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One Million Degrees is Named Winner of 15th Annual Chicago Innovation Awards
OMD recognized for programs that increase graduation rates, economic opportunity for community college students

Chicago, IL, October 26, 2016—One Million Degrees (OMD) has been named one of the winners of the 15th annual Chicago Innovation Awards. The winners were announced at an event held at Chicago's Harris Theater on Tuesday, October 25, with nearly 1500 business and civic leaders and supporters of innovation in attendance. The Chicago Innovation Awards, celebrating its 15th year, is the Chicago region's foremost recognition of the most innovative new products or services brought to market or to public service each year.

One Million Degrees (www.onemilliondegrees.org) is a nonprofit that serves nearly 700 primarily low-income students who attend the seven City Colleges of Chicago as well as four partner community colleges in suburban Cook and Lake Counties. OMD's Scholar Development Program, a unique and effective model providing academic, personal, professional, and financial supports, ensures more students receive their associate's degrees and launch upwardly mobile professional careers. The outcomes from OMD's innovative program transform the lives of students and offer a powerful economic return to the local and regional economies.

Since its inception in 2006, 65% of OMD Scholars have received their associate's degree and 77% of alumni have gone on to pursue their bachelor's degree (while just 13% of entering community college students nationwide receive their bachelor's degree). Researchers estimate that the return on investment of each associate's degree earned is \$530,000 in earnings, tax revenue, and savings on social expenditures. This academic year, OMD has embedded full-time trained staff at eight community colleges – double last year – providing students and the colleges themselves with real-time assistance to prevent college drop-out and promote student success.

“Local innovators continue to illuminate the Chicago region as a growing hotbed of creative activity that cuts across all sectors and industries,” said Tom Kuczmariski, co-founder with Chicago

journalist Dan Miller of the awards. “Every winner of the Chicago Innovation Awards demonstrates how a unique solution to an unmet need can bring transformative impact in the marketplace.”

“We are thrilled to be recognized for our innovative program,” said Paige Ponder, CEO of One Millions Degrees. “As we celebrate our 10th year, we know that it takes a community-wide effort to support our Scholars as they succeed. This recognition helps us build on that.”

The winning organizations receive a variety of honors including the opportunity to ring the NASDAQ Bell in New York City, and meetings with the Mayor, Governor and Cook County President.

“A record-breaking 643 organizations were nominated for this year’s awards,” said Luke Tanen, Executive Director of the Chicago Innovation Awards. “We are seeing an influx of talent and capital that continues to fuel innovation activity in the Chicago region.”

The complete list of this year’s Chicago Innovation Award winners can be found at www.chicagoinnovationawards.com.

The Chicago Innovation Awards are supported by Gold Sponsors Comcast Business, Wintrust Financial and SMS Assist; Silver Sponsors Tyson, Vedder Price, LinkedIn and others.

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About One Million Degrees: 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. 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 Scholars graduate at twice the state average with the skills and experiences necessary to launch economically mobile careers. OMD partners with 11 Chicago-area community colleges, including the seven City Colleges of Chicago, College of Lake County, Harper College, Prairie State College, and South Suburban College. OMD will serve 700 scholars across the region in the 2016-2017 academic year, an increase from 440 scholars in the 2015-2016 year. To learn more about One Million Degrees, please visit www.onemilliondegrees.org.