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One Million Degrees Receives Historic $7 Million Grant from MacKenzie Scott
Transformative Gift Recognizes Proven Community College Student Support Model, Enables Significant Growth

CHICAGO, Dec. 6, 2022 - One Million Degrees (OMD), a national leader in increasing community college enrollment and persistence among under-represented students with wraparound supports, has received an historic $7 million grant from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. This gift is the largest donation in OMD’s history, and will allow the organization to dramatically increase their reach and impact by supporting a new partnership with the City Colleges of Chicago, expanding career readiness programming for students and serving as seed capital to launch a national expansion initiative.

“We are enormously grateful for Ms. Scott’s gift,” said OMD CEO Aneesh Sohoni. “It is not only a huge win for our students; it also is an essential validation of our impact on their lives. Ms. Scott’s generous gift affirms our longstanding belief that community college students are capable of extraordinary achievements when surrounded by essential support. We very much hope it inspires others to support our work.”

The timing of the grant is especially opportune. On Nov. 15, OMD announced a significant expansion of its long-time partnership with City Colleges of Chicago to provide thousands of students with coaching, mentoring, financial and professional development support. Under the public/private partnership, a majority of first-year degree-seeking students will be accepted into the OMD program. The program will launch at Olive-Harvey College this year, and expand to additional colleges, reaching 3,000 students annually by year four. The partnership has the potential to achieve unprecedented and equitable outcomes for students, underscoring City Colleges’ commitment to closing the racial opportunity gap by one-third by 2026 and reaching a 55% universal completion rate by 2032.

OMD will be investing $1M of the Scott gift directly into this transformational partnership with City Colleges. OMD will use funds to enhance the program and ensure that Scholars understand how their community college journey fits into their long-term goals, are prepared with the capabilities needed to thrive in their careers, and are exposed to career opportunities as they pursue their education.

The partnership builds on the existing relationship between City Colleges and the research-proven model of OMD, which significantly boosts community college graduation rates and prepares students for
upwardly mobile careers. One Million Degrees is the only organization in Illinois and one of few in the country dedicated to providing comprehensive supports to low-income, highly motivated community college students to help them succeed in school, in work, and in life.

Research from the University of Chicago’s Inclusive Economy Lab finds that students who applied to the One Million Degrees program before enrolling were 70% more likely to enroll in college, 94% more likely to remain enrolled, and 73% more likely to earn a degree within three years and move directly into the workforce or pursue a four-year degree.

The Scott gift also will be invested in building a national initiative of OMD’s work to provide thought leadership and capacity building to organizations serving community college students across the country, as well as strengthening the career readiness and employer exposure components of OMD’s program. In addition, the gift provides flexibility to OMD to sustain its operations and be responsive to emergent and long-term needs in order to thrive.

“This gift will give One Million Degrees the opportunity to strengthen and scale up operations, allowing more students to join our community, equipping scholars with the skills to succeed in school, work, and life,” said Sohoni.

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**About One Million Degrees**

One Million Degrees accelerates community college students’ progress on career pathways to economic mobility by providing wrap-around supports to highly motivated community college students to help them succeed in school, in work, and in life. From tutors and coaches to financial assistance and professional development, OMD offers the support that empowers scholars to transform their lives and those around them for generations. OMD currently serves nearly 900 community college scholars from under-resourced neighborhoods at 10 Chicago-area community colleges, including all seven City Colleges of Chicago. OMD partners with employers across industries to build on-ramps to in-demand jobs through new apprenticeship and credentialing programs.