

## Persistence! WYSP Scholar Demonstrates Impressive Commitment to His Education

When it comes to education, Whitney M. YOUNG Scholar Joseph Falcon doesn't let anything stand in his way. Joseph has always had a passion for academics. So, when he learned about the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program®, he immediately decided to join.

"Ms. Karen Edwards Hunter from Lincoln Foundation came to speak to us about the program because we stood out academically," Joseph recalls. His class was part of the inaugural group of students attending the Academy @ Shawnee when it added a middle school program in 2013. "I remember telling my parents I wanted to become a Scholar," he says.

Joseph loved the Saturday morning educational sessions. He especially enjoyed the clinics that took place at the Kentucky Science Center. Transportation became an issue when his parents separated during his 8th-grade year, and his mother had no car. Undeterred, Joseph found a way to continue participating, by catching a TARC bus to ensure he didn't miss out. "I always tried my best to attend as many Educational Clinics as possible. It was fun to be involved and engaged in education outside of school. "I knew it was beneficial to me," he says.

As his family struggled financially, Joseph took on a part-time job to help out. He took on a second part-time job when his mother lost her position.

*(Continued on page 2)*



*Joseph Falcon studied abroad in Malaysia.*

## Scholars' Hard Work Pays Off In WYSP's First Debate Contest

Language Arts and Oration have always been a part of the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program® curricula. This year, 10th-grade Scholars were asked to elevate their skills by participating in the program's first-ever debate contest.

"We are thrilled with the results of this inaugural debate contest," said Venita Benboe, Director of Educational Programs. "It helped our Scholars gain valuable skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, and teamwork. It will also benefit them in their future academic and professional pursuits."

Scholars selected two topics to debate. The first, whether students should or should not take standardized tests and the second focused on whether there is a gender-related achievement gap with high school students. Scholars worked tirelessly to prepare for the event, spending countless hours visiting the Lincoln Foundation office to work on their speeches. Despite their fears of public

speaking, all four delivered powerful and persuasive arguments to defend their respective positions.

The event was judged by a panel of experts, including Dr. Patricia Carver from Bellarmine University, Dr. Nat Irvin, II from the University of Louisville, and Ms. Annie Murphy from Centre College. They evaluated the participants based on their understanding of the facts, their argumentative skills, their use of evidence, and their overall presentation.

Tatiana Hamilton and Yewande Olusesan-Adu were selected as the winners, and each received a cash prize. However, all students were commended for their hard work and were presented with special certificates of achievement. The debate was one of the activities that demonstrated learning during the final clinic of the academic year. The Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program® plans to host this event again in future years.



*Debate winner Tatiana Hamilton*



*Debate winner Yewande Olusesan-Adu*

# New “Zoom Room” Opens New Line of Communications with Scholar Community

The college-readiness focus of the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program® naturally leads to Scholars attending colleges and universities across the United States. With the advent of the new College Transition Enrichment Program, finding ways to stay connected with Scholars who opt to attend universities outside the state of Kentucky proved to be a challenge. That is, until now.

Earlier this year, Lincoln Foundation installed new video conference room technology (i.e., Zoom Room) in the Dr. Samuel Robinson Community Room. The equipment is now being used for hybrid gatherings of Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars. With this new technology, we are now able to connect Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars from all over the U.S., regardless of their location.

Since the installation, the Zoom Room has sparked new ideas on different types of meetings to bring our Scholar community together. College Scholars now want to have check-in sessions once a month beyond the tutoring, mentoring, and guidance sessions already planned. One Scholar summed it up by saying, “This will help us stay connected when we need guidance and support.”

The Zoom Room was made possible thanks to the generous financial support from First Savings Charitable Foundation, The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, and Old National Bank Foundation.



The new “Zoom Room”.

## Persistence! (Continued from page 1)

“I remember thinking it would be difficult to attend on a Saturday. But I knew attending the educational clinics was beneficial to me, so I told my employers about this important program I needed to attend on Saturday mornings.” Joseph was pleasantly surprised that both employers agreed to work around his schedule.



Joseph Falcon

Joseph took full advantage of the opportunities the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program® provided. In addition to attending as many educational sessions as possible, he served as a Scholar Ambassador and participated in various summer programs. “The Summer Institute at Centre College was especially beneficial because I could see myself there,” Joseph recalls.

With Centre as his college of choice, Joseph applied and was accepted. His natural leadership skills, including serving as president of Shawnee’s National Honor Society chapter, helped him receive Centre’s New Horizons Scholarship, an award for first-generation students.

Life wasn’t easy when Joseph first arrived at Centre, partly due to Covid restrictions and partly because it was Joseph’s first time being on his own. “I remember asking myself, what did I get myself into?” Joseph says.

Despite his concerns, Joseph refused to give up. With support from his friends and family, Joseph sought help from counselors, professors, and tutors. He worked tirelessly to keep his grades on track. He also joined study groups and used the communication and presentation skills he acquired in the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program®. “Many students are afraid to speak in class. But I knew how to present my ideas due to what I learned as a Scholar, so I stood out,” he says.

Recently, Joseph participated in study abroad programs in Japan and Malaysia. “The study abroad experience was life-changing. I realized many things about myself. I gained emotional maturity, and I appreciate life more.” Joseph also received the good news that he has been selected to participate in a collaborative research project in Peru this summer. This learning experience will allow Joseph to participate in an archeological dig.

Joseph is on track to earn a bachelor’s degree in anthropology with a minor in linguistics in May 2024. He dreams of becoming a Fulbright Scholar, then ultimately an educator or language teacher. He credits the Whitney M. Young Scholars Program® for providing him with the support and encouragement to achieve his goals.

“I am extremely grateful to the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program® and all who support this program. Thanks to this initial investment of support, I’ve been able to take advantage of every opportunity before me.” **Joseph would like to dedicate this article in memory of Ms. Karen Edwards Hunter, who passed away on November 22, 2020. Ms. Hunter was a beloved educator and Education Programs Coordinator for Lincoln Foundation.**

**“I am extremely grateful to the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program® and all who support this program.”**

— Joseph Falcon

# Meet Some of the Exceptional Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Earning Top College Scholarships



Mamadou "Alpha" Diop

Lincoln Foundation is extremely proud of the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Class of 2023/Phase 28 for their academic achievements. As of this writing, Scholars have collectively earned over \$11 million in college scholarships.

These three Scholars are noteworthy for their impressive accomplishments.

Mamadou "Alpha" Diop, a senior at Fern Creek High School, has received over \$1.3 million in college scholarships. He was accepted to all 29 colleges to which he applied, including a mix of public, private, and HBCU institutions.

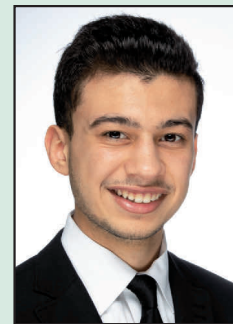
Alpha has been in the program since the 7th grade. He says he was motivated to attend the educational sessions held on Saturday mornings. He appreciates the staff for instilling in him a set of values and expectations that helped him achieve success.

Currently, Alpha is involved in his school's Ivy Plus Academy. He plans to

attend Berea College in the fall, where he will pursue a degree in sports management.

Whitney M. YOUNG Scholar Hussein Almosawi has been selected to receive the prestigious Coca-Cola Scholarship. The Coca-Cola Scholarship is a highly competitive award that recognizes students who demonstrate leadership, service, and a commitment to making an impact in their schools and community.

Hussein, who attends Butler High School, was among the 91,000 students who applied for the Coca-Cola Scholarship nationally. Only 150 were selected from the 2023 class.



Hussein Almosawi

Hussein recently traveled to Atlanta to participate in the Coca-Cola Scholars Weekend and accept his award in person. He will receive \$20,000 (\$5,000 a year for four years) to attend an accredited college or university of his choice. Hussein plans to attend the

University of Louisville in the fall and double major in computer science and engineering.



Martha Chang

Finally, special commendations to Martha Chang for being among the finalists to be considered for the Gates Scholarship. The Gates Scholarship, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is one of the most competitive scholarships available. Less than one percent of applicants are selected to receive the award. The award is given to outstanding, needs-based, minority students who demonstrate high potential to excel in college.

While Martha was not selected to receive the Gates Scholarship, she has earned an impressive number of other scholarships totaling more than \$344,000. She plans to attend Northwestern University, where she will pursue degrees in economics and law.



## Kudos

Lincoln Foundation would like to thank Baird and Kosair for Kids for being presenting sponsors of the annual Senior Banquet honoring the Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars Program® Class of 2023. The event will be held on Saturday, May 20, 2023, and will recognize fifty Whitney M. YOUNG Scholars for six years of academic achievement. This year, over \$100,000 in scholarships will be awarded. Lincoln Foundation would also like to recognize DMLO and Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs, LLP for being Magna Cum Laude Sponsors of this year's event. We thank you!



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# Coming Full Circle: WYSP Alum / Entrepreneur Gives Back

Lincoln Foundation is among the nonprofits across Kentucky participating in Kentucky Gives Day on May 9, 2023, a 24-hour online giving day hosted by the Kentucky Nonprofit Network. Whitney M. YOUNG Scholar Alum Carl Williams is helping position Lincoln Foundation for fundraising success. Carl, a member of the Class of 1997/Phase 2, is the President and CEO of 20/Twenty Strategic Consultants. He is one of several Whitney M. YOUNG Scholar alumni serving as fundraising champions to raise funds to benefit current and future Scholars.



Carl Williams

Carl is a graduate of duPont Manual High School. He attended Murray State University, where he earned an M.A. in Teaching in 2001. He earned his Rank 1 from Bellarmine University and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development from the University of Louisville.

Professionally, Carl has served in a variety of roles including high school teacher, school administrator, and Human Resources

professional in Jefferson County Public Schools and an adjunct professor at Bellarmine. He helped to launch Bellarmine's first Ph.D. program in social change. Later, Carl left education to lead an educational software start-up company funded by a private equity firm. He eventually sold the company, and then started 20/Twenty Strategic Consultants in January 2020, just as the global pandemic hit. "I realized there were a vast number of organizations hyper-focused on survival," Carl says. "We helped move them from a mentality of scarcity and helped them transition to a position of abundance, using best practices, leadership, and guidance." Carl initially thought the company would handle three to four clients

each year. He is pleasantly surprised the company has grown to serve 130 clients annually.

Carl says much of what he learned as a Whitney M. YOUNG Scholar continues to guide him today. He is proud to now give back to the organization that provided him with so much support.

## Whitney M. Young Scholars Program® (WYSP)



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