



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Steppingstone Scholars & Wharton Undergraduate Division's First Ever Equity Summit

Helping High School Students Bring Equity to their Communities

April 22, 2022 (PHILADELPHIA, PA) – [Steppingstone Scholars](#) (Steppingstone) and [the Wharton Undergraduate Division of the University of Pennsylvania](#) (Wharton) hosted its first ever Equity Summit on April 22, 2022. The Summit invited 9th to 12th graders to a day-long event at the Wharton School to build connections and passions as they explore the principles of equity-centered work. Through discussions, workshops and hands-on experiences, the students uncovered ways to turn theory into practice in their lives, as well as shared best practices and reflected on equity in their communities. **Steppingstone President Sean E. Vereen, EdD; Wharton School Dean Erika H. James; and Wharton Global Youth Program Executive Director Eli Lesser** were onsite to welcome the students. Keynote [Dr. Brandi M. Baldwin](#) spoke of her experience as a psychology and business professor turned entrepreneur tackling the world's most relevant business challenges: diversity and inclusion, motivating millennials to level-up their leadership, and advocating for equity in all levels of business.

"This Summit was the next step in our partnership with Wharton to help students in Philadelphia overcome systemic racial barriers that they face in their schools and communities," said Sean E. Vereen, EdD, President of Steppingstone Scholars. "We work for and need to listen to the students of this region around issues of equality and inclusion. After a long period of isolation we need to support students' engagement and voice. We hope this Summit results in students bringing new ideas and learnings back to their communities, and we are grateful to Wharton's partnership in hosting these important conversations and hands-on experiences with us."

"It was a privilege to convene such an enthusiastic group of Philadelphia high school students on our campus to explore the issues and opportunities that are central to creating equitable and inclusive environments in our schools and communities," said Wharton School Dean Erika James. "Through efforts like these, we can work toward ensuring equal access to the knowledge, networks and resources that will shape the next generation of leaders."

Throughout the day, students engaged in community and partnership building through access to experts and practitioners in the DEI field, workshops, and networking. The activities were designed to enlighten students through the exploration of actionable equity-centered practices, and also empower students to utilize these concepts in their school and home communities. The workshops focused on six key themes: Healing Our City, Tech Bias, Advocacy in the Arts, Campaigning with a Purpose, Know Your Rights, and LGBTQIA+ Advocacy.

Workshops were led by partnering organizations, including:

- [Bebashi – Transition to Hope](#) hosted a workshop on LGBTQ+ inclusivity training.
- [Collective Climb](#) hosted a workshop focused on proactive applications of restorative justice in our schools and society.
- [Divulge Alliance](#) hosted a workshop using digital arts for social change.
- [La Casa Latina at the University of Pennsylvania](#) hosted a workshop on grassroots organizing in Philadelphia.
- [LGBT Center of the University of Pennsylvania](#) hosted a workshop on advocating for the LGBTQ+ community.
- [Mazzoni Center](#) hosted a workshop - Yes, PLEASE! LGBTQIA affirming healthcare and mental health services.
- [Mural Arts Philadelphia’s Art Education](#) program hosted a workshop on the integration of advocacy in the arts.
- [Penn Women’s Center at the University of Pennsylvania](#) hosted a workshop on the impact of gender and intersectional identities on our everyday lives.
- [Slay Therapy LLC](#) hosted a workshop on trauma competency – applying trauma principles in education.
- [University of Pennsylvania Office of Social Equity and Community](#) hosted a workshop on restorative equity work.
- [World Affairs Council of Philadelphia](#) hosted a workshop on equity through a global lens.

To further inspire students, Dr. Brandi, the CEO of Millennial Ventures Holdings and former Wharton Lecturer, provided the keynote address. The host of the "Diversity and Confusion" podcast, Dr. Brandi is the founding visionary for the *Calling All Allies Project* (CAAP), an innovative initiative that empowers organizations to address racial inequality by making necessary, positive change in the areas where culture and climate intersect with Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI). Dr. Brandi also is the author of "Put in Work: Gain Respect, Influence Others, and Get Results as a New Leader," and "Authentic Ally: A Guilt-Free Guide to Becoming an Ally for Racial Equity."

About Steppingstone Scholars:

Since 1999, Steppingstone Scholars has used equity as its driving force to provide underserved students in Philadelphia, especially Black and Latino students, with sustainable access to academic and workforce opportunities. Through consistent engagement, advising and programming, Steppingstone serves students ages 10 - 24 by creating pathways beginning in middle school to college and career. These are the pathways that too many students and families still cannot see or access – and the only pathways through which a stronger, more equitable Philadelphia can be achieved. For more information regarding Steppingstone Scholars, please visit: www.steppingstonescholars.org. Follow Steppingstone Scholars on social media: [SteppingstoneScholarsInc](#) on Facebook, [@steppingstonescholars](#) on Instagram and [Steppingstone Scholars](#) on LinkedIn.

About the Wharton School:

Founded in 1881 as the world’s first collegiate business school, the [Wharton School](#) of the University of Pennsylvania is shaping the future of business by incubating ideas, driving insights, and creating leaders who change the world. With a faculty of more than 235 renowned professors, Wharton has 5,000 [undergraduate](#), [MBA](#), [executive MBA](#), and [doctoral](#) students. Each year 13,000 professionals from around the world advance their careers through [Wharton Executive Education’s](#) individual, company-customized, and online programs. More than 100,000 Wharton alumni form a powerful

global network of leaders who transform business every day. For more information, visit www.wharton.upenn.edu.

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STEPPINGSTONE SCHOLARS CONTACT:

Paige LeGrand

Vice President of Development & Communications

plegrand@steppingstonescholars.org

610.960.5065