Cohort 15 College Admissions

Congratulations to the LEDA Scholars of Cohort 15 for their outstanding college admissions results!

92% of the Cohort was admitted to at least one Barron’s “Most Competitive” institution, including 71% who were admitted to at least one Ivy League school, MIT, or Stanford. Cohort 15 Scholars received the news amid a challenging time, just after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although they had been looking forward to spending the month of April visiting college campuses as part of their decision process, Scholars instead found creative ways to get a feel for campus life, including virtual tours, video conferences with admissions representatives, and connecting with older Scholars and other students who attend the colleges they were considering.

A full list of outstanding colleges where our Cohort 15 Scholars were admitted can be found at ledascholars.org/collegeadmissions.

LEDA’s College Guidance team, already experts in remote advising, continued to work with every Cohort 15 Scholar in both exploring the exciting options available and evaluating pragmatic but impactful factors, such as financial aid, distance from home, and overall fit. It was the final stage of LEDA’s nearly year-long, highly personalized college guidance process, which begins at the Aspects of Leadership Summer Institute prior to senior year and includes consistent one-on-one meetings, college campus visits, access to a wide breadth of informational resources, and a supportive community of peers. LEDA’s comprehensive approach to college guidance includes support for securing financial aid and external scholarships, and Cohort 15 Scholars ultimately received significant institutional and external awards. Some of the most notable scholarships awarded include: the Gates Foundation (11 Scholars), Horatio Alger Association (8), Jack Kent Cooke Foundation (4), Lockheed Martin (3), Coca Cola (2), Dell (3), Generation Google (2), Ron Brown (2), and Morehead-Cain (1) Scholarships.

We are brimming with excitement to see them begin their college careers in the upcoming fall semester, entering a new phase in their journeys to develop into our future leaders.
Adapting to the “New Normal”
LEDA has modified the ways in which we support our community and developed new pathways to continue providing important services.

LEDA COVID-19 Emergency Fund
In March, LEDA established the LEDA COVID-19 Emergency Fund to support students in high school, college, and graduate school during this unprecedented global health crisis. The pandemic has hit our nation’s underresourced populations particularly hard, and our students need support to secure access to key resources – food, technology for online learning, stable housing, access to medical care, safe places to study and engage in self-care, and resources for basic necessities. Many of our students left their campuses on short notice, often facing immediate challenges in paying for transportation and storage. We continued to stay in touch with hundreds of our students when they arrived back home as they adjusted to the unique challenges posed by social distancing, virtual classrooms, and uncertain employment. To support the Emergency Fund, please visit ledascholars.org/emergencyfund.

Virtual Summer Institute and Career Institute
During our 16-year history, the national scope of our program model has allowed us to develop significant expertise in remote advising and support. This background has been a key factor in ensuring that our college guidance, college success, and recruitment and admissions processes maintained the consistency and caliber associated with LEDA’s program. LEDA is also drawing upon this expertise to pivot all summer programming during 2020 from in-person to virtual, namely, our Aspects of Leadership Summer Institute and our Career Institute.

The online Summer Institute is providing rising high school seniors with the transformative experience of the Summer Institute, including our signature Aspects of Leadership course, intensive writing instruction, standardized test preparation, individualized college advising, and plentiful opportunities for community-building. In addition, we are harnessing some of the inherent characteristics of online learning, such as recorded class sessions and flexible schedules, to ensure that Scholars who face additional responsibilities or limited online access at home can fully participate in the Summer Institute experience.

In August, the LEDA Career Institute will welcome a new class of LEDA Career Fellows to a virtual Career Institute. We are excited to collaborate with our employer partners on this virtual experience as we provide rising college sophomores with interactive professional development webinars and individualized career advising.

Our focus on building a robust community remains at the forefront of these virtual models, and we are committed to delivering innovative programming that successfully empowers our community of exceptional young leaders and grows our community. As we continue to navigate this new normal, we are incredibly proud of and grateful for the strength of our LEDA Family – our Scholars, Career Fellows, alumni, partners, staff, and Board – who have come together during this pandemic to support one another.
Community Updates

Catch up on some of the exciting things that have been happening in our community.

In the Press: the LEDA Policy Corps

Links to all written pieces featuring Corps members are available on the Policy Project webpage: ledascholars.org/policyproject.

- **Watch** “Student Reflections: Belonging in Higher Ed,” featuring Heidy, Jessica, and Will, and moderated by Eric Waldo, Executive Director of Reach Higher, at [youtu.be/siY_DFJ9v9s](https://youtu.be/siY_DFJ9v9s) on LEDA’s YouTube channel.

- **Watch** Martin and Mysia at CCA’s Annual Convening at [youtu.be/ObArgk_8AaU](https://youtu.be/ObArgk_8AaU) on CCA's YouTube channel. **Read** op-eds by Martin and Mysia as well.

- **Read** a Q&A featuring Abel and Carolina and LEDA staff Amber Briggs and Nada Abdelaziz on how higher education institutions can help students overcome hidden barriers to college success.

- **Read** an op-ed for NCAN by Willian and a Q&A for College Board by additional Corps members on how and why the higher education field should support DACA-status and undocumented students.

- **Read** an op-ed for HLA by Getzamany and an interview in the *Hechinger Report* and the *Washington Post* with Luis on how the higher education field can support under-resourced students during the pandemic.

LEDA Cohort 16

The 2020 Aspects of Leadership Summer Institute (#LEDAsummer) began on June 20, and we were thrilled to (digitally) welcome the newest members of the LEDA Community: Cohort 16!

Our first online Summer Institute has been going smoothly, and Cohort 16 has already begun to have an impact on the LEDA family through its participation in community events and networking with older LEDA Scholars. We are looking forward to making some great memories this summer!

To learn more about Scholars such as Hlawn from Wisconsin, Erick from California, Jacoby from Washington, Sahmaya from South Carolina, and many other members of Cohort 16, visit their Instagram account, @ledacohort16.
Executive Director Lamont Gordon

Dr. Lamont Gordon joined the LEDA family as the new Executive Director on June 1, 2020. Lamont has already begun to engage deeply with the LEDA community. In his first week, he participated in a Community Circle that was offered to LEDA students and alumni as a space to share experiences and process the current discussions on racial justice. Later in June, Lamont provided the official LEDA welcome for Cohort 16 during the Summer Institute kickoff and served as the first guest of the Institute’s Leadership Chats, starting a conversation with our newest Scholars about his career and leadership experience. He has also begun meeting with key LEDA stakeholders and members of LEDA’s Board of Directors, Leadership Council, and Corporate Advisory Council.

A first-generation college graduate, Lamont has over 20 years of youth development and nonprofit leadership experience. He has dedicated his career to creating pathways to higher education and career opportunities for students from underserved communities. Lamont received a bachelor’s degree in urban studies from Brown and master’s and doctoral degrees from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

At a time when students and educational institutions across the nation face unprecedented challenges, we are delighted to welcome a leader who will not only continue to put our Scholars and Fellows first, but who also has a track record of thoughtful and nimble leadership. We are excited to partner with Lamont to drive LEDA to new heights of excellence.