One Million Degrees (OMD) accelerates the progress of community college students on career pathways to economic opportunity. We provide recent high school graduates and returning adult students with tools, guidance, and resources that are vital to college persistence and long-term success in the workforce.

While more than 40% of Illinois public college students attend community college, only one in three of these students will earn a degree. The mission of community colleges is to develop local talent, support local employers, and help build a more just and equitable community, but students often need more support than colleges can provide.

This is where OMD steps in to connect the dots. By partnering with community colleges and investing in their students, our purposeful support system can transform lives.

OMD OFFERS

- Opportunities to learn, practice, and apply workplace skills
- Relationship-based support from staff that’s customized and proactive
- Performance-based financial support driven by clear, frequent feedback
- Intentional community-building with volunteer coaches and peer groups

SCHOLARS & APPRENTICES

FROM UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

ARE STUDENTS OF COLOR
85% Black or Latinx

CHICAGO-AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

850
90%
95%
10

85% Black or Latinx
90%
95%
10

FROM UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

ARE STUDENTS OF COLOR

CHICAGO-AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Hosted by One Million Degrees | November 19, 2020

A conversation on the importance of investing in community college students.
We are pleased to welcome you to OMD’s fall networking event to learn more about the economic impact of investing in community colleges and to interact with OMD Scholars and Alumni. Community college students have the potential to be successful employees, but there’s more – they are also talented, dynamic, ambitious individuals who are striving to build economic prosperity for themselves and their families. We encourage you to connect with our scholars, share your experiences, and continue the conversation in your spaces of influence. We hope you will be inspired to learn about how you can more deeply engage with OMD.

**WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO ENGAGE WITH SCHOLARS**

**BRIEF BACKGROUND ON OMD SCHOLARS**

The majority of OMD Scholars are from under-resourced communities and are Black or Brown, and a significant number are first in their families to attend college. In their daily lives, many scholars are impacted by systemic and institutional barriers such as racism, sexism, classism, housing and food insecurity, and health disparities.

About 75% of scholars are recent high school graduates, many are in their 20’s and 30’s and are in school while supporting their families, and others are adults who are returning to college after 20+ years. Some scholars have been in the workforce for years and have experienced several job interviews, while others have never worked a full-time job before. OMD Scholars represent a varied spectrum of cultural backgrounds and lived experiences, and we want to encourage them to feel comfortable presenting themselves authentically and sharing their perspectives during this event.

**DEFINING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY**

Each of these terms is critical to the work and mission of OMD. Please take a moment to review each one, as we believe it is important for all of us to continue to strengthen our empathy and understanding.

- **Diversity:** recognizing and embracing a variety of abilities, experiences, social identities, and cultural backgrounds. A simple way that people frame this is “being invited to the party.”
- **Equity:** rendering justice by deeply considering structural factors that benefit some social groups and harm others. For decades, there has been focus on equality —treating everyone the same— but equity incorporates context.
- **Inclusion:** valuing diversity by intentionally creating a welcoming space for individuals, particularly those who have been historically oppressed or underserved, to transform the status quo.
- **Accessibility:** enabling access to everyone along the continuum of human ability, despite a person’s connectivity to resources.

**CREATING AN INCLUSIVE SPEED NETWORKING ENVIRONMENT**

1. **Think beyond the resume** – value and build upon scholars’ lived experiences
2. **Be open and honest** – sharing both your good and bad experiences helps to build genuine connection
3. **Remember that learning is a two-way street** – volunteering provides an opportunity for mutual learning between you and our scholars
4. **Remain open to all possibilities** – please do not make any assumptions, positive or negative, about a scholar’s experiences; ask meaningful questions to create substantive dialogue
A NOTE ABOUT SOCIAL IDENTITY GROUPS

Social identity groups are based on the physical, social, and mental characteristics of individuals. A person may identify their race as Black, White, or Latinx (as examples). A person may identify their gender as woman or non-binary (as examples). Typically, when we think about how to value all people and make everyone feel included, we are considering the use of words and practices through the lens of social identities.

These social groups – whether ones we perceive as more visible (such as race) or less visible (such as ability or class) – influence how we present ourselves in the world, how others perceive us, and how we engage with each other. It is important to remember that these identities are not always visible. These identities can shift, and they can make us feel pride or isolation.

As you engage with our scholars, please be aware of the identities you carry along with the power and privilege that may be afforded by those identities. It is very important to be open to the diverse identities you may encounter as you build relationships in the OMD community.

HOW TO ENGAGE DIVERSE SOCIAL IDENTITY GROUPS RESPECTFULLY

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE – use neutral identifiers that do not assume gender, race, sexuality, ability, etc.

AVOID STEREOTYPES AND CONDESCENSION – use updated terms such as “under-resourced” rather than “low-income”

AVOID COMMON PHRASES, IDIOMS, AND QUESTIONS THAT REINFORCE THE IDEA THAT SOME IDENTITIES ARE “NORMAL” OR SUGGEST BELONGING – example: “Where are you from originally?”

SAMPLE DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Tell me more about what you’re studying and why you chose this area?
What do you consider your greatest strengths or assets?
What have you learned during your OMD experience and how might this translate to your work experiences?
What work experience do you already have? What have you learned from those experiences?
What leadership roles have you taken on – at school? In your community? In your family? At work?

AFTER THE EVENT

Thank you for taking the time to engage with the OMD community! We hope you enjoyed the time you spent with us. We would love to continue to build our relationship with you.

FOLLOW UP WITH SCHOLARS OR ALUMNI YOU MET

If you are interested in staying connected with a scholar or recent graduate, please feel free to share your preferred contact information in the breakout room, EMAIL US, and we will make the follow-up connection, or connect directly on LINKEDIN.

SUPPORT OMD AND THE SCHOLARS WE SERVE

Make a personal DONATION or a company sponsorship for our May 2021 virtual gala

MORE INFO

LEARN MORE ABOUT INVESTING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

READ Dr. Austan Goolsbee’s co-authored report.

CONNECT WITH OMD

and sign up to receive our monthly newsletter

SIGN UP