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**One Million Degrees Welcomes 2018-19 Class of 200 New Scholars to
Chicago, Suburban Community Colleges**

New Scholars encouraged to take advantage of programs, services to advance careers

CHICAGO, SEPTEMBER 6, 2018—[One Million Degrees](#) welcomed 200 new Scholars – community college students who will be provided a full array of intensive support services – to a future of unlimited opportunities. The annual Scholar Orientation Day, held August 21st at Malcom X College, highlighted the rich diversity of experiences and backgrounds students bring to community colleges, and through workshops, presentations, and networking illustrated the range of programs and connections that OMD offers to increase student persistence, completion and career readiness.

“This is your moment,” said OMD Chief Executive Office Paige Ponder. “The opportunities for community college student graduates to succeed in their careers and enrich their lives and communities have never been greater. It is our role to support you in your college journey and beyond.”

One Million Degrees is entering its 12th year supporting students at the seven City Colleges of Chicago, Harper College, Prairie State College, and, new this fall, South Suburban College with services that include financial assistance, mentoring, and professional development. The new Scholars are part of a total community college cohort of 750 students. OMD is the only organization in Illinois and one of few in the country working exclusively with community colleges to increase graduation rates and provide a pathway to economic and social mobility. The recent OMD report card for the 2017-18 school year showed that OMD Scholars graduated at twice the state average within three years.

The new school year begins as OMD is deepening its relationships with a wide range of Chicago employers and City Colleges to provide apprenticeship, internships, and full-time jobs for OMD Scholars.

Career planning to take advantage of corporate coaches and connections was a central theme of Scholar Orientation Day and the accompanying Alumni Leadership Institute. Ahmad Aladawi, a recent Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Wilbur Wright College who is pursuing his BA at the University of Illinois at Chicago while working full-time at Accenture, shared his experience in conversation with Melissa Summers, a managing director at Accenture, a major supporter of apprenticeships. Aladawi told Scholars that the bond with their corporate coach can extend beyond “relationship-building to providing all the resources I needed to help me be a successful student, share experiences in the workplace, and add value to the community.” Summers, an OMD volunteer coach who said she is looking for “confident self-starters” among future apprentices, encouraged Scholars to take full advantage of the skills and networks that coaches offer.

The ongoing influence of OMD is not lost on recent alums like Betty Eboifo, a recent graduate of Kennedy-King College who will be pursuing a BA in social work at Northeastern Illinois University. After a 44-year gap between her last school and Kennedy-King she told fellow alumni that OMD deserves a large degree of credit for helping her persevere. “They will continue to be an inspiration, and I want to be a mentor for other students and an advocate for OMD.”

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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. To learn more about One Million Degrees, please visit www.onemilliondegrees.org.