

## Dozens of minority students awarded more than \$500,000 in scholarships



Larry Handfield, right, shakes hands with Darquavise Dixon, 18, and Deavon Gooden, 18, as they sign for their scholarships to Bethune-Cookman University during the Academic Signing Day ceremony. Eighty-four graduating seniors signed scholarships to the colleges and universities of their choice at the 5000 Role Models of Excellence's ceremony on Monday, June 8, 2015. | **CHARLES TRAINOR JR** - MIAMI HERALD

BY EMILY COCHRANE

*Special to the Miami Herald*

It started with a tie.

Larry Pye Jr. had first noticed the tie in middle school: red with two black handprints, one larger than the other. It was always paired with a white shirt and black pants.

"I was intrigued," Pye, now 17, said.

He soon learned the tie was the uniform of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, a mentor program for male minority students at several schools throughout Miami-Dade County. He then applied to join the program as a ninth grade student at Miami Northwestern Senior High School.

Four years later, Pye wore his own red tie June 2 as he accepted a scholarship to Florida A&M University during the organization's Academic Signing Night at Jungle Island. More than \$500,000 in scholarship money was awarded to 84 graduating high school seniors during the ceremony.

"It shows that hard work pays off," Pye said. "It takes some burdens off my family."

The program was started by U.S. Congresswoman Frederica Wilson in 1993 to help at-risk male youth stay in school. Students apply to be a part of the program at over 100 elementary, middle and high schools in Miami-Dade County, and are each paired with a mentor from the community for meetings and field trips.

Each year, Wilson said, the scholarship night is a bittersweet moment for her.

"I'm presenting them with scholarships, with laptop computers," Wilson said. "But I am also presenting them to the world – a world that's full of challenges for boys that look like them."

Tuesday, the boys looked like accomplished men, beaming proudly as they signed scholarship letters and shook hands with university representatives and their mentors. They wore their red ties and custom-made suits donated by the Sean John Men's Clothing Collection at Macy's.

For many of the boys, it was the first suit they had owned.

"Looking at these beautiful black men in these beautiful black suits, I think they can do anything," Sean John President Jeffrey Tweedy said to the audience of students, parents and mentors. "So let's encourage them."

"There's nothing holding you back."

Tweedy was inducted as a role model in the program Tuesday along with Fisk University President H. James Williams and other community members.

As their names were called, each student signed a scholarship acceptance letter and donned a hat from their university. Grinning, they high fived each other and shook hands as they returned to their seats.

Barbara Olano fought back tears as she took pictures of her son, Brandon Hernandez, 18, signing his letter for a scholarship to the Department of Fire Rescue Training Center.

“I’m a single mom, so I figured the male role model would really help him,” she said. “He has become a mature, intellectual man. I’m ecstatic.”

The ceremony concluded with a rendition of Yolanda Adams’s “What About the Children” before recipients each received a laptop and a copy of *Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding*, a collection of personal essays edited by Ben Jealous and Trabian Shorters.

For Pye, the suit and tie will serve as the biggest memory of the brotherhood he found in the program.

“We’re all connected,” he said. “Not by blood, but by ties.”

## WHERE THEY ARE GOING

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### **Art Center College of Design Art School**

Emanuel A. De Martinez

Sean Herrin

### **Barry University**

Necen T. Dinkins

### **Bethune Cookman University**

Darquavise D. Dixon

Deavon Gooden

### **College for Creative Studies**

De’Naric Mikle

### **Culinary Institute of Arts**

Heisson Q. Chimbi

**Department of Fire Rescue Training Center**

Derrick Alcime

Gabyson Cadestin

Brandon Hernandez

Justin Miller

Brenton Roberts

Fisk University

Moises Arzu

**Florida Gulf Coast University**

Jordan A. Neal

**Florida International University**

Nathaniel Best

Malik Brown

Bedrice Charles

Alex Desiral

Price Destinobles

Christopher Excellent

Makaveli Gibson

Kevin Jose Hernandez

Mike Luscar

Serge Metellus

Andy M. Moreira

Guy R. Paul

Kenny Pierre

Joshua Stephenson

Dwayne Thomas

**Florida A&M University**

Dwayne Flanders

Samuel Fortune

JacQuez Garrison

Aaron Hanna

Terry L. Jefferson

Larry D. Pye, Jr.

Robert Ratliff

Wayne R. Sanders

Clifford Kyle Stephens

Garrett Tolbert

Quandell Torrence

**Florida Memorial University**

Malik Fleming

**Florida State University**

Madiba McKenzie

Bryan Pena

Jacksonville University

Derrick Lamar Jackson

**Miami International University of Arts & Design**

Ariel A. Gurdian

**Miami Dade College**

Alan L. Aldao

Samuel Antoine

Frantz Augustin

David Benjamin

Leonardo Bribiescas

Max J. Brutus

Jerry Cadet

Ramdin Constantine

Reynaldo DelValle

Richard Duroseau

Benjamin Ferreiro

Giovanni Gaspard

Alexis Gonzalez

Cristian E. Guillen

Steve L. Jean-Pierre

Sergio Jiron

Khaleel Joly

Max Lopez

Emmanuel F. Manon

Alan R. Odom

Mateo Piedrahita

Jarrett Ramsey

Carlos Rodriguez

Rico T. Rozier

Devin Spencer

Alejandro Terrero

Joshua Vildor

## **Franklin and Marshall College**

Raphael Y. Louis

## **Milwaukee Institute Art Design**

Julien Roberson

Shomari Slaton

## **School of Visual Arts (Film Making)**

Terry Gifford

St. Thomas University

Levarence L. Gilliard

## **Tallahassee Community College**

Michelir Senatus

## **University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff**

Jontavis Testa

## **University of Central Florida**

Eldrick M. Clapp

## **University of Florida**

Dwayne Robinson

Erickben Elizaire

## **University of South Florida**

Jeffrey Phillipe

Bryce Senatus



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