



MEDIA RELEASE

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BANK OF AMERICA INVESTS IN TOMORROW'S LEADERS *Significant gift will help expand the District's Early College Academy*

ST. LOUIS, MO. – The Saint Louis Public Schools Foundation today announced a gift of \$100,000 from Bank of America to support the expansion of the successful SLPS Early College Academy. The program, done in partnership with St. Louis Community College, Forest Park, currently engages high school students each year who complete their junior and senior years on campus at STLCC Forest Park. Funding from Bank of America will enable SLPS to expand enrollment and create a mentoring component for these student leaders.

“It is important now more than ever that we identify impactful programs that help area youth accelerate their success – whether that’s providing the requisites for higher education or the skills required to successfully enter the workforce,” said Marilyn Bush, St. Louis Market President for Bank of America. “We’re committed to advancing economic opportunity and our investment in the SLPS Early College Academy helps ensure these students have the resources they need to gain a head start on their future success.”

Started in 2016, the Early College Academy is an innovative effort that offers students the opportunity to take college-level courses and earn college credit while still in high school. Double diplomas are the reward. Students graduate with both their high school diploma and an associate’s degree.

Since its launch, more than 90% of Early College Academy graduates have gone on to pursue four-year college degrees, many getting a jumpstart on their college career. Graduates have matriculated at schools including Xavier University, Princeton University, Truman State University, Maryville University, University of Missouri-St. Louis and Swarthmore College. Last year’s Early College Academy graduates earned more than \$1.1 million in college scholarships.

“The Early College Academy has become a very popular program in the District,” said Dr. Kelvin R. Adams, SLPS Superintendent of Schools. “Students are highly motivated, and definitely the leaders of tomorrow. We are very happy to be able to offer this amazing opportunity to more students.”

For students, it is an opportunity to chart new paths.

“I wanted to do something that no one in my family has ever done, something challenging, and something that would give me worth,” said Noreen Dela Pena who now attends University of Missouri-St. Louis.

“I had mentors and people who stuck by my side through thick and thin to make sure that I had what I needed to go to the next level,” said Soldan High School Class of 2020 valedictorian Allayah Qualls, who credits the Early College Academy for helping her earn the Maryville University Presidential Scholarship.

The Early College Academy is a key part of SLPS’ overall college and career preparation efforts.

Since 2007, SLPS’s high school graduation rate has risen from 54.2% to 81.9% in 2020. “We know our students need to be prepared for the next step, and we offer a whole range of programs—from opportunities to earn career certifications, to dual credit, to dual degrees, so they are prepared to thrive in the workforce,” explained Dr. Beth Bender, Associate Superintendent of College and Career Readiness.

About Bank of America

At Bank of America, we’re guided by a common purpose to help make financial lives better, through the power of every connection. We’re delivering on this through responsible growth with a focus on our environmental, social and governance (ESG) leadership. ESG is embedded across our eight lines of business and reflects how we help fuel the global economy, build trust and credibility, and represent a company that people want to work for, invest in and do business with. It’s demonstrated in the inclusive and supportive workplace we create for our employees, the responsible products and services we offer our clients, and the impact we make around the world in helping local economies thrive. An important part of this work is forming strong partnerships with nonprofits and advocacy groups, such as community, consumer and environmental organizations, to bring together our collective networks and expertise to achieve greater impact. Learn more at about.bankofamerica.com, and connect with us on Twitter ([@BofA_News](https://twitter.com/BofA_News)).

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About the St. Louis Public Schools Foundation

Since 1997, the St. Louis Public Schools Foundation has existed to mobilize the community’s generosity and to support the amazing educators and students within the Saint Louis Public Schools. The St. Louis Public Schools Foundation is the District’s strategy partner with the unique mission of dedicating 100% of its funds and efforts to District strategy. The Foundation works closely with the Saint Louis Public Schools Superintendent, District leadership, and schools to ensure that the community’s resources support District priorities. www.slpsfoundation.org

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