

Porter-Billups Scholars



In 1996, Regis University Men's Head Basketball Coach Lonnie Porter established the Lonnie Porter Leadership Academy to provide academic and leadership training to at-risk inner city students from Denver. In 2006, NBA star Chauncey Billups joined forces with Porter in this effort and the program was renamed the Porter-Billups Leadership Academy.

The Porter-Billups Leadership Academy:

- Students participate in a rigorous three-week academic program each summer and year-round support is provided to the high school students and their parents.
- The Academy serves about 130 elementary through high school students each year.
- Over the years, Coach Porter and staff develop long-term relationships with the students and their parents. Nearly 25% have participated for 6 to 8 years.
- Nearly 90 percent of Academy students come from families where parents have not completed college.
- About 85 percent of participants are students of color.
- 30 percent of participants are from families with incomes of \$30,000 or less.
- 97 percent of Academy alumni have graduated from high school. This compares to an estimated graduation rate of 69 percent for Colorado students.

The University is raising scholarship funds so that low-income Academy graduates have the financial resources to attend Regis. Financial aid is critical to helping these at-risk youth complete college and achieve their potential.

The Porter-Billups Scholars at Regis

- Although participants can apply to any college, the Porter-Billups Scholarship was developed to provide full-tuition to Academy alumni who participated in the Academy for at least seven consecutive years, are enrolled at Regis, and demonstrate financial need.
- Roughly 10 Porter-Billups Scholars are enrolled at Regis each year.
- To date, about 60 percent of Academy alumni have graduated from college (with a 100 percent graduation rate of those who attend Regis).

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Jeremiah Keelan, RC '06

When Jeremiah joined the Academy in 7th grade, he had no idea just how familiar with Regis he would eventually become, even having one of his first college classes in the same room as an Academy class. He admits he didn't know what college was supposed to be until his second year at the Academy, at which time he realized that continuing his education beyond high school would be a lot of work, but also an important pursuit. Although education was always something his family valued, the scholarship made college a reality.

"Without it, I never would have been able to come here."

Now, as the first in his family to graduate from college, he is well on his way, planning to use his degree in business administration in a position with a marketing and advertising agency in the Denver-Metro area. He credits Regis and the Academy with preparing him for life after college. "Coach Porter is like the dad of the Academy. He and the staff helped make the transition from the Academy to college easy, and Regis helped me with entering the professional world."

While at Regis, Jeremiah played baseball and volunteered his time to his former grade school, Skinner Middle School, coaching baseball. He also worked summers with Opportunity Through Baseball, a program for disadvantaged kids similar to what he experienced with the Academy. "I valued the opportunity to give back and help kids know that there is more out there than the limited worlds they knew."

Jeremiah is honored to have attended Regis and for all of the doors it and the Academy have opened for him. As one of the first Academy participants to graduate from college, he also is appreciative for the support of Chauncey Billups and donors. "I want the donors to know they are truly impacting our lives. Their support helps young men and women pursue their dreams and better their lives, which contributes to the betterment of society."



Allison Rodriguez, RC '08

As soon as Allison Rodriguez joined the Porter-Billups Leadership Academy in grade school, she knew she wanted to go to college, and not just any college. She wanted to go to Regis University.

The importance of a college education was drilled into the minds of students at the Academy. "You are never given a chance to fail," she says of the program. "If your grades fall, you know that Coach Porter will have questions for you."

The inspiration behind her dream to become a teacher came out of her Academy and Regis experiences. Her time with Coach Porter and her teachers, as well as the professors at Regis not only excited her for life after college and for her own career in the education field, it provided her with an important support system and a group of special role models. She plans to teach in a low-income school district in Colorado and work with elementary-aged English Language Learners.

"I hope that when students leave my classroom at the end of the year they think that anything is possible. I want them to know that college is an option, just as the Academy and Regis did for me."

The opportunity to study at Regis means the world to Allison, and she feels the completion of her degree matters to more people than just her parents. She knows it also matters to Coach Porter, to the Academy, to her instructors at Regis, and to the donors of the Porter-Billups Scholarships.

"Words cannot express my gratitude to Coach Porter, Chauncey Billups and those who have made the Porter-Billups Scholarships available," she says, noting how the Academy has helped so many students find hope for themselves and their future. "It opens doors that we thought would forever be closed. Without this opportunity I would not be where I am today."

Jarell Fleming, RC '07

"Education is one of the most important things in life," says Jarell, who spent six years in the Porter-Billups Leadership Academy (PBLA) before attending Regis. "The more you know, the more you can do."

The Academy started out as "just something to do" for the summer, but as time went on, he became more focused on the scholarship to Regis that would be available to him if he did well in school. "Regis was challenging and rewarding, a place where I experienced personal growth and gained confidence through learning about what I was truly capable of accomplishing."

He now aspires to a career in marketing research and analysis, a subject he discovered during his undergraduate studies. "My classes were great. All of my business instructors had experience other than just what was in books. They'd owned their own businesses and worked for different companies. It really gave me insight into the professional world." He also interned with a local magazine.

To Jarell, the Academy and the scholarship program give everyone a chance at college. "The Porter-Billups Scholars program is very important. It helps youth who want to go to college but who would never be able afford it on their own."

As the first in his immediate family to graduate from college, he appreciates that the Academy exposes young people to a collegiate atmosphere at such an early age. Jarell admits he didn't know about Regis before participating in PBLA, but each year he became more excited about the idea of Regis. "The scholarship and the support from Coach Porter made Regis a reality for me. I wanted to do well at Regis because of all that Coach Porter put into me during the Academy." And although he finished with the Academy before Chauncey Billups arrived, he still counts the NBA pro among his many supporters. "Having a pro athlete from our neighborhood step up to help young people like me is really inspiring."

"You won't find a lot of programs like Porter-Billups," he says. "I am honored to have had the opportunity to participate in the Academy and attend a school like Regis."

