



Philadelphia Futures' 2022 College Kickoff

Annual event offers low-income, first-generation-to-college students opportunity to be proud of accomplishments & connect with peers who attend their schools

(PHILADELPHIA) [Philadelphia Futures](#) and [Steppingstone Scholars](#) celebrated the annual College Kickoff on Thursday, August 11th at Temple University's Mitten Hall. At this event, first-year college students from low-income and first-generation-to-college backgrounds celebrated their accomplishments and networked with upperclassmen who attend their new schools. Many students in attendance showed their school spirit by wearing their college t-shirt - an amazing visual to help network with other students attending their schools.

Philadelphia Futures, who hosts this event for its college students, announced in May 2022 with Steppingstone Scholars that they would merge in the Fall to create one of the most dynamic, expansive, and trusted educational nonprofits in the City of Philadelphia to better serve Philadelphia students through a wider reach and significantly enhanced programming. To introduce current Philadelphia Futures students to Steppingstone Scholars, Sean E. Vereen, Ed.D. (current President of Steppingstone Scholars) offered a powerful keynote speech, giving an inside look to his college trajectory and lived experiences.

“The annual College Kickoff is an incredible opportunity for our students to come together, celebrate their accomplishments, and network with one another. As I mentioned in my keynote speech, creating community, while in college and beyond is essential to success, which is why Steppingstone Scholars is excited to merge with Philadelphia Futures, said Sean Vereen, President and CEO of Steppingstone Scholars. “In merging, we bring together decades of expertise, capital, and partnerships, as well as talented staffs committed to investing in student success and the city.”

Vereen – alongside Sara L. Woods, Esq. (current President of Philadelphia Futures) – will be the future co-presidents of the new organization that is anticipated to merge in Fall 2022.

“Our annual College Kickoff is the perfect way to jumpstart the new school year and introduce our new merged organization to our students and the community, said Sara Woods, President and CEO of Philadelphia Futures. “Through this merger, we aim to increase pathways and help students prepare for life sustaining careers by giving them the tools they need to persist and graduate from high school, earn a college degree or other postsecondary credential, and ultimately experience the success they deserve.”

Futures and Steppingstone have a bold new vision for the united entity – and the city itself. Together, the new organization will work to ensure that **“all Philadelphia students**

graduate high school with pathways to economic mobility through college and workforce success.” This focus is rooted in a commitment to break the cycle of generational poverty, which has long challenged the City of Philadelphia.

Philadelphia Futures and Steppingstone Scholars’ plan to merge in the Fall came after a comprehensive 18-month period of due diligence and organizational collaboration, which was funded by the William Penn Foundation and The Nonprofit Repositioning Fund, and unanimously approved by the respective Boards of Directors for Futures and Steppingstone on May 24, 2022. Upon the official merger, which is subject to required governmental notices and approvals, the organizations will rebrand as a new entity, which will be unveiled in Fall 2022. Once merged, the new entity will have a \$10 million operating budget and 71 total staff members – 22 of whom are embedded in the School District of Philadelphia (District) as coordinators and advisors. This enhanced operational budget will allow the new organization to immediately serve 3,000 Philadelphia students as well as significantly scale services, which will create even more sustainable access to academic and workforce opportunities for students, especially Black, Latino, and first-generation students. Furthermore, the new entity will have a combined endowment of \$30 million, which strengthens its long-term financial position.

Learn more about the merger in this [Inquirer](#) and [Philadelphia Tribune article](#).

About Philadelphia Futures:

Philadelphia Futures is a nonprofit organization that supports Philadelphia’s low-income, first-generation-to-college students with the tools, resources, and opportunities necessary for admission to and success in college. Philadelphia Futures envisions a city where every student has what they need to succeed in college and thrive in life. Through its direct service programs, Sponsor-A-Scholar (SAS) and College Connection, the organization annually serves more than 500 high school and college students offering academic enrichment services, personalized college guidance, placement and retention services and financial resources. Through its other programs and services, including its Step Up to College resources, Outreach Futures, and The Charles E. Ellis Trust for Girls, Philadelphia Futures provides college guidance and financial resources to students throughout the City. Philadelphia Futures can be found online at www.philadelphiafutures.org. Follow Philadelphia Futures on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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.stepsstonescholars.org. Follow Steppingstone Scholars on social media: [SteppingstoneScholarsInc](#) on Facebook, [@steppingstonescholars](#) on Instagram and [Steppingstone Scholars](#) on LinkedIn.

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