



Young Women's Leadership
Charter School
of Chicago Girls of today, leaders of tomorrow.

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Chicago's Only All-girls Public School Graduates Friday with 100 Percent Acceptance to College *Senior Awarded Prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship*

CHICAGO (June 2, 2014) – For the second year in a row, 100 percent of the high school seniors from Young Women's Leadership Charter School (YWLCS) have been accepted to colleges and universities around the country.

During the Commencement Ceremony on May 30th at the South Shore Cultural Center, Michelle Boone, Commissioner of the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, delivered the keynote speech to the 43 graduates, many who will be the first in their families to go to college.

"Young Women's is making a profound impact on the lives of so many girls who have the opportunity to get an education that will help them realize their dreams and reach their potential," said Michelle T. Boone. "I'm honored to be part of the celebration to send off to college a new class of women leaders who will make a difference in our communities."

YWLCS empowers young women to transform their lives through education. Each day, students are taught that at YWLCS there are "No excuses, just results." This mantra inspires YWLCS students to make a commitment to themselves that despite any challenges they may confront at school, at home, or in their neighborhoods, they will rise to the occasion and do whatever it takes to not only go to college, but get a college degree. Many of the girls at YWLCS arrive at the school in 7th or 9th grade performing several grade levels behind. However, with hard work and determination, this year's seniors have proven that they are living the "no excuses, just results," mantra and getting one step closer to reaching their goals.

More than 90% of the students at Young Women's come from low-income families, which creates a significant financial barrier for students when it comes to funding their post-secondary education, but the school's college counseling staff work with each student to develop a plan to earn scholarships and grants and enable families to make an investment in their daughters' futures through college. Early in their careers at YWLCS, students and their families get the information and support from the school to ensure that college is a viable option.

YWLCS Senior, Charnae Caldwell, took that message to heart. She applied for the prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship and recently learned that she was selected. This is the second year in a row that the school has had a Gates Millennium scholar. As one of 1,000 students throughout the country who were selected for the competitive scholarship, Caldwell will attend Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia.

The “good-through-graduation” scholarship covers all unmet educational expenses a student may accrue while pursuing any degree including a doctorate. The program, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, also invests in the personal and professional growth of its scholars

Receiving the Gates Millennium Scholarship has been a dream come true for Caldwell.

“Going to college was always my goal, but I knew that securing enough money to attend the best college for all four years would be a challenge,” Caldwell said. “When I found out that I was one of the students to receive the scholarship, I felt relieved to know that I can focus on my academics at college, instead of worrying about how I could find the money to stay there.”

Students in YWLCS’ Class of 2014 have accrued nearly \$800,000 in scholarships to date and have been accepted to nearly 150 colleges and universities across the nation, including: University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin, Northern Illinois University, and Clark Atlanta University.

While two-thirds of YWLCS students arrive performing up to three grades below their age level, 75% of YWLCS alumnae go on to attend college—a significantly higher percentage than the CPS average of 54%. This year is the 11th class of seniors to graduate from the school, and approximately 50% of YWLCS alumnae have graduated from college or are working to earn a degree. Furthermore, YWLCS alumnae are four times more likely complete a college degree within seven years of high school graduation, than their peers in the Chicago public school district.

Senior graduation was held on Friday, May 30th, 10am-Noon at the South Shore Cultural Center, 7059 S. South Shore Drive.

About Young Women’s Leadership Charter School:

As the only all-girls public school in Chicago, the Young Women’s Leadership Charter School (YWLCS) gives urban girls the tools to excel academically, to graduate from high school, and to go to college. Located on Chicago’s Near South Side, YWLCS is a non-selective school that engages nearly 350 Chicago urban 7th-12th grade students in rigorous college preparatory learning with a focus on math, science, and technology. The school was founded in 1999 by a group of 23 Chicago women who were determined to create a school offering urban girls a rigorous college preparatory education emphasizing math, science and technology, areas where women, and particularly women of color, had long been seriously underrepresented. The school is open to any young woman residing in Chicago with admission based on lottery. Many YWLCS students will be the first in their families to go to college and the school has been recognized for graduation and college acceptance rates that exceed those of other non-selective Chicago high schools.