



COLLEGE PREP PROGRAM

FY 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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“Take those opportunities and run with them.”

Yareli Martinez College Prep Program Scholar and program alumna. Yareli is enrolled in WashU’s Class of 2029 on a full scholarship.



Dear CPP Community,

Over the past decade, the College Prep Program (CPP) has served more than 550 students across the St. Louis region. And—like Yareli—each student’s story reminds us of what’s possible when scholars receive consistent support and access to opportunities that may not otherwise exist.

This year’s annual report not only celebrates our scholars’ achievements, but it illustrates the ways CPP has grown. We embarked on a truly collaborative process to create a clear mission and vision and define our core values—**Community, Learning, and Opportunity**. Our mission, vision, and values support how we approach programming, from Summer Academy to Academic Year Programming. They also made it possible to restructure our Pre-College Year Mentor Model, which now connects third-year scholars with members of WashU’s Admissions & Aid and College Prep Program teams. By building relationships and sharing their expertise, our professional staff members provide support and guidance through all aspects of the college search process.

We have spent the past year listening closely to scholar feedback, reengaging our alumni, developing our student staff to better support our scholars, and raising CPP’s visibility across our campus and throughout the St. Louis community.

As a result, the transformation I see in our scholars is inspiring. They forged confidence through consistent mentoring and support, developed new curiosities in neuroscience, gained new knowledge during visits to local and regional universities, and built resiliency, all while being cheered on by an entire community. Our scholars are visionaries, leaders, and game changers with gifts that will impact St. Louis—and the world.

As we continue this work, we are excited about what’s ahead. Together, we remain committed to closing opportunity gaps and empowering our scholars to access and succeed in higher education.

With gratitude,

Tashanna R. Staniel
Director, College Prep Program

Our Mission

Our mission is to close opportunity gaps for our scholars and empower them to access and succeed in higher education. Through mentorship, personal and leadership development, and exposure to opportunities, scholars have the foundation to reach their full potential.

Our Vision

Our vision is a future where prospective first-generation college students from limited-income families in the St. Louis region—regardless of their community, background, or lived experiences—have the support, community, confidence, and resources they need to pursue higher education and thrive.

Our Values

Community

We foster a network of support and collaboration and uphold the highest standards for respect, responsibility, and active engagement. We work to build a positive, diverse, and welcoming environment where lasting relationships help everyone succeed and feel connected.

Learning

We offer a learning environment with a blend of academic and enrichment sessions, including WashU credit-bearing courses. We provide our scholars opportunities to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, team building, and other essential life skills to help them excel in the classroom and beyond.

Opportunity

We are committed to the growth and success of our scholars. We provide them with tools, resources, and enrichment experiences that help them excel socially, academically, and personally.







Program Model

Overview

CPP is a four-year commitment that begins the summer after a student's first year of high school and continues through their first year of college. Three Summer Academy experiences on WashU's campus anchor the program (in their third year, scholars have the opportunity to earn WashU credit), and an array of weekend programs occur throughout the school year. Programming includes academic sessions focused on coding, scholarship and financial aid workshops, ACT test prep sessions, college enrichment trips, and tours of local businesses. During their four years in the College Prep Program, students gain significant academic knowledge and experience, form bonds with their fellow scholars, and gain a greater understanding of college life.

Summer Academy

Summer Academy gives scholars an immersive experience to build on what they have learned during the academic year. Scholars take courses such as math and neuroscience, develop their writing skills with the help of WashU's Writing Center, and earn college credit in their third year, an essential milestone in their CPP journey. Equally important, Summer Academy emphasizes community building, with traditions like the newest cohort creating and presenting their *I Am From* poems at the close of the summer. Together, these experiences prepare scholars academically, professionally, and personally while fostering a sense of belonging.

Scholars participate in a range of credit-bearing courses along with academic and enrichment experiences during Summer Academy. Here are some highlights:



Neuroscience

Scholars explore neuroscience through creative problem-solving and hands-on experiments, including a sheep brain dissection to study key structures and functions. Using a fictional “zombie” disease, they investigate how scientists research disorders by using animal models like worms and fruit flies.

I didn't even know that it was a thing at first, but now I want to become a behavioral neuroscientist.

CPP Scholar

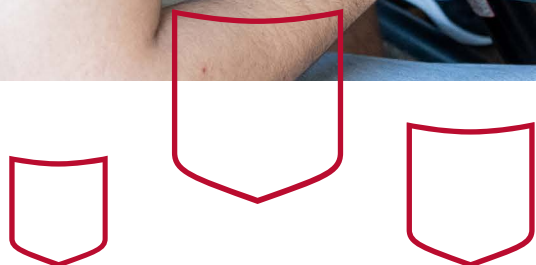


Dialogue Across Differences

DxD is structured to foster communication, collaboration, and other key skills for talking about deeply held value differences. The credit-bearing course strives to prepare students for living and working in an increasingly diverse world. Through regular practice in dialogue circles, students can expect to gain greater skills in facilitating meaningful conversations, characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and collaborative learning. These skills will prepare them for effective communication and leadership in environments beyond the classroom.

This course received the highest ratings among all academic offerings, with the majority of third-year scholars recommending it be continued for future cohorts.





The Art of Storytelling With the WashU Writing Center

Third-year scholars participate in writing sessions hosted by the WashU Writing Center. These sessions focus on developing, drafting, and revising their college and scholarship essays. Over three weeks, they engage in brainstorming, freewriting, and drafting exercises while exploring the Common Application essay prompts and storytelling strategies. Scholars receive personalized feedback from Writing Center tutors, helping them craft essays that reflect their character, goals, and experiences.



Fabulous Fox Theatre and Contemporary Art Museum Enrichment Experience

Scholars participate in a behind-the-scenes look at careers in the arts through visits to the Fabulous Fox Theatre and the Contemporary Art Museum. A panel of local arts professionals share their career journeys, offering insight into the many paths within the creative industry. Scholars also have an opportunity to connect with panelists in small-group settings, gaining inspiration and exposure to artistic careers in St. Louis.

Academic Year Programming

Academic year programming is held throughout the fall and spring semesters, offering scholars a combination of academic and enrichment sessions. These sessions are designed to prepare scholars for success in high school, college, and beyond. Academic sessions focus on business, arts, STEM, and humanities, and they include coding, entrepreneurship, robotics, and design thinking. Enrichment sessions provide scholars with personal and professional development, and they include essential skills for success, financial literacy, and mental health and wellness.



BAE (Balance – Accountability – Emotional Regulation)

Mental Health and Wellness Workshop

This three-part workshop series equips scholars with practical skills to foster resilience and support personal growth. Session one, *Balance*, focuses on managing academic and social responsibilities. Session two, *Accountability*, helps students develop strategies for making choices that align with personal goals and well-being. Session three, *Emotional Regulation*, provides tools to recognize, understand, and respond to emotions productively. By the end of the series, scholars gain actionable strategies to strengthen their mental and emotional resilience and support their academic success.



Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences Session

Scholars receive an introductory overview of Earth, environmental, and planetary sciences, exploring fundamental concepts that explain the dynamic processes shaping our planet. Scholars tour the WashU Department of Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences' state-of-the-art facilities and specialized laboratories. This hands-on experience provides scholars with insight into cutting-edge research and analytical techniques, fostering a deeper understanding of Earth science applications.

“It was interesting to the point it got me to change my major! I thoroughly enjoyed seeing different elements and I took lots of pictures.”

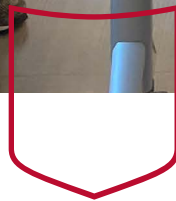
CPP Scholar

ACT Test Preparation

Each spring, second-year scholars begin their ACT preparation with a proctored practice test administered by a certified ACT official. These test scores establish a baseline. During Summer Academy, scholars participate in ACT prep courses led by Kleitz Education Group. This preparation continues into their junior and senior years through ACT refresher sessions, which provides ongoing practice, strategies, and support to strengthen skills and improve performance.

“It’s helped me better focus and have strategy when taking the test and improve my score.

CPP Scholar



Pre-College Year Mentorship Model

In their third year, high school seniors enter the Pre-College Year, where they receive individualized support to prepare for the transition to higher education and beyond. Scholars meet monthly with their assigned CPP Mentor, who serves as a guide, cheerleader, and listening ear—encouraging both personal and academic growth. Support includes coaching on college search, applications, interviews, financial aid, and scholarships, as well as guidance in decision-making, personal development, and building confidence.

Last year, the program piloted an evolution of this model—reframing the role as mentorship and engaging CPP staff and Undergraduate Admissions & Aid colleagues, including Student Financial Services, Marketing & Communications, and the Vice Provost's team. This shift has strengthened the network of encouragement and support available to scholars during this critical stage.



“My experience mentoring Sapphire was more valuable than I imagined! During our meetings, we covered everything from applying to college to Sapphire getting to sing at Carnegie Hall with her school choir. It is good to know that our discussions guided Sapphire’s path to her college career.”

Penny Smith

Marketing & Communications
Coordinator





Our Impact

The WashU College Prep Program currently supports 117 active scholars representing 51 high schools. Among these, the five schools with the highest number of scholars across all three cohorts are:

1. Cahokia High School
2. McKinley Classical Leadership Academy
3. Hazelwood East High School
4. Hancock Place Senior High School
5. Gateway Science Academy

This past spring, we welcomed 50 new scholars into Cohort 12, continuing our mission to close opportunity gaps and empower scholars to access and succeed in higher education.

At the time scholars graduate from CPP, they will have spent 424 hours engaged in activities, workshops, classroom instruction, and hands-on experiences to prepare them for life after high school.

117

Active Scholars

51

High Schools

50

New Scholars in Cohort 12

424

Hours Engaged

Postsecondary Enrollment

The WashU College Prep Program continues to support scholars in their transition to postsecondary education after high school.

Historically, 74% of CPP high school graduates enroll in a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation.

Cohort 8 Class of 2024

Cohort 8 demonstrates the program's lasting impact, with strong postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates following graduation.

Of the 27 scholars in Cohort 8, 24 enrolled in college in fall 2024, representing an 88% college enrollment rate (National Student Clearinghouse data).*

*Three scholars did not have enrollment records in the National Student Clearinghouse.

27

Scholars in Cohort 8

88%

College Enrollment Rate

Cohort 9 Class of 2025

Cohort 9 is the program's most recent graduating class, continuing CPP's tradition of excellence with record-high graduation and college enrollment outcomes.

Of the 37 scholars in Cohort 9 who graduated from the program, all graduated high school, and 97% enrolled in college, based on survey responses from 81% of the graduating class (as of October 6, 2025).

As noted in this article from *The Record*, 10 scholars from Cohort 9 were admitted to WashU in fall 2025, and they received a total of \$820,000 in financial aid from WashU. Most of the CPP scholars attending WashU are eligible for the WashU Pledge Scholarship, which provides a free WashU education to all admitted students from Missouri and southern Illinois with a family annual income of \$75,000 or less. This scholarship includes tuition, housing, food, fees, books, and even money for a

laptop. Other students have received offers from the University of Pennsylvania, Louisiana State University, Saint Louis University, and some 60 state and private universities, community colleges, and historically Black colleges and universities.

97%

enrolled in college, based on survey responses from 81% of the graduating class (as of October 6, 2025).

\$820,000

in financial aid from WashU

Alumni Spotlights

College Prep Program alumni are thriving in college and beyond, sharing their experiences and insights to inspire the next generation of scholars. The following stories highlight how CPP graduates continue to build on their experiences and make an impact in their communities.

I had a great connection with my mentee and enjoyed helping her find her college match.

Ronné Turner Vice Provost for Undergraduate Enrollment and Student Financial Aid



Mason Shaver Cohort 6 Alum

“The most impactful part of the program was seeing that it was possible for me to go to college, that I was as capable as anyone else. The staff instilled confidence in me.”

Mason carried that confidence into his time at WashU, where he was selected as a Pershing Fellow in Non-Profit Leadership, a program that places students in summer internships with St. Louis organizations across sectors such as social services, education, health care, and the arts. He also served as a Gephardt Fellow, where he and his peers helped direct \$50,000 in funding to a local nonprofit through the Philanthropy Lab.



Oladipupo Fadeyi Cohort 9 Alum

Oladipupo is a 2025 graduate of Hazelwood East High School and the WashU College Prep Program. He is currently a first-year student at WashU, majoring in philosophy with a goal to study abroad in the future. His advice to current scholars: “Enjoy every moment, it goes by fast.” Oladipupo is a WashU Taylor Scholar, an on-campus resource creating opportunities for students to connect with mentors, strengthen professional networks, explore purpose-driven internships, develop financial literacy, and build social capital.



Dani Strehle Cohort 9 Alum

Dani is a 2025 graduate of STEAM Academy at McCluer South-Berkeley High School and the WashU College Prep Program. Dani’s advice to current scholars: “Become comfortable with uncertainty. If you remain dedicated to the process, a product will produce itself.” She is a first-year student at the University of Pennsylvania double-majoring in international relations and urban studies. During her pre-college year with CPP, Dani was the mentee of Ronné Turner, vice provost for Undergraduate Enrollment and Student Financial Aid. “I had a great connection with my mentee and enjoyed helping her find her college match,” Turner said. “As a CPP student, she was well prepared for the college admission process and open to exploring her options.”

