

CASE STUDY

Sector: Beverage

# Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation Scholar Coaching Initiative



COCA-COLA  
SCHOLARS  
FOUNDATION



Center for  
Creative  
Leadership





Since 1989, the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation (CCSF) has supported more than 6,000 young people as they develop into leaders who make significant, positive impacts in the world. The Foundation, one of the world's most respected business-supported scholarship programs, provides \$20,000 college scholarships to promising high school students. In addition, it provides scholarship recipients opportunities for personal and professional growth and development and maintains a robust, engaged alumni network.

The program's alumni have achieved leadership positions in business, government, nonprofits, academia, and the arts. It 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.

In 2016, the Foundation partnered with the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) to create the Scholar Coaching Initiative. Foundation leaders envisioned the initiative as a way to

- strengthen the network by creating more opportunities for Scholars and alumni to connect.
- build on the Scholars' leadership development during the Leadership Development Institute that takes place over the annual Scholars Weekend event.
- deepen the knowledge and application of CCSF's four pillars—the values of self-awareness, empathy, vision, and inspiration.



CCSF “exists to bring better to the world, through investment in exceptional high school students who are dedicated to leadership, service, and action that positively affects others.”

The college scholarship, while elemental, is only part of the investment CCSF seeks to make. By connecting Coca-Cola Scholars and hosting leadership and service summits for alumni, CCSF has created a robust network of connected, committed leaders. By adding further leadership development opportunities and personalized coaching to the Coca-Cola Scholar experience, the Foundation has the potential to accelerate the impact young Scholars might have, helping them become more successful earlier in life.

During their first year of college, Scholars receive personalized support from a CCSF coach trained in CCL’s coaching approach. The goal is to help Scholars develop personally and holistically, particularly as it relates to the CCSF’s four pillar values: self-awareness, empathy, vision, and inspiration.

Key objectives for the coaching initiative are:

- **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 addition, CCSF also wanted to provide alumni unique opportunities to access leadership development. CCL’s coach training and follow-on support not only build coaching capacity within the network; alumni and staff trained as coaches have indicated that the experience has been enriching to their professional and personal lives as well.

## Societal Advancement

CCL’s Societal Advancement group seeks to develop leadership within and across systems to advance the greater good by providing more integrated, sustainable, and scalable leadership solutions to the social sector. We bring more than 40 years of leadership development research and best practices to individuals and organizations that seek to improve their communities, nations, and the world.

Societal Advancement was formed in 2016 by bringing together and leveraging the expertise of four CCL groups: the Education & Nonprofit Sector (ENP), Leadership Beyond Boundaries (LBB), Advancement, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Executive Nurse Fellows (ENF) grant team.

Societal Advancement faculty and trainers work with nonprofits and NGOs; educational institutions and faith-based organizations; government agencies and international organizations; and citizens and youth. Often, we work with several of these groups at once, as we engage people across traditional boundaries of hierarchy, class, language, religion, culture, and race. We seek to reach underserved groups with pressing needs for large-scale societal change through a combination of customized programs, digital assets, train-the-trainer solutions, and continued investment in the research and creation of new products and approaches for this sector.

The constituents Societal Advancement serves include K–12 schools and school systems, colleges and universities, nonprofits, and health care organizations. In our work, we aim to increase the number of lives touched and prove the efficacy of leadership as a necessary factor to catalyze meaningful social change.

Whatever the challenge, our Societal Advancement faculty seek to work collaboratively with our clients, combining CCL’s experience and expertise with the unique knowledge of the community we are engaging with.



## The Solution

CCSF and CCL co-designed a three-phase program to develop a custom coaching program, train CCSF coaches, and then implement six coaching sessions with the first cohort of Coca-Cola Scholars in 2016.

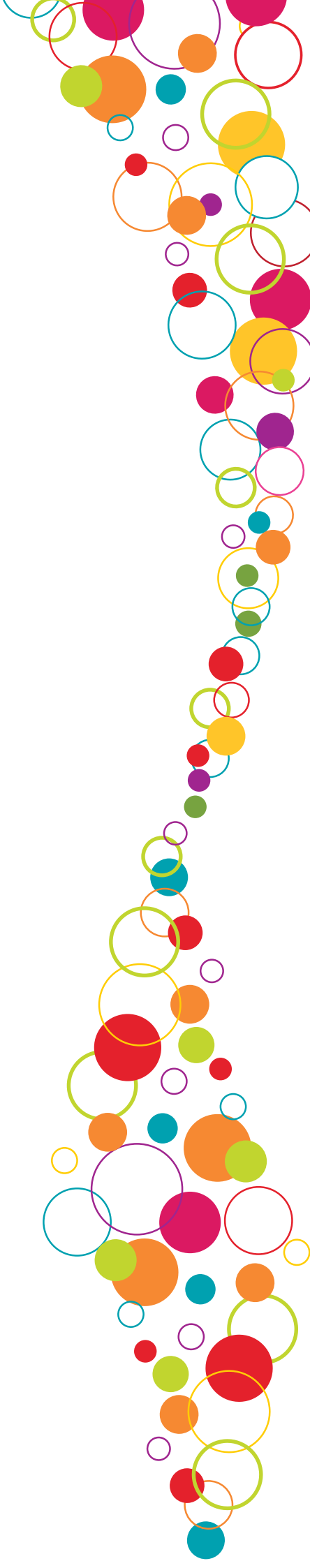
### Leadership Learning

In May 2016, CCSF President J. Mark Davis and Director of Scholarships Jamie Williams gathered with CCL's client team (Kelly Hannum, Sam Soloman, and Preston Yarborough) to initiate the discovery and strategic planning process for the coaching initiative. Among the priorities of this session were:

- connecting CCSF's pillars with CCL's perspective on inside-out leader development.
- overlaying student development theory concepts and exploring college-level leadership identity development.
- presenting CCL's leader development point of view and discussing coaching as a way to develop Scholars and others.

The co-design approach through every stage has been very beneficial in shaping a meaningful experience, for both Scholars and alumni. Being a thought partner helped us determine the best way to provide a unique experience that supports Scholars where they are, that engages alumni in a mutually developmental way, and that has a positive impact on their affinity for our network.

— *Jamie Williams, Director of Scholarship*



In April 2016, just a month before this coaching pilot planning session, CCL delivered the Leadership Essentials training to seven CCSF staff, all of whom would be serving in the initial cohort of CCSF coaches for the first year of the pilot.

CCSF staff who participated said the training was valuable for them, and that they came away understanding CCL's view of leadership, including the Direction-Alignment-Commitment (DAC)<sup>™</sup> model. They also reported that they gained valuable skills, such as applying the Situation-Behavior-Impact (SBI)<sup>™</sup> model to give effective feedback.

The most valuable thing I learned during the program was how to give feedback using Situation-Behavior-Impact. That is valuable because the ability to give quality, useful feedback is a difficult skill that is extremely important and useful for a leader.

— *CCSF staff member*



## Training Coaches

In September 2016, four CCL trainers traveled to Atlanta to train the first set of coaches: seven CCSF staff and nine alumni who volunteered to serve in this new role.

Four priorities were set out for the coach training:

- train 16 staff and alumni who would each serve as a coach for one to three new Coca-Cola Scholars.
- maximize trainees' coaching capacity using CCL's framework for leader development.
- establish coaching competencies, skills, and best practices.
- launch a pilot coaching program with the intent to scale it.

The CCSF coach training presented models and concepts important for supporting college student leader development. Participants also were introduced to fundamental helping skills that facilitate effective coaching relationships as well as opportunities to practice their coaching.

In addition, CCL established protocols for the new coaches to document coaching sessions and be accountable for assessing and addressing any critical safety or well-being issues that could emerge during coaching sessions.



The different activities and reflection activities were great in helping me . . . know what it's like to be coached before I begin coaching. The training was interactive, personalized, and intentional. I benefited greatly from it.

— *Coach trainee*

The coaches-in-training also provided qualitative and quantitative feedback at the end of the two-day training session. Among the notable results, all trainees reported agreeing or strongly agreeing with these statements:

- I understand my role as a coach.
- I feel prepared to build effective coaching relationships with the Scholars.
- I am confident I can establish a rapport with Scholars.
- I learned about concepts and techniques that will be valuable to me in other settings (work or home, for example).

Following the training, the newly minted coaches were assigned to a select group of 34 Coca-Cola Scholars and the coaching pilot was kicked off.



## The Impact

Coaches conducted six coaching sessions with their assigned Scholar(s), with each coach working with one to three Scholars. Both coaches and Scholars reported that the experience was worthwhile for them individually, and both groups felt it was worth continuing.

As a group, the Scholars reported their top benefits from the program were:

- being more able to “step back” from situations and reflect on their options and intentions.
- having a clearer vision for what they want to accomplish.
- feeling more able to face challenges.

The Scholars also said the coaching program made them feel more connected to CCSF, one of the program’s key goals.



“Having a coach has been useful to reflect on the transition to college with another person who is an outsider. My coach has helped me evaluate my personal growth in the past few months, and she has been a wonderful source of support, advice and inspiration. It is also really neat to have such wonderful, personal contacts within the CCSF family.”

—CCSF 2016 Scholar

“It has been incredible to talk to someone outside my everyday world. I always feel inspired and refreshed after my calls. I think I’ve grown and learned a lot just by talking through my goals and my transition to college. I’m really grateful for this opportunity and I know I will stay close with my coach.”

—CCSF 2016 Scholar

“I have found myself aiming to coach others! It was actually something that happened early on, but I found how much I benefited from engaging in active conversation, and having my coach challenge me to see different perspectives helped, and I wanted to do that for others.”

—CCSF 2016 Scholar



Coaches also appreciated the impact of the program. They reported:

- strengthening their connection to the Coca-Cola Scholars network.
- enhancing their leadership skills.
- learning skills that helped them in their personal lives.

In addition to the positive impact coaching had on Scholars, the effect on coaches is a win-win for CCSF. Staff members who served as coaches gained valuable leadership development skills that they reported using with their direct reports and peers at the Foundation, as well as in their personal lives. alumni coaches strengthened their bonds with CCSF and gained skills that continue to benefit them in their personal and professional lives.

“The Foundation continually strives to create deeper, more significant relationships with Scholars . . . the relationship is the most important aspect of the scholarship. Having that network is important, and this is another way to deepen those connections.”

“I would encourage other alumni to coach. And I’d be happy to talk to others either to encourage them or serve as a resource.”

“It’s a great opportunity for your own development. You can use the skills you develop across relationships and for the rest of your life.”

“It’s an opportunity to really make a difference in the life of a Scholar who could use that extra support. You’re an adult who has a nonjudgmental relationship with them. You’re a resource for them. And you learn and develop by learning from others, and they have a different perspective to share. You see things from another angle.”



The pilot cohort of Scholars and coaches also provided numerous suggestions to further strengthen the program as it moves into its second year and beyond.

The Foundation and CCL have taken next incremental steps along the strategic plan to scale the program. In 2017, 27 coaches were trained, including 18 coaches new to the program. Fifty-nine Scholars have been selected for year two of the pilot and will get the benefit of this coaching experience. The Foundation also sees potential to expand the program beyond its current focus on first-year college students.

“There are a number of ways we could apply this coaching model in our network,” said Jamie Williams, Director of Scholarships. “I think we’re well situated to build on the innovative approaches we have developed to possibly consider coaching later in college or even in career coaching.”



## Center for Creative Leadership®

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) is a top-ranked, global provider of leadership development. By leveraging the power of leadership to drive results that matter most to clients, CCL transforms individual leaders, teams, organizations, and society. Our array of cutting-edge solutions is steeped in extensive research and experience gained from working with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels. Ranked among the world's top providers of executive education by the *Financial Times* and *Bloomberg Businessweek*, CCL has offices in Greensboro, NC; Colorado Springs, CO; San Diego, CA; Brussels, Belgium; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Johannesburg, South Africa; London, United Kingdom; Moscow, Russia; Singapore; Gurgaon, India; and Shanghai, China.

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