The HEAR Scholarship Foundation’s mission is to provide financial and mentoring support to Chicagoland high school graduates of need who have demonstrated academic excellence, commitment to community, and highest moral character in pursuing their dream of a college education.

Dear HEAR Foundation Friends and Supporters,

I am pleased to report that HEAR continues to make great strides in 2019. We are extremely grateful for the support we continue to receive from our Board of Directors, volunteers, and you, our donors. You make our program possible as we continue to work to realize our vision of making college a realistic goal for every high-achieving student of need in the Chicagoland area. For that we are very grateful.

HEAR Program Highlights this year include:

• Raising in excess of $250,000 at our annual Holiday Fundraising Party held last December. This was our most successful to date.
• Awarding 30 scholarships at our annual Scholarship Award Ceremony in May, our largest class of HEAR Scholars to date.
• Surpassing our goal of awarding 100 HEAR scholarships by 2019. In May we awarded our 111th HEAR Scholarship to Chicagoland’s best and brightest scholars.
• Committing more than $2,000,000 to supporting students in our HEAR Scholarship Program.
• Expanding our HEAR Mentoring Program under the direction of Patti Kelly, Mentoring Chair within the Board of Directors. We now commit to providing a mentor to all new scholars, significantly differentiating HEAR from other scholarship-granting organizations and strengthening bonds with our scholars.
• Enhancing our HEAR Enrichment Committee of volunteers under the direction of Mary Sue Smith. This committee regularly sends packages to our scholars, reminding them that the HEAR Family really does care.
• Expanding our development program through Len Wislow, Development and Marketing Chair within our Board of Directors. With an additional dedicated staff member, we are now seeking broader support from local corporations and foundations. Early returns indicate that this effort will be a significant funding source.

I am excited to see what the second half of 2019 brings for the HEAR Foundation and thank each of you for your continued support of our program.

Chris Eigel
HEAR President
847-830-1393

Left: Jenifer Núñez, a new HEAR Class of 2023 scholar, gets a surprise visit from Dr. Ray Pollina (Scholarship Director), Vera Pollina (Executive Director), and Suzanne Meagher (Mentor). Jenifer graduated from the Latin School of Chicago with a GPA of 3.95. She is a Daniel Murphy and High Jump Chicago Scholar. She was delighted to receive a HEAR Scholarship and will be studying at the University of Pennsylvania in the fall.
Dear friends,

Thank you for another year of support! Our 2019 application cycle is completed and has brought 30 gifted, gritty, promising young men and women into the HEAR Family of Scholars. You can find more information and some of their individual stories in the following pages and on our website. I hope that you'll also have an opportunity to meet our new scholars in person. They are truly inspiring!

Because of you and your support, 2019 is the year of the HEAR Mentor. We are absolutely thrilled to announce that under the leadership of Patti Kelly, our re-structured Mentoring Program is up and running. Every one of our 30 incoming freshmen has been paired with a personal mentor to help them navigate the college journey. We also continue to offer workshops and networking opportunities. If you would like to lend your expertise to one of these events, please contact us at info@hearfoundation.org.

With increasing numbers of local graduates, Chicago-based scholars, and a growing network of friends, we are also working to identify new avenues for volunteering in the Chicago area. The HEAR Board of Directors believes that giving to others should be a daily practice. With these wonderfully capable scholars joining our families, there are no limits to the practical good we could do in our community! If you know of a cause, an organization, or a community effort that could use a large group of volunteers who are not afraid to get their hands dirty, please reach out to us at vera@hearfoundation.org and tell us more!

I hope you enjoy learning more about current, past, and new scholars and their efforts. Our family is thriving - we are so grateful that YOU are a part of it!

With warm regards,

Vera Pollina, Executive Director

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**A Message from our Executive Director**

Donor Report | August 2019

The YEAR of the 100th Scholar

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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The HEAR Foundation has been awarding college scholarships for 10 years. This year we surpassed our goal of awarding 100 Scholarships. Our Awards Ceremony in May was particularly celebratory as we welcomed our 111th HEAR Scholar into the family!

St. Ignatius College Prep once again generously allowed us to use their stunning Foglia Library for our annual awards ceremony. Shermin Kruse (novelist, partner and COO of Kruse Asset Management and partner at law firm Barrack Ferrazzano) generously agreed to be our Keynote Speaker and kept our audience entertained by comparing life to a game of Fortnite. Thanks to our generous donors and supporters, we were able to award 30 scholarships to exemplary high school students in financial need. We also celebrated the perseverance of the HEAR Class of 2019 as 8 more HEAR Scholars successfully graduated from our program this year. We are proud to share that to date we still maintain a 100% graduation success rate.

The Foundation has now committed over $2,200,000 in renewable scholarships. Our scholarship of $20,000 is paid directly to the scholar's college over a four-year period. This fall, the HEAR Foundation will be supporting 84 HEAR Scholars at 59 different colleges throughout the United States and beyond. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign remains a popular college choice among our newest class of HEAR Scholars, where we currently have 10 students enrolled. Other popular choices include Marquette, Northeastern (Boston) and UIC.

STEM subjects continue to dominate among our scholars with 63% choosing a STEM major in college. 13% have chosen to pursue a business major and a further 14% are social studies majors. Our scholars have a combined cumulative GPA of 3.5 (an improvement on 3.45 last year).
HEAR Honor Roll

The HEAR Scholars listed below all made honor roll (GPA at or above 3.7) over the past 12 months. A special mention to graduating scholars Brianna Guzman and Allison Ledwon who had cumulative GPAs of 3.81 and 3.82 respectively upon graduation!

**Fall Term 2018:**

- Shagufta Khatoon - 4.0* (Class of 2022)
- Nicole Maimon - 4.0** (Class of 2022)
- Ellery Therriault - 4.0* (Class of 2022)
- Annie Zhou - 4.0* (Class of 2022)
- Brianna Guzman - 3.98* (Class of 2019)
- Nick Moran - 3.94* (Class of 2021)
- Daisy Trujillo - 3.94 (Class of 2022)
- Taylor Smith - 3.93* (Class of 2022)
- Andres Lagunas - 3.92* (Class of 2021)
- Allison Ledwon - 3.9* (Class of 2019)
- Sam Van Loon - 3.9* (Class of 2019)
- Melanie Zuniga - 3.86* (Class of 2022)
- Eric Brzeski - 3.81 (Class of 2022)
- Nicholas Caputo - 3.8 (Class of 2022)
- Andrea Guzman - 3.8 (Class of 2021)
- Juliana Tamayo - 3.8* (Class of 2019)
- Amanda Bardhoshi - 3.76 (Class of 2021)
- Jerry Lau - 3.76 (Class of 2020)
- Gina Dudek - 3.73* (Class of 2021)

**Spring Term 2019:**

- Gina Dudek - 4.0 (Class of 2021)
- Jillian Gomez - 4.0 (Class of 2020)
- Nicole Maimon - 4.0 (Class of 2022)
- Juliana Tamayo - 4.0 (Class of 2019)
- Sam Van Loon - 4.0 (Class of 2019)
- Taylor Smith - 3.96 (Class of 2022)
- Nick Moran - 3.94 (Class of 2021)
- Pablo Esparza - 3.92 (Class of 2020)
- Andres Lagunas - 3.92 (Class of 2021)
- Ellery Therriault - 3.92 (Class of 2022)
- Annie Zhou - 3.91 (Class of 2022)
- Allison Ledwon - 3.9 (Class of 2019)
- Melanie Zuniga - 3.88 (Class of 2022)
- Shagufta Khatoon - 3.78 (Class of 2022)
- Brianna Guzman - 3.73 (Class of 2019)

*Made honor roll in Fall & Spring Terms
**Scored a 4.0 in both terms

By the fall of 2019 the HEAR Foundation will have helped 111 scholars pursue their dreams of a college education.

The HEAR Foundation awarded 30 scholarships in 2019

Over $2,200,000 in scholarships committed to exemplary young Chicagoland high school seniors in financial need.

Current Average Term GPA - 3.5

Over 83 active scholars by fall 2019

The HEAR Scholarship Foundation maintains a 100% college graduation rate to-date. The national average for low income students graduating is approx. 14%.

(National Center for Education Statistics)
**Our Selection Process**

Our relationships with high school college counselors and support organizations continue to strengthen within the Chicagoland area. This year we received applications from 108 different high schools, an increase of 15%.

The number of eligible applications decreased slightly this year. This was as a direct result of a change in criteria of baseline ACT/SAT scores. Our other eligibility criteria remain unchanged: applicants must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or above, possess excellent character, a demonstrated commitment to service, impeccable work ethic and proven financial need. Additionally, each applicant must submit two essays, a high school transcript, and a letter of recommendation.

Over 575 applications met our initial selection criteria. After further screening, approximately 40% of these were evaluated by a panel of 24 volunteer readers. Each application was reviewed by 5 readers who scored them based on our evaluation rubric.

This year, 55 finalists were invited to attend an in-person interview, an increase of almost 20% from 2018. Our interview panel read all the applications and came to each interview with applicant-specific questions. Our 12 interviewers were incredibly impressed by those interviewed over a period of three intense evenings.

30 successful recipients of a HEAR scholarship were celebrated at our annual Awards Ceremony on May 21st. They are now looking forward to starting a new chapter in their lives. We also recognized the significant achievement that 8 HEAR Graduates made as they successfully graduated from the HEAR Program.

Thank you to HEAR Director, Dan Strzalka, and Nixon Peabody LLP, who once again generously granted us use of their conference rooms during our interview process.

**HEAR Mentoring Program**

We are delighted to announce that Board Director Patti Kelly, in conjunction with a number of other members from the HEAR staff, has completely revamped our HEAR Mentoring Program. The HEAR Scholarship Foundation will now provide every incoming scholar with a personal mentor who has been trained to provide support and advice throughout our scholar’s college journey.

Patti says, “As the Mentoring Chair, I am delighted to be a part of the first formalized HEAR Mentoring Program. I truly believe that most people seek opportunities to live purposely and help others. Mentoring is a way to do both. Through the HEAR mentoring program, mentors work with our college-bound HEAR scholars to guide and support them throughout their college career. Almost one third of first-generation students drop out of college in their freshman year. To date, the HEAR Foundation has achieved a student graduation rate of 100%, two thirds of which represent first-generation students.

The incoming HEAR Class of 2023 is our largest to date, with 30 scholars matched with a fantastic and energetic group of mentors ready to support and guide them. The HEAR team is excited about our new mentoring program and is dedicated to its success and to the success of our mentors who will play a significant role in the lives of our college-bound scholars.”
HEAR Scholarship Enrichment Committee

The HEAR Enrichment Committee continues to add a personal touch to the work of the HEAR Foundation. Mary Sue Smith and numerous volunteers compile and send HEAR care packages to all scholars throughout the college year. Exam season is a particularly stressful time, especially for our younger scholars. Receiving a package in the mail gives them a boost and reminds them that they are supported. In addition, they make sure our HEAR Scholars feel special on their birthday by sending each one a card. The packages and cards reinforce the HEAR Family commitment we make to our scholars. Special thanks to Mary Sue and all the volunteers who take the time to put this together.

HEAR Scholarship Program

Dr. Ray Pollina stepped down as HEAR Scholarship Chair earlier this year. Please join us in thanking him for his commitment over the years, and for making the HEAR Scholarship Program what it is today. Mr. Robert Wise took over from Ray and is excited for the coming year.

A message from our new HEAR Scholarship Chair, Mr. Bob Wise:

This year, as a result of the success of our annual fundraiser and through donations from our supporters, the HEAR Scholarship Program was able to award 30 scholarships to exemplary high school seniors in the Chicagoland area. This is our largest class to date. Despite these growing numbers, the HEAR Foundation remains unique as a scholarship provider with our family approach. Our students have mentors and are invited to attend programs aimed at helping them succeed in college. When possible, we assist them with finding internships and jobs post-graduation. This is why the HEAR Foundation has one of the highest graduating rates and an average graduating GPA above 3.6% this year.

The HEAR Scholarship Program is already planning for next year. Our goal is to once again grant up to 30 new scholarships to the most qualified students. Our past results have been very encouraging. But higher education evolves, and so must the HEAR Foundation in order to remain successful. We now have a robust HEAR Mentor Program thanks to the hard work by HEAR board director Patti Kelly. We are also reviewing how we select candidates to help ensure their success in college. In order to accomplish our goal, we intend to continue to broaden our effort to make public school districts and private schools in the Chicago Metropolitan Area aware of who we are and what we do.

The HEAR Foundation would like to thank Dr. Ray Pollina for the many years he served as chairman of the scholarship committee. We are grateful for his leadership and the growth of our program. Dr. Pollina continues to be an active board member and will continue to provide support to the scholarship committee.

Donor and volunteer support remain key to our success and will continue to be crucial to our growth and sustainability. We are thankful for your time and generosity. Our need is great and because of you, we have the ability to create positive change, one student at a time.

Please contact me if you have any comments or questions.
Robert Wise
Scholarship Committee Chairman
bob@hearfoundation.org
**Vision for 2019/2020**

Dr. Pollina is currently working with the HEAR Business Development team, led by HEAR Director, Len Wislow, as they continue to develop relationships with corporations within the Chicagoland area. Len and his team recently launched a new marketing initiative and have had early success with a number of local organizations. We look forward to keeping you updated of their progress.

In addition to broadening our outreach to organizations for funding purposes, the HEAR Foundation is continuing to build on its network of supporters in order to offer internship opportunities for our scholars. Many of our scholars lack the connections needed to gain valuable work experience in their field of interest. The HEAR Scholarship Foundation finds that being able to provide access to this is an increasingly important aspect of our program. Not only will it differentiate the HEAR Program further from other scholarship providers, it will also reinforce our promise of being a family, not just a financial provider. A key example of internship success is recent HEAR Graduate, Nick Coleman. Through his HEAR Mentor, Nick was able to secure an internship with a large insurance company during his years at Illinois Wesleyan. Upon graduation, Nick was offered a full-time position with the firm and is now an Assistant Finance Analyst. He is also studying for his CPA exams. This opportunity wouldn't have been possible for Nick without the support of the wider HEAR Family.

With over 100 scholars now in (or graduated from) our program, the HEAR Scholarship Foundation has a unique opportunity to draw on talented and driven young people from our community to help out. During the 2019-2020 academic year, HEAR is committed to revisit our volunteering programs and find new ways to answer to Chicago's most urgent needs. Be on the lookout for HEAR Feeds news!

**Scholars Profiles**

**HEAR Class of 2019 - Brianna Guzman (right)**  
Schmidt Family Scholar  
Earlier this summer, Brianna graduated Magna Cum Laude from St. Louis University, MO, with a BS in Communication Sciences and Disorders and a minor in Special Education. Brianna has one of the highest cumulative GPAs of 3.81 in the HEAR Class of 2019. She made honor roll every semester except one during her college career. This fall, she will be commencing a doctorate in Audiology at Rush University.

**HEAR Class of 2020 - Sam Daughenbaugh (left)**  
Sam will be entering his senior year at DePauw University this fall. He is currently participating in The Fort Johnson Summer Undergraduate Research Program, a 10-week internship that combines independent research with activities to promote career development and science communication skills. Only 10 fellowships are awarded each year and are highly sought after. Sam’s main interests lie in marine biology. He is particularly interested in eco-toxicology, marine ecology, disease ecology, and fisheries science.

**HEAR Class of 2021 - Andres Lagunas (right)**  
Andres has completed his sophomore year at DePaul University, where he is majoring in Accounting. One of our strongest scholars, Andres has a cumulative GPA to-date of 3.92. Over the summer, he is interning for 8 weeks in the accounting department at the Chicago Children’s Theatre. He was connected to the organization via the Emerge Summer Career and Leadership Program, an initiative powered by Chicago Scholars and Invest for Kids that seeks to pair career partners from the city with students to create professional development opportunities. Andres is excited to have an experience that provides a chance to gain valuable leadership skills as well as obtain transformative feedback.
HEAR Class of 2022 - Taylor Smith (right)
Kirkegaard Family Scholar
Taylor’s freshman year at Ball State University was a very successful one. She was offered a position with the Ball Bearings Magazine in her first week at college and has since accepted a new position for sophomore year as a student secretary in the journalism department. Over the summer she has been interning at SOCIETY19 Media where she writes five articles a week, keeping her journalism writing skills alive. In May, she also had the opportunity to meet with Jodi Rudoren, a reporter and Associate Managing Editor for Audience at the New York Times. She also sat in on a NYT morning breaking news meeting.

HEAR Class of 2023 - Darius Johnson (left)
Darius joins our newest HEAR Class of Scholars and will shortly begin his freshman year at Santa Clara University. He plans to double major in Management Information Systems and Economics with a minor in Business Analytics. A member of Evanston Scholars, Darius attended Evanston Township High School where he was an Honor Roll student. He received community service, leadership and youth achievement awards during his high school career and was also Track & Field Co-Captain. Darius is very excited to begin the next stage in his educational journey.

Socializing And Celebrating

Winter 2018 Scholar Event
In late December, HEAR held its annual Winter Social at Pompei Pizza in Little Italy. It was a great opportunity to reconnect with our freshman class in particular, who had just finished their first semester and had many experiences to impart. We were delighted to be able to share a meal, listen to our scholars’ experiences and provide advice and guidance where needed.

This year we were joined by special guests Dr. Terri Thorkildsen from the College of Education at UIC and Jerrold Rumps, Outplacement Specialist and Career Transition Strategist with Challenger, Grey and Christmas. They led a lively Q&A session and gave valuable insights into resume building, job searching, interview strategy and more.

Summer 2018 Scholar Event
After the success of last year’s new approach to our summer scholar event, we kept to the same format this year, focusing most of our attention on the 30 new scholars joining our program. Once again, we have a high number of first-generation college goers among our new scholars (67%) who have no one to provide help and guidance as they start on their college journey.

Vera Pollina, our Executive Director, afforded advice and techniques to ensure that our scholars are as equipped emotionally as possible as they prepare to leave for college. She touched on areas including time management and goal setting, familiarizing oneself with resources that are available through the school, the importance of early class registration and developing strong relationships with teaching staff. Mary Sue Smith, our HEAR Enrichment Committee chair, joined the event and presented each new scholar with their first care package. She also stressed the importance of staying healthy and maintaining strong ties with family back home in Chicago.

We were thrilled to welcome friends from Spencer Stuart, a Chicago-based executive search and recruitment organization, who gave an insightful presentation on preparing for future applications for internships and jobs. There was an energetic discussion about networking, resume writing and building an appropriate online presence. Their advice was very well received and we are grateful to them for donating their time to help support our scholars.

We were joined towards the end of the day by some of our current and graduated scholars who shared their experiences with our new class over pizza and cookies. Hopefully their advice and knowledge dispelled some concerns our new class had about starting college life.
A scholar's story

Ever since I was little, learning has always been something that I have loved. Nothing ever seemed to give me the drive or motivation to do well and succeed as much as school did, so I have always pushed myself as a student to do the best that I possibly could – and this still rings true today.

When I first started receiving letter grades in third grade, I became obsessed with getting As in every single class, and this caused a lot of anxiety and stress. Any grade below a 93% – to me – meant that I had failed, and because of this, I struggled a lot throughout grade school and high school to find time to relax and just be a kid.

But in the long run, I knew all of that hard work would pay off. I knew that the time I spent studying for exams and revising essays to get the highest grades possible would help me reach my goal of continuing my education in college, so I kept pushing myself. I kept working hard, I kept studying, I kept learning, and I graduated from high school as valedictorian with a scholarship from the HEAR Foundation that allowed me to pursue my dreams.

Because of HEAR, I can afford a college education, I can thrive as a student, and I can continue to learn, which I have loved to do since I was little. I know that when I graduate from Ball State, I will have incredible opportunities to pursue because of my college education and that is a blessing that I will forever be grateful for.

Taylor S
HEAR Class of 2022 Scholar

Thank you for your continued support of the HEAR Foundation and for helping make a difference in the life of a young scholar.