

# Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation and CCL Develop the Scholar Coaching Initiative

CASE STUDY



## CLIENT CHALLENGE

The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation (CCSF), one of the world’s most respected business-supported scholarship programs, supports 1,400+ young people each year as they develop into leaders. In addition to college scholarships, CCSF provides recipients opportunities for personal and professional growth and development and maintains a robust, engaged alumni network.

The program counts among its alumni members of the US House and Senate, hundreds of entrepreneurs and C-suite executives, academic and nonprofit leaders, and internationally recognized artists and writers.

CCSF uncovered coaching as an opportunity for alumni to provide leadership and personal development for Scholars while in college. The Foundation envisioned a coaching initiative that would deepen the knowledge and application of CCSF’s 4 pillars – the values of self-awareness, empathy, vision, and inspiration.

One of the greatest challenges was creating meaningful and development-focused engagement among a geographically dispersed population, as well as an experience that was relational rather than transactional.

CCSF turned to the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) to develop the Scholar Coaching Initiative.

**CLIENT:** Coca Cola Scholars Foundation

**LOCATION:** Headquartered in Atlanta, GA

**SIZE:** Providing scholarships to ~1,400 students annually in amounts totaling over \$3.4 million each year

*Our partnership with CCL is built on a shared desire for excellence and a commitment to learning in service of excellence. This coaching initiative has provided a rich framework for scaling meaningful engagement that has a significant demonstrated impact on both the Coaches and those being coached.”*

- J. Mark Davis, President  
Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation

## SOLUTION

In their search to develop the coaching initiative, CCSF researched and met with dozens of potential leadership development partners. Ultimately, CCSF found that CCL met several key requirements for this new endeavor, including:

- » Demonstrated legacy of creating successful programs with corporate, community, and education partners
- » Grounding of development and delivery in research-based practices
- » A “co-design” approach to create a unique experience to achieve CCSF’s goals

Above all, CCL and CCSF shared the belief that leadership is learned, and that leadership development empowers individuals and communities to create positive change.

CCSF and CCL partnered to co-design a 3-phase program to: develop a custom coaching program; train CCSF coaches; and implement coaching sessions with Coca-Cola Scholars.

Key objectives for the coaching initiative were:

- » Empowering the Scholars with guided reflection and goal planning
- » Promoting the Scholars’ success as academic, pre-professional, and community leaders
- » Strengthening engagement with the Foundation

In 2016, CCSF senior leaders collaborated with the CCL team to begin the discovery and strategic planning process for the coaching initiative. This planning process set the initiative into action, and several months later, 4 CCL trainers traveled to Atlanta to train the first set of coaches: 16 staff and alumni who would each serve as a coach for 1-3 new Coca-Cola Scholars. This training session introduced the trainees to coaching competencies, skills, and best practices, as well as CCL’s framework for leader development.

Following the training, the newly minted coaches were assigned to a select group of Coca-Cola Scholars and the coaching initiative was kicked off. During their first year of college, Scholars are matched with a CCSF Coach and receive personalized support via 6 coaching sessions.

## RESULTS

Both Coaches and Scholars reported that the experience was beneficial for them individually, in the following ways:

### TOP 3 SCHOLAR BENEFITS

- » Having a coach helped me feel more connected to the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation
- » I feel more prepared to take on leadership roles at school or in the community
- » I’m better able to ‘step back’ from situations to reflect on my options and intentions

### TOP 3 COACH BENEFITS

- » Serving as a Coach has strengthened my connection to the Coca-Cola Scholars Network
- » I developed skills that have helped me in my personal and professional life
- » Participating in this initiative has enhanced my leadership skills

CCSF staff members who served as Coaches **gained valuable leadership development skills** they reported using with their direct reports and peers at the Foundation, as well as in their personal lives.

Since the program started, **95 Coaches** have been trained in coaching and leadership development best practices, resulting in **1,400 hours of coaching** being delivered to **225 Scholars**. CCSF is set on growing the number of coaches in the future, and together with CCL the Foundation continues the effort to refine and improve the training and to adapt the latest best practices in leader development.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**98%** of Scholars and Coaches intend to stay connected to the foundation

**93%** of Coaches indicated that being a Coach was a valuable experience

**91%** of Scholars would encourage others to sign up for coaching

*The co-design approach has been very beneficial in shaping a meaningful experience, for both Scholars and Coaches. Being a thought partner helped us determine the best way to provide a unique experience that supports Scholars and engages alumni in a mutually developmental way.”*

*- Jamie Williams, Director of Scholarship  
Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation*

## PARTNER WITH US

At CCL, we understand how leadership development can help build a foundation for real change and greater transformation. We can partner with your organization to create customized leadership solutions that allow you to expand your impact and the meaningful work you bring to the world.

Learn more: [ccl.org/foundations](https://ccl.org/foundations)

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)<sup>®</sup> is a top-ranked, global, nonprofit provider of leadership development. Over the past 50 years, we’ve worked with organizations of all sizes from around the world, including more than 2/3 of the Fortune 1000. Our cutting-edge solutions are steeped in extensive research and our work with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels.

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