



# Appalachian Scholar Project

Using Scholarship to Promote Academic Excellence in West Virginia

## Education Access

West Virginia has some of the brightest students in the country. But, due to underfunding, the death of the coal industry, and systemic lack of understanding of higher education system, our students do not have choices for under graduate education.

West Virginia is in abject poverty. A drive through our communities looks like bombed out villages in Kosovo from the 90s. We have the 2nd lowest median household income in the nation. We rank on the lower end of the spectrum in nearly every metric the census measures a state. But, in every community, there are exceptions to the rule. We intend to find those exceptions and harness their potential for the future.

West Virginia's population is the least educated in the country. Currently, we stand at 18.5% of the population with bachelor's degree. Our Number one University, West Virginia University has a 33% 4-year graduation rate.

According to a Marshall University study, students in West Virginia are the least likely to study out of state. This creates a circular system of intellectual growth. Our solution to this problem will breath new life into education, industry, private and government sectors.

## West Virginia

We will be working in Charleston West Virginia in close partnership with the local community. This is a close-knit, diverse, low-income community. Average median wages are the 2nd lowest in the country. Football is king, Education plays a minimal role in life throughout the state. Guidance counselors are overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. Much of what the counselors provide is simply minor assistance with the completion of a common app profile and WVU pamphlets. At a nearly 90% acceptance rate, it is not difficult to gain admissions, however, it is far harder to earn a degree from this institution.

Currently, in West Virginia, upward bound is tackling student success in high school, but post high school there is if any little support. There is not a single organization doing this type of college access work in West Virginia, We will be trail blazers in the regard. The programs that do exist focus on students studying inside WV, our program focuses on studying outside of West Virginia. We propose that West Virginia's most talented students deserve to be at our nations top universities, such as Harvard, Stanford, Or Williams college. We also understand that these universities are difficult to earn acceptance to, even for the wealthy and well connected. However, our approach will be multi-faceted and ensure students college targets are well rounded and attainable. We are different in the fact that we will be sending our scholars to universities with very high graduation rates, low student debt, and high returns on employment and graduate school programs.

## Budget

The Beauty of this program is that we only need facilities, Books & Supplies, and food for the students during our 4-week boot camp. Everything else will be provided by the staff either through their own funding sources. Until we can find a cheaper facility, with all the things we need, our greatest expense will be facilities rental. Later cohorts food costs will be the highest. Staff salaries will depend upon either self-funding or patricelli summer experience grants.

## Training, Mentorship, and Followthrough

My approach to this problem will be threefold. The first aspect of our approach will be Training our scholars, The second aspect is through close mentoring beginning with myself and my staff followed by a self-sustaining approach through their peers. Third, once goals have been established, follow through as a parent of multi-generational college student through the maze of college applications.

The cornerstone of our program will be training. We will put our motivated Appalachian Scholars through a 4-week boot camp in Charleston West Virginia. During this time period, Our students will create an actionable college application plan, be exposed to variety of top tier colleges around the country, build confidence in typical freshman level reading and write at elite universities, find out which scholarships that best meet their needs, meet their mentors, and finally walk away with a master essay to apply to the college applications of their choosing along with a completed common app. The next crucial moments will be handled by fellow first generation students here at Wesleyan. The student will meet via skype every month with a mentor and myself to go over milestones in the application to process to ensure completion. Once the student is accepted, we will tap our extensive network of peers, friends, and partners to assist the student with a soft landing on the campus they arrive on. The mentorship process will continue on a monthly basis with myself and the mentors for the following year. After a successful completion of freshman year, they themselves will be the mentors for the next cohort of scholars.

## Metrics

Metric 1: Acceptance into a dream school

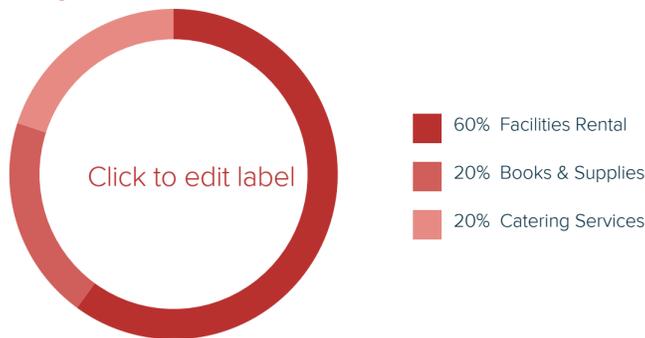
Metric 2: Complete freshman year, return to our program to assist in administering our program

Metric 3: Complete 4-year undergraduate education program

These are our basic metrics for success. However, we envision our scholars to go on and live and thrive in places like Boston, NYC, San Francisco and be on the cutting edge of their chosen fields. At some point, we'd like to see those scholars return to West Virginia and assist in rebuilding our state.

Succes for our program will be to see our student accepted to the best possible university we can match them with and complete their four-year education. Short term, we plan to bring as many students back for the second cohort to talk about best practices at their universities.

### Budget Breakdown



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## The Timeline

Exactly what are you planning to do and when? List your to-do items, deliverables, or major milestones.

**Date**  
Bootcamp starts: June 10th

**Date**  
Bootcamp ends: June 30th

**Date**  
once a month check, or more as needed by scholar

## Team Members

Name: Dennis White

Email: dlwhite@wesleyan.edu

Major: College of Social Studies/Latin American History

Class: 201

Born and raised in West Virigina, Dennis Joined the Army at the age of 22. After 10 years of military service, much of that time spent in leadership roles, I began to work towards an undergraduate degree throught he Posse scholar program. During that time, I've spent countless hours advising fellow veterans on elite college application process. I plan to implement that knowledge and leadership in the civilian sector to improve my homestate.

Name: Professor Cecilia Miller

Email: cmiller@wesleyan.edu

Co-Chair of the College of Social Studies

Professor Miller is an intellectual historian. She will provide direct feedback on curriculum building and the college application process.