jordan Brown.

What really struck me that day was how Mr. Brown had a way of demystifying the entire financial aid experience and making the information digestible for the students and parents in the auditorium. Shortly after his presentation, I personally reached out to Mr. Brown to discuss the SAT test, which was yet another foreign component of the college admission process to me. To my relief, ACCESS provided Israel with a fee waiver which allowed him to take the test free of charge. It was on this day that I began to believe that college might just be in my son’s future. I always knew that, if given the opportunity, Israel would excel both academically and intellectually in college, but financially I couldn’t afford my son’s dream.

I learned a valuable lesson during this time—you can’t let your circumstances change the language you speak to your kids. You may not make a lot of money, but you can still speak the language of college.

Israel and I learned so much from Mr. Brown in terms of the financial aid opportunities available to us. I really appreciated that he was always accessible to my son. Whenever we had a question, he was always there for us. Mr. Brown hand walked us through the financial aid application and encouraged Israel to apply for every scholarship opportunity available to him. I became even more confident that college may become a reality for my son. I believed that if we continued to put forth the effort, ACCESS would help us find the money to fund his college dream.

One thing that I want ACCESS supporters to know is that many kids, like my Izzy — from low-income families and who have endured difficult situations—are walking
around with diamonds embedded in them. Diamonds of different persuasions: diamonds of mathematics, arts, and even medicine. They have talents and gifts that are as valuable as the rarest gem that one may find. It is our job to recognize their potential, believe in them, and give them an opportunity to shine. **When you support ACCESS, you aren’t just donating money—you are harvesting diamonds and funding dreams.**

When Izzy and I arrived at the Scholarship Awards Luncheon in June, we checked in with the ACCESS staff and were given an envelope containing a letter that none of the other Scholars had received. We were honored to learn that he was the recipient of a special scholarship named the Chesapeake Bay Wine Classic Access Scholarship. Neither of us was aware that Israel would be receiving an increased scholarship amount until his name was called. My heart skipped a beat as Izzy walked to the stage!

I felt a wave of pure love and support from the entire ACCESS organization. I was overwhelmed with gratitude. I knew in that moment that Israel’s dream of going to college would come true. It was a moment that I will never forget. **ACCESS believed in my gem. On that very day, Israel grew in stature just a little bit.**

It is such a poignant thing to see your son grow in his own sense of confidence—there is nothing sweeter. Thank you for entrusting Israel with this investment; he is currently pursuing his love of the arts as a freshman at Virginia Commonwealth University.

I keep a promise on my refrigerator as a reminder of my heart’s commitment to him every day. I promise to pray for him, encourage him, cheer for him, remind him of his talent and ability, listen to him and exhort him from freshman year until he celebrates achieving his master’s degree.

“**I promise to pray for him, encourage him, cheer for him, remind him of his talent and ability, listen to him and exhort him from freshman year until he celebrates achieving his master’s degree.**”

Kimberly
Mother of Access Scholar
Our 2015-16 Accomplishments thanks to your generous support

**Early College Awareness Program**

Nearly 11,000 7th and 8th graders attended an ACCESS event or participated in an early college awareness activity in 26 low-income middle schools to take their first step in the pursuit of higher education.

Over 1,694 families attended parent night workshops.

**High School Program**

22 Access Advisors served students in 30 local public high schools, helping over 7,000 9th and 10th graders with college planning. 12,000 11th and 12th graders were assisted with the college entrance process, leveraging nearly $50 million in financial aid and scholarships!

**Last-Dollar Scholarship**

ACCESS awarded $950,000 in scholarships to 181 students in the Class of 2016. 58 additional scholarship renewals were awarded to college students during the school year.

**College Success Program**

ACCESS College Success Advisors on 13 Virginia college campuses provided advisory services to nearly 1,000 students and achieved a six-year graduation and retention rate as compared to the national average of 59%.

80% of the students in grades 7 – 12 participated in at least one ACCESS activity.

93% of the juniors and seniors had one-on-one college advising appointments with their ACCESS Advisor.

63% of the Class of 2016 is either enrolled in college or in the military at the time of this report.
Event Highlights

In addition to the Annual Luncheon and the Scholarship Awards Luncheon, ACCESS participated in several other events during the 2015-16 school year.

It IS A Different World:
College Changes EVERYTHING!

ACCESS partnered with SunTrust Bank and Norfolk State University to bring five original cast members from the 90’s hit television show “A Different World” to the L. Douglas Wilder Performing Arts Center. Kadeem Hardison, Jasmine Guy, Charnele Brown, Darryl Bell and Cree Summer Francks held an intimate discussion that explored the importance of higher education. They also discussed the value of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in both their historic and current roles. Six lucky student participants won scholarships to either begin or to continue their post-secondary education journeys.

National Signing Day

ACCESS was one of 1,000 groups across the country that participated in National College Signing Day, part of First Lady Michelle Obama’s Reach Higher Initiative. In partnership with Old Dominion University, approximately 1,400 local students traveled to the Ted Constant Convocation Center to celebrate their commitment to higher education. All participating students had been previously accepted to a college or university and had filed their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Shaggy of Z104’s the Z Morning Zoo radio show emceed the event. Gil Bland from the State Council of Higher Education attended as the event’s keynote speaker. Congressman Bobby Scott also brought remarks and congratulations to the group.

ACCESS Scholars invited to the White House AGAIN!

We are so proud of Tiara Benson and Destiny Cobb, our two Class of 2016 Scholars who attended the Beating the Odds Summit at the White House, along with ACCESS Advisor Mary Carter Scott! The summit brought together more than 130 college-bound, Class of 2016 high school graduates from all over the country for a celebratory event with First Lady Michelle Obama. Throughout the day, the students participated in workshops and panels led by the U.S. Department of Education and other leaders in K-12 and post-secondary education.
I was first introduced to the ACCESS program as a student at Churchland High School. In the fall of my senior year, I was selected to go on a college tour with ACCESS and my fellow college hopefuls. Mrs. Forbes, the ACCESS trip coordinator didn’t know it, but that was my very first time visiting a college campus.

And this wasn’t just any college campus. I was visiting my dream school—Virginia Tech. I remember being excited and fearful all at the same time. I had submitted for early decision to Virginia Tech’s School of Engineering sight unseen. During this trip I was going to find out if I would become a Hokie. I knew from the second I stepped foot on campus that Virginia Tech was the right place for me and before I knew it, I was sitting in front of an admission officer awaiting their verdict. I was waitlisted, but promised entrance if I could successfully complete a calculus course before my fall semester as a freshman began.

I was determined not to let this news define my path, so I knew that I had to be proactive and take action. Thankfully, I had already joined the inaugural class of Tidewater Community College’s First College Program, which offered me the opportunity to earn college credits at TCC before matriculating in the fall. Mrs. Rosa Wells-Garris, the dean of that program fought for me to have the opportunity to take Tidewater Community College’s calculus course that I needed. She won the battle, but under one condition—I needed to score high enough on the mathematics placement test.

I did exactly that. Now I had two programs that supported me and believed in me—ACCESS College Foundation and Tidewater Community College.

By the end of my senior year, I had earned 28 college credits as a First College Scholar and was well on my way to becoming a Hokie. I had been accepted into my dream school, but how was I going to afford it? My ACCESS Advisor did all that she could to help me and my parents answer this question. She helped maximize my financial aid opportunities and encouraged me to apply for the ACCESS “Last-Dollar” Scholarship. I received the funds needed to attend college and entered my freshman year at Virginia Tech as a Class of 2006 ACCESS Scholar.

Despite my academic accomplishments, I still lacked confidence in myself and didn’t trust that my success was a result of my own intelligence and merit. In my sophomore year the new ACCESS College Success Program started on Virginia Tech’s campus. There was an Advisor on campus every other week to hold workshops and make sure I had everything I needed to succeed in school. I remember being too ashamed to even pass my grades to my ACCESS Advisor, but I needed the money. They graciously continued my scholarship and gave me a semester to improve.

There were some rough days ahead; days where I questioned myself, wondering if I even belonged in engineering. I thought about giving up. Most of my friends who had started with me had switched majors or were suspended already for their academic performance.

It wasn’t easy, but with the support of my family, friends and organizations like ACCESS I stayed at Virginia Tech and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Engineering.
At the entrance to all college campuses there should be a sign that reads, “Do not attempt to do college alone.” It wasn’t designed that way and neither is the workforce. I will be forever indebted to the many kind-hearted people who helped me carve out a successful path for my career and my life.

I know that I have a responsibility to our community and to those who will follow in my footsteps. After all, no one can achieve their dreams on their own. That’s why I promise to give back without hesitation or question.

From the end of my sophomore year through my remaining tenure at Virginia Tech, I mentored at least 50 incoming engineering students. All of them are successful in their field today. I recently began participating in a mentoring program that pairs up graduating seniors with Virginia Tech Aerospace alumni. **There are very few things more rewarding than giving back to the people, organizations, and community that helped you become the person you are today.**

My advice to ACCESS Scholars is to continue to use the resources afforded to you by the ACCESS Program. To the ACCESS donors and other supporters, I thank you. There are so many students who face challenges like I did. You are part of the reason why they will continue to succeed.

“I KNOW THAT I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR COMMUNITY AND TO THOSE WHO WILL FOLLOW IN MY FOOTSTEPS. AFTER ALL, NO ONE CAN ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS ON THEIR OWN. THAT’S WHY I PROMISE TO GIVE BACK WITHOUT HESITATION OR QUESTION.”

DeAnthony Heart
ACCESS Alumnus
ACCESS by the Numbers

**CHARITY NAVIGATOR**

Four Star Charity
ACCESS has received consecutive Four Star ratings from Charity Navigator. Only 6% of charities they evaluate can say the same.

For every $1 you give in support of the ACCESS Program we leverage $20 in financial aid and scholarships for local students.

Zero.
The number of times Access has exceeded its fiscal year operating budget.

We had 100% participation in our staff giving campaign last year. A Beating the Odds ACCESS Scholarship was awarded to 2 Scholars as a result.

Seven Cents!
That’s our fundraising efficiency and we’re proud of it. Last year, we only spent seven cents to raise every $1.00 in contribution revenue.

We have doubled the amount of Facebook likes on our page since last year. The result? Increased engagement with the Access family of supporters.

It all started with five Norfolk high schools. In September 1988 a three-year pilot project entitled ACCESS was born.

And NOW...
You will find ACCESS Advisors in 30 high schools in, 26 middle schools and on 13 college campuses.

ACCESS financial statements can be found online. Visit AccessCollege.org/governance
We promise to help students go to college and graduate.

The ACCESS Team

Executive Leadership Team
Bonnie B. Sutton, President and CEO
Heather Foxwell, Business Manager
Cheryl L. Jones, Program Director
Dionne Scott, Director of Development

Main Office Staff
Haley Allen
Program Assistant
Sarah Bevier
Grants and Special Events Manager
Reginald Ford
Development Assistant
Pamela Jimerson
Financial Coordinator
Katie Phillips
Office Assistant
Ariole Taylor
Development Operations Manager
Danielle Veness
Donor Relations Manager
Ashley Woodous
Program Coordinator

ACCESS ADVISORS
Program Specialists
Antoinette Haygood
College Success
Peggy Johnson
Early College Awareness
Adria Phillips
High School
Kyle Williams
High School

High School Advisors
Portsmouth
Jordan Brown
Churchland High School
Joanne Forbes
I.C. Norcom High School
Joshua Mann
Wilson High School

Norfolk
Darius Blount
Lake Taylor High School
Kevin Cenedella
Maury High School
Mary Carter Scott
Norview High School
Megan Ulanch
Granby High School
Jacqueline Whitehead
Booker T. Washington High School

Chesapeake
Apollonios Hall
Oscar Smith High School
Gabriel Hall
Deep Creek High School
Western Branch High School
Arthur Kelly
Grassfield High School
Great Bridge High School
Natasha Sackey
Indian River High School
Kyle Williams
Hickory High School

Virginia Beach
Gabrielle Alexander
Ocean Lakes High School
Salem High School
Mindy Ballard
Frank W. Cox High School
Kempville High School
Sara Gastler
Kolam High School
Tallwood High School
Jenny Hechtkopf
Landstown High School
David Kidd
Bayside High School
Adria Phillips
Princess Anne High School
Natasha Sackey
First Colonial High School
Seko Varner
Green Run High School

Suffolk
Shawn Jackson
Lakeland High School
Nansemond River High School
Adrienne Miller
King’s Fork High School

Northampton County
Devin Allen
Northampton High School

Early College Awareness Advisors
Stephanie Carswell
Jessica McLenney
College Success Advisors
Tabatha Hargrove
Rachal Weaver
Preserving the ACCESS Promise

Broadening the Core of ACCESS Services

Together we raised $20.2 million through the College Changes Everything Campaign—$17 million to endow services for the future and $3 million to implement enhanced services now. ACCESS is taking specific steps in four program areas: Early Awareness, High School, Scholarships, and College Success.

The Impact of the Campaign to Date:

1. Replaced funding for a federal grant that began our Early College Awareness Program to ensure that 7th and 8th graders continue to receive the tools they need to begin their journey towards higher education earlier.

2. Increased our advisory services at 11 low-income high schools, allowing ACCESS to have a much greater positive impact on the students and their families who really need it.

3. Added one College Success Advisor, primarily to serve our many students at Tidewater Community College, ensuring that even more students graduate from college.

4. Increased our scholarship amount from $2,500 per Scholar to $5,000 per Scholar to help make higher education affordable.

The Campaign Impact Continues...

New for the 2016-17 school year:

During this school year, we will implement the Campaign initiatives in the following ways:

1. Add another Early College Awareness Advisor

2. Serve students full-time, five days per week at King’s Fork and Lake Taylor high schools

Thank You Campaign Supporters!

You are the reason why more students than ever will experience the ACCESS Promise.
Delivering the ACCESS Promise
Maintaining Day-to-Day Operations

**Why are gifts to the ACCESS Annual Support Campaign vital?**
Donations to the Annual Support Campaign help us continue to deliver the ACCESS Promise by funding our day-to-day operations. Unlike endowment gifts made to our College Changes Everything Campaign, unrestricted gifts made to the 2016-17 Annual Support Campaign will go to the area of greatest need within our annual budget.

**Unrestricted Annual Support Campaign gifts help keep our program running in the following ways:**

- **60%** supports Advisors and general staff who all work in support of opportunities for students. Your gift helps maintain the appropriate Advisor to student ratio, as well as the recruitment and retention of quality staff.

- **19%** supports students by eliminating fees and reducing college costs. Your support enables us to pay fees on our students’ behalf for necessary college entrance testing (ACT and SAT), as well as for costly college admission applications. Our Last-Dollar Scholarship for Access Scholars reduces their need for student loans in many instances, making college more affordable.

- **8%** supports school events, activities and publications that directly impact the student experience for completing the college process. Your gift supports awareness activities for middle school students, important newsletters and publications such as the college handbook for juniors and seniors, college tours, and financial aid nights.

- **8%** pays for ongoing business expenses. Just like you, ACCESS has a telephone and internet bill to pay, technology to maintain, insurance, and other general expenses.

- **5%** helps us keep the lines of communication open with the community for the benefit of our students. Our stories and ability to talk to our community partners is an important part of how we stay connected. Your gift provides important public relations, marketing, and fundraising opportunities.

Whether you are renewing a promise or making an entirely new one, we hope that you will join us in supporting tomorrow’s leaders.
Promise to volunteer, promise to mentor, and use the enclosed remittance envelope to support ACCESS.

A donation of any amount will make a big difference in the lives of students in our community.
Take your promise digital and donate online today: accesscollege.org/donate
Christelle Hollomon knew that she was academically qualified to attend college, but after her dad’s passing her family lacked the resources to help Christelle navigate the college admissions and financial aid process. That’s when ACCESS stepped in.

Christelle Hollomon

My dad always told me that, “Your education is one thing no one can take away from you.” I held on to his words throughout high school. I knew that I wanted to go to college but I had no idea where to start. It was during this time that I met my ACCESS Advisor, Mrs. Morris. From that point on I knew college would become a reality for me.

Mrs. Morris always found a way to make things work, helping me obtain fee waivers so that I could take standardized tests and apply for college admission free of charge. It may not seem like much, but any bit of money helps tremendously when your family is living month to month. ACCESS also gave me the opportunity to take a college tour during my senior year. Mrs. Morris helped file my FAFSA, which allowed me to get the financial aid that I needed to afford college. She even encouraged me to apply for other outside scholarships. I know that I wouldn’t have been so successful if it wasn’t for my ACCESS Advisor in high school.

I am currently a sophomore majoring in marketing at ODU. I feel myself growing as an individual each day that I am here. My ACCESS College Success Advisors are Mrs. Haygood and Mrs. Weaver. They do an excellent job of communicating with me and other ACCESS Scholars, always letting us know when they will be on campus. They also keep us up to date on scholarship opportunities and make certain we get our FAFSAs filed! I love the conversations we have; not only do we discuss financial things, but Mrs. Haygood also gave me great advice when I had problems with my roommate and when I was frustrated with one of my professors. I still keep in contact with my high school Advisor as well. Whether it’s via text message, e-mail, or on Facebook,

it’s nice to know that Mrs. Morris has become a great friend and mentor.

I am so tremendously blessed to be able to continue my education and pursue my dreams here at ODU. College is without a doubt the best decision I have ever made.

Knowing that I’m one step closer to a great career motivates me to work harder and also to encourage others to work hard as well. ACCESS helped me gain the confidence to never give up, no matter the circumstances. My Advisors continue to give me the tools I need in order to be successful.

To all of the supporters of ACCESS—thank you, thank you, thank you! Without your support, none of this would be possible. You all are the reason I can say, “I am proud to call myself an ACCESS Scholar.”
YOU are the Reason

Our students and their families count on us keeping the ACCESS Promise. But, we know that you are the reason they can count on us. We asked our family of supporters to tell us why they support ACCESS and here are just a few of their responses:

Education is the only gift that changes lives.
- Chesapeake Bay Wine Classic Foundation Board Member

I would not have been able to attend college myself without financial aid. I would have loved to have had the assistance of an organization such as ACCESS to help with the extraordinarily confusing process of applying for financial help.
- ACCESS Board Member

It is a blessing to participate in the ACCESS Program and to see young people attending college where it might not have been possible without support from ACCESS. It is uplifting for donors to see young students achieve graduation and take their places in our community and in the world. Donors, students and our society all benefit. What a great program!!!
- ACCESS Supporter since 1999

I Support ACCESS Because...

Of all the assistance, both financial and experiential, that it provides our students.
- High School Principal

Children are our future and education guides them to be great leaders. Every child should have access to college.
- Corporate Partner and ACCESS Supporter since 2013

Friends of Access showing support at our annual Scholarship Awards Luncheon

Complete information about ACCESS supporters and the giving societies can be found online: accesscollege.org/community-of-supporters