The mission of ACCESS is to provide all students the path to higher education.

Ran Randolph

A degree, as well as a skill-based certification, has the power to transform a life, particularly for those who do not have the resources or support necessary to make higher education attainable. As the chairman of the ACCESS Board of Directors, I understand the inner workings of the organization and have the privilege of seeing firsthand the ACCESS team pour their hearts into bettering the future of every student they serve.

This year alone, ACCESS Advisors worked diligently and reached more than 30,000 local students through our continuum of comprehensive services for students in grade 7 through college graduation. Middle school students took their first step in the pursuit of higher education. Our Advisors assisted high school students with college preparation, and nearly 4,000 seniors we assisted went off to college. Our Scholars achieved a 6-year college retention/graduation rate of 88% (compared to the national average of 55%). It is our passion for helping students with the skills and desire to go to college that inspires us!

From college tours to parental advising, from financial assistance with college testing to “Last-Dollar” Scholarships, ACCESS touches every aspect of the college process.

As we report on ACCESS’ 29th year, I am honored to be a longtime supporter. As enjoyable as it is to reflect on the success of ACCESS to date, I am enthusiastic about the future – our new brand, a larger digital presence, our “First in the Family” campaign – all of which are possible because of your support.

Thank you for believing in the mission of ACCESS.
As important as it is to remember our roots, I am incredibly optimistic about our future and excited about entering our 30th year.

Bonnie Sutton

“It is within our reach to open the doors to college for many hundreds of young people. If ACCESS can do this, it will be a powerful instrument for hope and enrichment for our community and for the people who need it most.”

Frank Batten, Sr., Co-Founder, ACCESS College Foundation

As I reflect on the 2016-17 school year, my mind travels back over ACCESS’ 29 years of helping students across our region. Frank Batten’s words, pulled from the first newspaper article published about ACCESS in May of 1988, still ring true today.

Over 29 years, we have assisted 59,000 students with the college process, leveraged $565 million in financial aid and scholarships and awarded $9 million in ACCESS “Last-Dollar” Scholarships. I think Frank would be pleased with those numbers!

This report features some of our recent success stories, which speaks to what we do and reminds our supporters they are changing the lives of young people and enhancing the future of our community. Our founders, Frank Batten and Josh Darden, believed all students deserved the chance to pursue their post-secondary educational dreams; and as we report on our 29th year, I am proud we continue to do just that.

Accomplishments of the 2016-17 School Year

WOW!

This year, we reported $43 million in financial aid and scholarships and we awarded $800,000 in ACCESS “Last-Dollar” Scholarships.

Middle School Program

- 3 Advisors served 10,000 7th and 8th grade students at 26 low-income middle schools

High School Program

- 23 Advisors served 21,000 high school students in grades 9-12 at 30 public high schools in South Hampton Roads and Northampton County

College Success Program

- 3 Advisors served 1,000 college students on 13 Virginia College Campuses
On April 25th, more than 2,000 seniors from across South Hampton Roads and Northampton County gathered at the Ted Constant Convocation Center for our second annual ACCESS College Commitment Day to celebrate their commitment to higher education. Each student attending had been accepted to at least one college or university, had filed their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and had been assisted by ACCESS.

At the inaugural event in 2016, 1,200 students participated, meaning we nearly doubled the attendance in 2017! Some of our ACCESS board of directors, including David Mele and Mark Johnson, jumped into the crowd to celebrate with the students.

“There was no other place in Hampton Roads where you could find lively, smart, enthusiastic young people who are committed to going to the next level and taking the next step to go to college,” Johnson says.

There were inspiring speeches by ACCESS Alumni and students who had overcome great obstacles to achieve their dreams. They included Cedricka Dalton, a Churchland High School graduate, who obtained a bachelor’s degree from Norfolk State University and is currently an Electronics Engineer for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center on Naval Station Norfolk’s base. She is now pursuing her

Look out! Sponsors Jerry and Amy Frostick of J&A Racing get in on the action.
The mission of ACCESS comes to light when you see students excited about their future. ACCESS is changing the lives of these students forever.

DAVID MELE, PRESIDENT
HOMES.COM

"College was the best experience of my life," Dalton told the seniors. "I beat the odds with the help of ACCESS. So get out there, beat those odds and make that completion with a purpose."

Joseph Dugan, a graduating senior from Princess Anne High School, battled multiple health and discipline problems early in his high school career but with assistance from ACCESS is now a freshman at Virginia Commonwealth University.

"Thank you ACCESS for teaching me that nothing is impossible… for forcing me to sit down and apply to college when I didn’t believe I could get in," Dugan said. "Without ACCESS I wouldn’t have been accepted into five universities. And now I know, if you want it bad enough, you can achieve it."

Thank you to those who made the event possible: Old Dominion University, Norfolk State University, Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, University of Mary Washington, J&A Racing and Signature Family Wealth Advisors. Sponsors also surprised six deserving students with scholarships.

A special thank you to all who attended and our emcee, local radio host, Shaggy, from Z104's Z Morning Zoo!
At ACCESS, we believe any student who dreams of continuing his or her education after high school should have the opportunity to do so. However, if a student is part of the first generation in the family to head off to college, there are additional challenges. ACCESS helps young people from all backgrounds, especially those who will be the first in their family, to ensure they follow the necessary steps to be accepted into college and have access to all available resources.

Our new series, “First in the Family,” chronicles the stories of many of these students. When they go off to school, and more importantly when they graduate, they become role models for others in their families, starting a new cycle of success and hope.

MEET Ayanna Frost

When Ayanna Frost entered Woodrow Wilson High School in Portsmouth, she met with her ACCESS Advisor, Joshua Mann, to plan her path to college. She knew it wouldn’t be easy.

“Coming from a single parent household, I knew my mom didn’t have the income to send me to school,” Ayanna says. “I had to work extra hard inside and outside the classroom.”

Ayanna has a twin sister, doubling the burden on her mother to send both girls to school.

“I had to motivate my sister. We have a good life now, but I want a better one. It doesn’t matter where you come from. If you keep trying, keep pushing to succeed, you can change your life.”
Ayanna is proud of her sister, Keyanna, who will continue her education at ECPI University, but she is also eager to begin her own college journey.

With the help of Mr. Mann and the ACCESS team, Ayanna was accepted into 14 colleges and universities, averaged $378,000 in scholarships and received full tuition to Virginia State University.

“Mr. Mann was my backbone,” Ayanna says. “I don’t know where I’d be without him.”

Mr. Mann believes ACCESS plays an integral role in helping students like Ayanna.

“ACCESS has given me the tools to help students from any walk of life, but first-generation students are a major target for us,” Mann says. “We don’t want anyone to come in the door and tell us they can’t go to college because they can’t afford it.”
Gaining ACCESS

With your support, we help students across South Hampton Roads and Northampton County gain access to college. We are proud of the difference we make in the lives of students and their families.

This year, we asked students, teachers and ACCESS Advisors how ACCESS has changed their lives or the lives of their students:

“I’m the first in the family to go to college...I wanted to prove to my family I could do it and ACCESS was there every step of the way.”

Chi Ali, ACCESS Scholar, ODU Graduate

“For some high school students, getting to graduation is normally the end. We know if we can make that just the beginning, it’s all worth it.”

Gabriel Hall, ACCESS Advisor

“A lot of students settle for just getting their high school diploma because no one has ever pushed them to do better. In any community, in any school, if you can have someone that’s specifically there to put college in each kid’s mind, we’re going to have more going to college. And ACCESS does that.”

Vanessa Faircloth, Oscar Smith Math Teacher

“ACCESS has helped me realize what I want to be when I grow up, the importance of securing the funds to make my dreams possible and helped me to pick the right school.”

Keyasia Allen, Lake Taylor High School Senior

“It’s rewarding to know you’re helping the future generation get the education that they need. Some of them didn’t know college was an option and now they’re on their way.”

Shawn Foster, ACCESS Advisor

“We try very hard to have a college-going culture and ACCESS gives us that person on staff who can be that ally for our students.”

Kelly Singer, Landstown High School, Gifted Resource Specialist
Make an Impact with Your Donation

Why are gifts to the Annual Support Campaign vital to ACCESS? They allow us to deliver encouragement and support to students across the region.

At ACCESS, we know the path to college is not always an easy one; in fact, it can be overwhelming and confusing. Once a student realizes post-secondary education is an option, they often cannot see the way to get there due to financial burdens.

Between college tours, application fees and SAT and ACT registration costs, the dollars add up.

Your support of this year’s Annual Support Campaign ensures that today’s students have the resources to become tomorrow’s leaders. A donation of any amount will make a difference.

Donate Now!

Make your annual contribution online at: www.accesscollege.org/donate

$50 ONE SAT/ACT REGISTRATION FEE

$200 UP TO FOUR APPLICATION FEES FOR ONE STUDENT

$1,000 A COLLEGE TOUR FOR 50 STUDENTS

$5,000 ONE ACCESS “LAST-DOLLAR” SCHOLARSHIP

Financial statements can be found online at www.accesscollege.org/governance
It was Frank Batten, Sr. – the legendary publisher of The Virginian-Pilot and Ledger-Star, chairman of Landmark Communications and the first rector of Old Dominion University – who in 1988 conceived the idea of a program to help low-income students become eligible for and then afford to attend college. He recruited his good friend and fellow philanthropist, automobile dealer Josh Darden, whose uncle Colgate had been Governor of Virginia and later President of the University of Virginia, to start what was then called the Tidewater Scholarship Foundation.

Batten then asked John “Dubby” Wynne, executive at Landmark, which owned the newspapers, and Anne Shumadine, Batten’s lawyer, to be part of the effort that resulted in what is today the ACCESS College Foundation. Along with ACCESS President and CEO Bonnie Sutton, they sat down with former local journalist Joel Rubin to recall those early days.

**JOEL:** “Where did Frank and Josh gain the sense that it was so important to help the underprivileged?”

**DUBBY:** “If you recall, our newspaper just attacked Massive Resistance in the late 1950’s with a vengeance and actually got
a Pulitzer Prize for it. Frank was publisher, so it was in his DNA to look out for people who needed an opportunity. He believed in giving people a chance to change and do things well. He felt blessed and an obligation to help others. In my opinion, Frank was as humble a wealthy person as I have ever known. As for Josh, his father had been Mayor of Norfolk and so he also felt a civic responsibility to help others. Josh believed there should be a safety net for low-income people so I’m sure it didn’t take him five minutes to say ‘I’m in’.”

**ANNE:** “I don’t think you would even consider saying no to Frank or Josh. They always had something that was interesting and inspiring. And you wanted to be part of it.”

**DUBBY:** “When they came to me, I was honored.”

**BONNIE:** “When I went on fundraising meetings with Frank or Josh, everyone knew they were going to say yes. They just didn’t know what the question was yet.”

**JOEL:** “Was there a specific goal for the organization?”

**ANNE:** “Both Frank and Josh were adamant we had to measure success, and I think they looked at it in terms of how many kids actually went to college, stayed there and graduated.”

**JOEL:** “Why was it so important that these kids go to college?”

**DUBBY:** “To be self-sufficient and get yourself out of dependency was a big deal. Josh, Frank and I talked a lot about the importance of citizenship. A college degree is not just about getting that job. It’s about having values and commitment to community.”

**JOEL:** “It sounds like they really understood the challenges low-income families faced.”

**DUBBY:** “Many low-income families were just intimidated by the process. Some wouldn’t even take the test to qualify for college, because they didn’t know how to do it.”

**ANNE:** “When we started, it wasn’t about the “Last-Dollar” Scholarship. It was about having Advisors in the schools who could encourage and help students fill out those very complicated applications. So that’s what we raised money for, to pay Advisors, not for scholarships.”

**JOEL:** “Two of the key people in the founding were Lucy Wilson, who was chairman of the Norfolk School Board and Gene Carter, who was the superintendent of schools. Dr. Carter was the one who recommended Norfolk adopt a model that was already successful in Cleveland, right?”

**DUBBY:** “Yes. We went to other places to see best practices. We thought we could replicate the Cleveland program in Hampton Roads.”

**JOEL:** “Today ACCESS has Advisors in 30 high schools, 26 middle schools and on 13 college campuses. What do you think Frank and Josh would think?”

**ANNE:** “They would be thrilled at what happened and where it is. Whenever I go to something for ACCESS, I’m amazed at the new people who are there. To me it’s an easy thing to support. I think when we sat around in 1989 and dreamed about what ACCESS could do, this is what it would be. Bonnie has been our superstar.”

**BONNIE:** “I have loved this program that Frank and Josh founded and have been honored to be part of it. There are incredible donors who have taken this mission to heart, believed in it and funded it. We have incredible staff who are passionate about helping students achieve their fullest potential. Together, all of us have created an amazing force of hope and inspiration for students in our area.”

**DUBBY:** “It’s a permanent fixture in town now. I think people are pretty well committed to it.”

...AND A LOOK FORWARD TO THE FUTURE. 
Celebrating 30 years in 2018!