



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## One Million Degrees Raises Record \$795,000 at Degrees of Impact Gala

*Support at 11<sup>th</sup> annual benefit strengthens array of services to growing number of Chicago-area community college students*

**Chicago, IL, June 7th** - One Million Degrees (OMD) raised a record \$795,000 at its 11<sup>th</sup> annual Degrees of Impact: A Food and Wine Tasting gala supporting low-income, highly motivated community college students to complete their education and pursue upwardly mobile careers. The June 1<sup>st</sup> benefit, which attracted 650 guests, honored OMD Scholars and alumni, with special recognition to the Honorable Melissa Bean, Chairman of the Midwest, JPMorgan Chase, for her support of OMD and longtime service on its Board of Directors, including as its current Vice Chair.

The evening capped several weeks of significant developments for OMD, the only organization in Illinois exclusively focused on helping community college students excel academically, complete their degrees, and launch their careers. Earlier in the week, OMD won Impact Grants Chicago's \$100,000 Impact grant, which will fund technology platforms to support staff who are working full-time on 10 community colleges across Chicago with 800 student Scholars. The grant will also provide additional resources to OMD's 600 volunteer coaches, who provide career development and personal counseling.

In her remarks at the gala, OMD CEO Paige Ponder also told the guests about exciting early research from the University of Chicago's highly-respected Urban Labs measuring the impact of One Million Degrees' programs on community college persistence. The result are "positive and their magnitude – the size of the difference – is large," she said. "In the first year of our study, students who are part of OMD are 23% more likely to be enrolled full-time and 27% more likely than the control group to persist through the full year of community college. Your investment in OMD is making a measurable difference in the lives of the people we serve."

The Degrees of Impact gala, co-chaired by Deb Gross and Caroline Grossinger, at Rockwell on the River mixed food and wine from some of Chicago's top chefs with moving speeches from OMD Scholars and alumni about how OMD is changing outcomes for them, their children, families and communities.

Speakers included:

- Paola Salcedo, Olive-Harvey College valedictorian and keynote speaker;
- Tiffany Spraggins, an upcoming apprentice at Accenture; Wilbur Wright College;

- Coby Zaguri, a Scholar alumnus from College of Lake County, who will attend the University of Illinois – Chicago this fall, and coach Robin Broughton;
- Oluwatobi (“Tobi”) Adenuga, alumnus from Truman College; University of Illinois – Chicago graduate; welcome speaker.

Featured Chicago chefs at the event included: Ryan McCaskey, Acadia; Chris Kuziemko, Booth One; Rob Juan & Jason Chan, Katana; Lee Wolen, Somerset; Devon Quinn & Stefano Tulipano, Eden; and Sarah Mispagel, Sepia and Proxi.

Lead Doctorate sponsors for Degrees of Impact included: JPMorgan Chase & Co.; Origin Investments; The Pritzker Traubert Foundation; and Wintrust.

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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.

Currently in its 11th year of programming, OMD continues to expand the number of scholars it supports to be a catalyst for change in Chicago. OMD partners with 10 Chicago-area community colleges, including the seven City Colleges of Chicago, College of Lake County, Harper College, and Prairie State College. OMD serves 800 scholars across the region in the 2017-2018 academic year. To learn more about One Million Degrees, please visit [www.onemilliondegrees.org](http://www.onemilliondegrees.org).