The Journey
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RON BROWN SCHOLAR PROGRAM FALL 2019

Message from the President

Most successful ventures are the result of many, interlocking parts working well together. This is certainly the story of the Ron Brown Scholar Program. What makes us unique is that we have always insisted that the Program be more than just a scholarship. We are a safety net and a support network advancing the collective impact of our extraordinary, service-minded Scholars through an organization that functions very much like a family or team—with ongoing personal bonds and collective gatherings. Friend-raising—bringing Scholars and professionals together—is one of those integral and interlocking components that has contributed to the success of our Program and our Scholars.

Perhaps one of our most successful gatherings to date was held October 25th at the home of our newest Board of Trustees member, Meredith Eggers, who lives in Los Altos, CA. Meredith encouraged us to create more of a West Coast presence, which we call RBS West, due to the large number of Ron Brown Scholars and Ron Brown Captains based in California. Nearly forty RBS representing almost all RBS classes from 1997 to 2019 attended as well as RBS staff and dozens of Friends of Ron Brown Scholars (FORBS).

We measure our success by the number of new friends, volunteers and donors who join in our vision, as well as by the depth of engagement, mentorship, the graduation rates, their achievements, employment outcomes and of course, the RBS’s commitment to the less fortunate.

Today, the Ron Brown Scholar family numbers 465 Scholars, thousands of donors, friends, mentors and volunteers. Over 23 years we have created the Guided Pathway Support Program which has provided over 2,600 African American high schoolers with college and scholarship counseling, partnered with more than 15 corporations and 15 universities, and have witnessed Scholar achievements far beyond anything our founder Tony Pilaro and I could have initially imagined in 1996. We name more than 200 Ron Brown Captains annually.

We could not have done this without our Board of Trustees, Advisory Board, selection teams, dedicated staff, friends and donors.

In this newsletter, we’ve listed our donors and we share the “$20 million by 2020” Campaign details. We’ve set an ambitious goal of raising a $20 million endowment by the end of 2020. With 14 months remaining in the campaign, our endowment has reached over $17 million, which is being managed by Alliance Bernstein. Our dream is to build an endowment sufficient to support the dreams of students like these in perpetuity.

I’m hoping you will stand with our extraordinary Scholars and help us cross the finish line. To close out our campaign, we’re turning to the Friends of the Program with a request: pledge to match a portion of what the Scholars themselves raise in donations during 2019. There is no stronger testament to the importance of our work than the willingness of our Scholars to support it. The oldest of our Scholars are just turning 40, and all of them—from the most recent graduates to those mid-career professionals—continue to give generously because they know firsthand the value of the Ron Brown Scholar Program. RBS have donated more than $60,000 in 2019 alone.

With just over a year left, we are so close to our goal! My hope is that all who read this newsletter will increase giving and stand with friends and Alumni to make the dream of $20 million by December 31, 2020 a reality.

Thank you for considering. Please enjoy the holidays and, as always, please reach out to me with any questions or ideas for us.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Mallory
President and CEO
Malakha Mathama Bility (RBS 2014) earned her BA in Public Policy and Global Health from Duke University. She currently serves as a Clinical Research Coordinator at UNC Chapel Hill’s School of Medicine where she engages in research on preventing early-childhood obesity. With the goal of promoting healthy family behaviors around nutrition and activity, she is measuring the impact of a health communications tool kit for families and their pediatricians.

Her interest in health communications was greatly informed by her undergraduate internships, which were supported by the Ron Brown Scholar Program. In 2016, she completed an internship in the office of Terence Carter (RBS 1997) and FOX Entertainment Executive Vice President. The Ron Brown Scholar Program also provided her with funds for two other internships, which Malakha says laid the groundwork for her career as a public servant. In Summer 2017, she completed an internship with Sesame Street in their International Social Impact Department and in Summer 2018, she lived in Geneva, Switzerland to complete an internship in the Migrant Health Division of the UN’s International Organization for Migration.

Like so many members of the Ron Brown Scholar family, “impact” figures largely into Malakha’s definition of success. She looks forward to collaborating and building community with fellow RBS who are also passionate about improving quality-of-care for vulnerable populations.

With family from both sides of the Atlantic (Liberia and the United States), Malakha is interested in public health that stretches from the local to the global.

Scholar Profile: Malakha Mathama Bility, RBS 2014

Mathama Bility (RBS 2014) graduated from Duke and currently serves as a Clinical Research Coordinator at UNC Chapel Hill’s School of Medicine.
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Deadline: January 9, 2020
www.ronbrown.org

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Stakeholders: A Long-Term Investment in the Ron Brown Scholar Program

On August 2–4, Ron Brown Scholars and FORBS gathered at the offices of Deloitte in Washington DC for the annual summer leadership conference, affectionately known as the Ron Brown Family Reunion. The weekend began with a Friday night reception where Scholars connected and networked with each other as well as FORBS, both old and new.

Saturday was all about the Scholars. The day started bright and early with opening remarks from RBSAA President, Marquise McGraw (RBS 2002), followed by presentations and open discussions on topics such as career development, mental health and political engagement. Some of these conversations looked inward at the Ron Brown community itself, including “RBS Alumni Professional Development Plan,” a session facilitated by Dr. Carmelle T. Norice Tra (RBS 1997) and “Ron Brown Scholar Regional Chapters” a presentation from Leslie Turner (RBS 2013). Others looked outward, at the ways that Ron Brown Scholars and Alumni engage with their place in the world beyond the Program, most notably “Community and Civic Engagement,” a discussion with Morgan Harper (RBS 2001), a 2020 Candidate for Congress in Ohio’s 3rd Congressional District and Mondaire Jones (RBS 2005), a 2020 Candidate for Congress in New York’s 17th Congressional District. The sessions inspired conversations that were both challenging and creative and the Scholars and Alumni in attendance left the day invigorated and full of ideas on how to further engage in their communities.

The weekend would not have been complete without a healthy dose of Scholar competition, which came in the form of a team building activity midway through Saturday, where Scholars were split into two teams and challenged to work together to lift a long stick—a task that ended up being much more difficult than it sounds.

The Ron Brown Leaders Network held its annual Leaders Summit on June 28–29 at Goldman Sachs Global Headquarters in New York, NY. Over 150 Ron Brown students and alumni turned out for the opportunity to engage with one another while learning and networking with our corporate partners. This year, 12 corporate partners attended the Summit and provided leadership over the breakout sessions. Sessions included a Women in STEM Breakfast sponsored by Deloitte, Albert Einstein School of Medicine, Goldman Sachs and Lockheed Martin; a Case Competition led by facilitators from Wake Forest University School of Business; Senior & Alumni Professional Development sessions led by executive coaches Cindy Joseph, Rebecca Wilson and Ty Moore (RBS 2002); and a Q&A session exploring job satisfaction in early career stages with panelists from Google, Otis Elevator, Deloitte and Lockheed Martin.

2019 Ron Brown Leaders Summit
Guided Pathway Support Program Partners with College Track New Orleans

The Guided Pathway Support Program (GPS), a 2016 initiative of the Ron Brown Scholar Program, was developed for the purpose of teaching underserved high school students how to prepare for, apply to, and pay for college. Using its high-tech and high-touch mentorship model, GPS advises students through an online college access community. To date, the GPS program has worked with over 2,600 students nationwide.

This summer, an invitation was extended by Mike Woodward (RBS 2004), Executive Director of College Track New Orleans, to the GPS development team. Mike posited the possibility of a collaboration between the RBSP and College Track, a college completion program dedicated to working with first-generation, low-income students on their educational journey from freshman year of high school until they walk across the stage at college graduation. Mike’s hope is that the two organizations, working in tandem, will greatly increase the outreach and thus increase the number of first-generation, low-income high school students who receive college admission advice and subsequent assistance through their graduation from college. He believes that collaboration with GPS will increase access for College Track scholars as it will connect them to a community extending beyond the boundaries of New Orleans. “To be associated with a peer group of more than 2,000 individuals who share similar aspirations is powerful in and of itself, but to also be able to receive individualized supports around the clock throughout the process is immeasurable.”

New Orleans was the site of the August 27, 2019 initial discussion. It was attended by RBSP Vice President, Vanessa Evans-Grevious, GPS Program Director, Kiya Jones (RBS 1999), College Track New Orleans Executive Director, Mike Woodward (RBS 2004), and College Track and 2019 Ron Brown Scholar, Linda Denson.

Mike’s association with College Track began while he was a graduate student at Tulane University’s School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. He first learned of College Track New Orleans as a community partner. Their mission, to empower students from underserved communities to graduate from college resonated with him based on his own journey to become a first-generation, low-income college graduate. Two years later, he joined the team as the Site Director because it allowed him to be “the adult” he needed when he was younger. He believes that the holistic, uniquely long-term commitment (10 years) to scholars has provided the key to the organization’s ongoing transformative impact: 400+ scholars, a 100% four-year college matriculation rate (Fall 2018), and twice the national graduation rate for low-income and first-generation youth.

The program includes three interconnected pillars: 1) Academic Affairs prepares scholars for the rigors of college with intensive academic support that strengthens mathematical and critical thinking skills, including tutoring, study groups, dual enrollment, and more; 2) Student Life enables scholars to explore their passions while developing leadership and teamwork skills; and 3) College Access provides personalized support to navigate the college selection and application process.

Continued on page 7
Late last year, the Ron Brown Scholar Program launched STEM101, an initiative supporting Guided Pathway Support Program (GPS), students interested in math, science, and related fields. Led by Dr. Christopher Hunter (RBS 1998) and supported by generous funding from the Fund II Foundation and our partners at Goldman Sachs, STEM101 builds on the success of GPS, which has helped over 2,600 high school juniors and seniors successfully navigate the college application process. Our high-tech, high-touch approach harnesses the power of social media to create a nationwide learning community. The results speak for themselves: to date, 99% of GPS students have gone on to college.

We designed STEM101 as an antidote to the persistent underrepresentation of African Americans in the ranks of science and engineering professions—an early step in building the diverse and nimble workforce that will help drive tomorrow’s innovations. Our interventions are based on educational and social science research demonstrating the importance of cultural as well as academic preparation: focusing on both the technical and soft skills necessary to succeed in college, STEM101 provides students with academic counseling and mentorship. We also emphasize the importance of research experiences to nurture the curiosity and hands-on engagement to nourish the creative spirit that drives students to these fields in the first place.

STEM101 is still in its first year, but we have already helped connect our students to some pretty incredible opportunities. Two of our students, River Fields and Ededi Adjagbodjou, actually worked together creating tissue-engineered blood vessels and researching how stem cells interact with hormones and anti-inflammatory drugs. Samantha Adjei has been interning in a lab at the New York Medical College, researching a tick-borne infection called babesiosis. Suad Mohamed joined a research team at George Mason University investigating whether race affects the odds of transplant survival in patients suffering from polycystic kidney disease. Journey Washingtonhigh earned a perfect score in the MIT MathROOTS olympiad, won a Silver Medal in sculpture at the NAACP national convention in Detroit, and interned at the Air Force Research Lab, where she was immersed in the life of the lab, designed curriculum, and earned a secret security clearance from the Department of Defense. Olivia Ibeh learned to code in several programming languages and built a makeup website catering to women of color.

STEM101 can’t remove all the challenges facing tomorrow’s science and engineering professionals, but we can help set them up to succeed. Young people with these kinds of experiences not only receive a leg up in the competitive world of college admissions; studies have shown that they are also much more resilient, and more likely to continue in their chosen fields, even when confronted by adversity. In seeking to foster a culture of research, engagement and active inquiry among high school students today, STEM101 is planting the seeds for tomorrow’s breakthroughs. We are extremely proud to welcome these students into the RBS family and we can’t wait to see what they will achieve.
developing social-emotional skills through experiential learning and community service; and 3) College Completion supports scholars with 1:1 coaching throughout the entire college experience as they select, apply to, enroll in, and graduate from college.

For Mike Woodward, the Ron Brown Scholar Program was an equalizer on his educational journey. It allowed him to attend college without fear that undue financial burdens would hinder his progress. Beyond the financial support, RBSP offered an extended family where he could embrace his blackness and brilliance simultaneously. “I have gained a mentor in Mr. Mallory and countless friendships over the course of the past fifteen years. Through unwavering support in times of both triumph and despair, the RBSP has afforded me a level of social capital that has and will continue to enhance my trajectory and the trajectories of those who come after me”.

The productive meeting in New Orleans proved even more fruitful than hoped for due to a visit to an exhibition by New Orleans artist, Leonard Galmon (RBS 2014). The productive meeting in New Orleans proved even more fruitful than hoped for due to a visit to an exhibition by New Orleans artist, Leonard Galmon (RBS 2014). For the Sake of Order, was his third exhibit with the Arthur Roger Gallery. Leonard remarked, “My work is inspired by my experiences in predominantly white spaces. It’s inspired by the little things we know as micro-aggressions. The way people react to me, the way they are surprised by the way I speak, me going to Yale, me being an artist. I realized that I just didn’t make sense with their conception of society. I was out of place. The grid has been used by cartographers to segment, organize and order the land. So I latched onto it as a means of expressing order in the general sense. I placed it on top of portraiture to reference more specifically the ordering of Black people. Removed from the context of cartography, the grid becomes its own ‘order’ en-

Ron Brown Scholar Program Partners with Apex Clean Energy

We are proud to welcome Apex Clean Energy as our newest corporate partner in the Ron Brown Leaders Network. Apex Clean Energy is an independent renewable energy company based in Charlottesville, VA focused on building utility-scale generation facilities. The company will support 2019 Ron Brown Scholar Kinan Martin. Kinan is a graduate of Albemarle High School in Charlottesville, VA. He is now pursuing an engineering degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

We look forward to connecting our talented students who are passionate about sustainability and green energy with APEX.

Tina: The Tina Turner Musical

Tina: The Tina Turner Musical co-written by Katori Hall (RBS 1999) and Olivier Award-winning playwright from Memphis, will officially open on Broadway at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre in New York City on November 7th. Learn more at www.katorihall.com.

New Orleans, continued from pg. 5

Vanessa Evans-Grevious, RBSP Vice President (shown below), joins Herbert Spurlock (RBS 2014), Linda Denson (RBS 2019), Kiya Jones (RBS 1999) and Mike Woodward (RBS 2004) at the Arthur Roger Gallery to view the art exhibit For the Sake of the Order, by Leonard Galmon (RBS 2014).
Verizon Adfellows

Providing Access for Diverse Talent into Advertising

By: Nancy Coleman (RBS 2014)

Breaking into the advertising industry is a notoriously difficult feat and that’s only for those who are aware of the robust selection of career paths available. If you don’t know someone in advertising, you probably don’t know about all the jobs in it, either. Another major issue that plagues the industry is the lack of diverse talent. As a result, multi-million dollar brands like H&M and Pepsi Co. have either missed the mark or completely botched communicating to audiences in a diverse world. It’s no secret that many creative works are brainstormed, approved, produced and launched with no people of color in the room. And if they were in the room, they were not empowered enough to say something and be heard.

Verizon Adfellows seeks to change the inaccessibility of the hiring process and help usher diverse talent into agency doors, one emerging leader at a time. The program started in September 2017 with 20 fellows who were either recent graduates looking to launch a career or established professionals entering a new industry. Fellows cycle through four 8-week rotations in marketing roles both client-side and with partnering agencies, including the ranks of big advertising names like McCann Worldgroup, R/GA, and one of RBSP’s very own partners – Weber Shandwick. This kind of access in such a short time frame is unprecedented, but it only works thanks to buy-in from both fellows in the program and agency partners offering guidance and support. September 2019 marks the program’s third year, now with nearly double the number of fellows and three times as many partner brands and agencies compared to its first year.

As an alumna of the program, I know firsthand just how talented, motivated and inspiring these fellows are – they will not stay quiet in the face of unequal, unjust, or otherwise unacceptable work. Likely, the hardest thing about breaking in for most of us is stepping into environments that are often slow to change. However, if you consider yourself to be or know someone eager to make waves with the patience to test the water first, Adfellows might just be the right fit.

Remembering Our Dear Friends

Steven H. Rubin (1933-2019)

Steve Rubin served as an advisor to Ron Brown Scholars, RBSP Editor and Historian for more than 18 years.

Cokie Roberts (1943-2019)

RBSP was honored to have Cokie Roberts serve as our 2015 American Journey Awards host and as a longtime RBSP supporter.
The Ron Brown Scholar Program wishes to thank all of the foundations, organizations and friends who have supported our mission.

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Scholarship Sponsors are very special and generous people who have provided the funding to fully support a Ron Brown Scholar and without whom we could not award the number of scholarships we do, nor support our wonderful young Ron Brown Scholars in the unique way that is the foundation of our mission.

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Our Leaders Network Partners share valuable career advice with our young leaders while introducing them to professional opportunities within their organizations.

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In 2017 the Ron Brown Scholar Program embarked on bolstering our endowment to $20 million by 2020 in order to award a minimum of 20 Ron Brown scholarships annually. As of September 30, 2019 we are at $17.06M - please help us cross the finish line by making a donation or pledge. Any and every contribution is important to us as we continue to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Program.

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Robert Binswanger

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The Robert Binswanger Communitarian Award established in spring of 2019 will be given annually to a Scholar who exhibit extraordinary commitment to the common good.

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