

# Young Adult Focus Group for the Ad Hoc Committee on Measures of Postsecondary Preparedness

As one step in addressing the charge of the Ad Hoc Committee on Measures of Postsecondary Preparedness, the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) organized and facilitated a meeting with a select group of young adults and adult mentors. The purpose of this meeting was to elicit input from young adults to determine the extent to which high school prepared them for success in a postsecondary environment. Adult panel members provided insight on the skills they emphasize in their education centers and how they might be measured in a meaningful way.

We assembled an exceptional panel of young men and women living and attending postsecondary school in the Atlanta area. The youth panel members included Ramon Diaz-Soria, Kally Flores, Jala Hawkins, Kendreze Holland, Joshua McNease, Akira Morris, Anh Thu Nguyen, Demetrius Underwood, and Colleen Welker. Two prominent adults who serve the youth community also participated as panelists—Gregory C. Mooney, President & Director, Comer Education Campus, Chicago and Anona Shugart Walker, Director of Post-Secondary Partnerships, Achieve Atlanta. Also, in attendance were Tonya Matthews, Alice Peisch, and Bev Purdue, Governing Board members; Lily Clark and Lisa Stooksberry, Governing Board staff; and Emily Dickinson, Sheila Schultz, and Anne Woods, HumRRO staff.

The meeting was held on October 25, 2018 in Atlanta, Georgia. In advance of the meeting, panelists received brief biographic summaries of the participating young adults, the meeting agenda, and logistical information for the meeting. Appendix A contains the agenda, list of attendees, and panelists' biographies.

Terry Mazany, Ad Hoc Committee Chair, welcomed the panelists and attending Governing Board members, thanking them in advance for their participation. He opened the meeting with an overview of the Committee's charge, a review of related activities, and the importance of obtaining the panelists' input on their preparedness for success in their chosen postsecondary path.

Following introductions by all attendees, Emily Dickinson (HumRRO) reviewed the agenda and goals for the meeting. She then facilitated a rich discussion among the young adult panelists about the different types of skills required for postsecondary life, drawing on the common theme of preparedness. The adult panelists provided their perspectives as youth service providers and offered guidance on meaningful measures for students. Finally, Terry Mazany offered some concluding comments.

This document summarizes the comments shared by the panelists and presents key themes of their discussion.

## Young Adult Discussion

### *Youth Panel Discussion: Life & Choices After High School –My Path So Far*

To establish a context around the discussion about postsecondary preparedness, each young adult panelist shared his or her personal stories. They were encouraged to elaborate how they are moving along their life path, emphasizing postsecondary preparedness, career goals, and personal and professional influences. When speaking, panelists spoke of a desire to “give back” and support their communities.

**Akira Morris** is a Criminal Justice major at Clark Atlanta University. As a college student, Ms. Morris has made the dean’s list twice. She was introduced to politics in middle school. She gained an appreciation in high school for how politics can influence one’s life when she realized that people of color, especially black women, are under-represented in the criminal justice system. She attended Gary Comer Prep High School in Chicago and was exposed to higher level classes, which drove her to excel. Barrack Obama’s presidency increased her motivation to represent young black woman.

**Joshua McNease** participates in Year Up Greater Atlanta and is enrolled in Atlanta Technical School. Although he has a learning disability, he was unaware he could receive accommodations when taking the SAT. He was disappointed with his SAT scores, but he did not have the money to take the test again. He was upset with his options after high school and was persuaded by his family to pursue his current opportunities. He is very happy with his technical program and is excited to be learning valuable skills that will translate to success as he completes school and enters the workforce.

**Demetrius Underwood** attends Morehouse College and is interested in politics. He attended Gary Comer Prep High School and was pushed to excel. He shared complications with growing up in Chicago and being a minority. He said his life is often stressful because even though he has the academic background to succeed in college, his lack of financial stability makes it difficult to know what his future will hold.

**Jala Hawkins** is a sophomore at Spelman College. She originally pursued a career in healthcare, but soon changed her mind and is now studying mathematics. Her goal is to be a high school mathematics teacher. Ms. Hawkins always loved math and she was inspired by her 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. She wants to give back to her community and inspire others to learn and succeed.

**Anh Thu Nguyen** is a second-year chemistry major on the pre-health track at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She loves chemistry and took 3 years of chemistry in high school. Initially, she wanted to be a cosmetic chemist because she loves beauty, but she changed her mind because she didn’t feel like she would be helping people working in that career. She had a difficult transition into college life and experienced health issues. She spent time at Emory Children’s Hospital, which inspired her to pursue a career in the medical field.

**Kendreze Holland** attends Georgia State University as a chemistry major, with a concentration in biochemistry. He did not feel prepared academically for college because he did not have access in high school to higher level math classes like Calculus. He was inspired to go to college because of a visiting engineering professor who volunteered at his high school. His parents did not go to college and discouraged his dreams. Not having a family support system forced him to reach out to fellow students for help. His friends have helped him learn study skills

and better manage his time. Although Mr. Holland lacked certain resources growing up, he is encouraged to stay in school and succeed.

**Kally Flores** attends Georgia State University Perimeter Campus in Dunwoody and is pursuing an early education degree. Although her mother left school in sixth grade, she encouraged her daughter, Kally, to get an education. Her brother graduated high school and she wanted to do the same and more. Historically, Hispanics are not represented professionally or encouraged to excel, so Ms. Flores works every day to disprove stereotypes. She wants to be a preschool teacher because she remembers her teachers (bad and good) and how they influenced her. She is inspired when young children ask her questions. She wants to make her family proud.

**Colleen Welker** attends Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville, where she studies business management and event planning. She was offered various career paths when in high school. At one time, she wanted to go into the healthcare field, but she now prefers a business focus. She plans to move to New York City and learn about event planning from her networking contacts. She does not particularly like school and wants to get started on her career as soon as possible; however, she realizes she needs an education before doing so. She prefers work to school and wants to learn from people already in the field instead of reading about it.

**Ramon Diaz-Soria** attends Oglethorpe University. When growing up, he had many dreams, but no clear path on how to pursue them or an action plan. He was inspired by his middle school science teachers and they made him think that science was cool. He participated in an International Baccalaureate program, which helped him realize he wanted to pursue a career in the science field. Although his parents do not pressure him to become a doctor, he feels he needs to become one because there is a scarcity of Hispanic doctors. He is becoming more interested in politics now that he is in college. He believes many political issues affect immigrants and minorities that should not be ignored. He would like to find a career that merges health and politics. He wants to help make healthcare more accessible. Many young people do not have the money for or access to proper healthcare, or they have a negative view of doctors and the care they would receive. Mr. Diaz-Soria wants to change that.

Ms. Matthews noted that many young adult panelists spoke about life shifts they encountered. She encouraged them to elaborate on who helped them on their journey. She was specifically interested to know if they had support in high school that helped them plan and prepare for their postsecondary life.

One young panelist said that her mother wanted her to be a doctor because they make a lot of money; however, she feels she can make a bigger difference by becoming an educator. As a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) student, another young panelist said he often feels he has limited options; however, he is learning to accept and adapt. Although he wants to be a doctor, he also knows he will need to support his parents after graduation. This young panelist has plans to pursue a graduate degree after some years of working. His parents were not a resource in high school or now; he admitted feeling unsure who to approach for help with school and life situations. After reaching out to friends, he made contacts at his college and formed mentorships with professors. He often feels anxious trying to figure out are helpful resources.

Another young panelist agreed and admitted feeling conflicted with attending college. In addition to school, she works to support her family and worries her family may be deported. She does not like to be away from home because she cannot watch over them. In high school, she did not

have access to many resources. Her teachers stressed the importance of taking the SAT and ACT, but she didn't know how to sign up or study for the exams. She also found the financial aid forms difficult to access and complete without guidance. She felt fortunate that some teachers reached out to her and got her involved in the mentorship program, HOPE (Hispanic Organization Promoting Education). She was paired with an education coach during her senior year of high school who helped her navigate college admissions and find success in college.

### ***Youth Panel Discussion: How Prepared Was I for Life After High School?***

Over a working lunch, Ms. Dickinson facilitated a deeper discussion regarding the skills panelists found to be important for moving them forward on the path towards their goals. The discussion focused on different intrapersonal/interpersonal, cognitive, literacy, and academic skills acquired and desired for a postsecondary environment.

#### ***Intrapersonal/Interpersonal***

***Communication.*** All panelists agreed on the importance of possessing effective communication skills. They commented that people cannot know that others need help if they don't ask. It can be intimidating to talk with peers or adults sometimes, but they realized doing so is necessary. Many panelists said they took classes that helped them gain networking and public speaking skills. They realized the benefits of communicating needs, wants, and expectations for themselves and others. Communication also helps them express their value to potential employers and encourages dialogue with classmates and teachers. Male panelists spoke of overcoming stereotypes, such as remaining strong and silent; they noted how much better they felt with open lines of communication. Panelists agreed stress is an ever-present component of their lives and communicating the importance of self-care helps them balance competing priorities.

***Collaboration.*** Panelists recognized their innate personalities often steer them towards leadership roles. They recognized the importance of stepping back and working with others and acknowledged it was okay when their ideas weren't selected. Many college assignments require group projects, which forces them to work as a team to accomplish a task or reach a goal. Others said they often need help and would not be able to get through college without collaboration.

***Perseverance.*** Panelists mentioned the adjustment from high school to postsecondary life. Although campus was close to one panelist's house, she found college to be very different from her neighborhood because the students were of varied socioeconomic levels. She found it difficult to meet people and find a place to belong. Another young panelist reported having ineffective study skills. He did not study for his first two tests and did not do well. However, he learned better study habits from a classmate and believes these new study skills will give him more control over how well he performs on future tests. One panelist wants to graduate early so she can attend pharmacy school, but she also realizes it may be better to slow down and not overwork herself. Panelists stated the negative and challenging aspects of their lives motivate them to persevere and remain dedicated to their academic and professional ambitions.

***Self-Efficacy/Self-Control.*** Participants admitted struggling with self-control and reported this was mostly because they demand too much from themselves. They recognized the need for downtime and rest. They sometimes find it difficult to step away from a leadership role, especially when in group situations.

## **Cognitive**

*Problem Solving.* Panelists reported feeling a lot of stress associated with problem solving and having learned various techniques for mitigating it. One panelist focuses on what she can control. Another tries to make problem solving into a game, a process he learned in high school. Others said past experiences helped them make better decisions when faced with similar problems. They said most of their problems involve family, work, school, and trying to succeed.

*Creativity.* Panelists said they have had to be creative in their planning skills, especially when finding strategies that work for them. One uses technology and a variety of apps to help manage their time and organize their activities. Another panelist noted creativity is often needed to find the best solution to a problem. Some panelists reported being creative by visualizing the long-term result and working backwards to achieve it. Other panelists said they need to be creative when planning. For example, one panelist knew he would miss a class, so he obtained approval from his teacher to record his part of a group presentation, which his group then played during the actual class.

*Time-Management.* Panelists said planning helps them manage their time better. The panelists again spoke of using technology to help them organize and remain aware of their responsibilities.

*Self-Motivation and Self-Responsibility.* While many panelists agreed they were intrinsically motivated, they reported also finding inspiration from music, meditation, and rewards. One panelist uses color coding to remind him of appointments and assignments. The panelists indicated their focus was always school and getting ahead. Some panelists are first generation citizens and mentioned personal and familial pride in pursuing higher education and career goals. One panelist is motivated to have a better future than her past and she believes education provides the answer.

*Opportunity to Learn.* Although all young adult panelists are enrolled in some type of postsecondary education program, they reported following different paths to get there. Some panelists felt their high school classes prepared them for the rigors of college courses. Other panelists said they were identified early in their academic careers as being gifted and this distinction provided them access to services other students did not receive. After one panelist overcame health issues, he had to persuade teachers to give him a chance in the advanced classes. Another mentioned her preschool teacher worked with her every day to learn English and supported for enrollment into higher level elementary school programs. Panelists agreed they needed to advocate for themselves to obtain academic opportunities. Many said they had friends who were just as smart, but because they were in lower level academic classes, many of them ended up dropping out of school or not going to college and now were working in low-skilled labor jobs. They wished postsecondary education was more accessible to and financially feasible for minorities. Many young panelists expressed a desire for increased educational opportunities at younger ages to keep students interested in school.

*Self-Care.* Panelists were attuned to their mental health and considered it an integral component of their overall well-being. All spoke of stressful lifestyles and the need for self-care. Some panelists regularly seek help from a therapist or talk with family members. They mentioned the importance of a strong support system that includes both family and friends. Some panelists preferred to focus on gratitude instead of hardships. All panelists were thankful for all their opportunities. They hoped their generation would change the stigma around mental health, especially around minorities.

Ms. Dickinson concluded that many of the soft skills appeared to be self-taught and overlapping, so it would be hard to pinpoint their specific origin.

### ***Literacy***

***Financial.*** Panelists expressed a need for financial literacy to be widely taught in schools. Although the panelists believe they are intelligent and can do well academically, they feel they do not have strong management skills. A panelist said the student loan forms were very difficult to complete without formal guidance; most agreed with the complexity of student loan forms. Many of the panelists attend college now because they were able to obtain financial assistance. They expressed a need for high schools to teach financial literacy, which would greatly benefit students like them who require financial aid to attend college. Some panelists reported their high school helped them with practical financial strategies and how to complete the loan forms. One panelist said he learned to research future salaries for his chosen profession and decided where he should live based on what he could afford. He said he adjusts his current lifestyle to live within his means.

***Civic Responsibility.*** All panelists felt a strong sense of civic responsibility and expressed a desire to make a difference in their communities and beyond. They mentioned political involvement and how it affected them, with examples ranging from illegal immigration to minority success in education.

### ***Academic***

Panelists cited teachers as being very influential in their academic endeavors and encouraging them to succeed. Students who participated in an International Baccalaureate program felt academically prepared for college. Students who participated in advanced-level high school classes also felt prepared. Panelists who did not participate or have access to these resources felt less prepared. Many panelists mentioned that even if they were academically prepared, college classes are challenging and they need help handling a heavier academic course load.

### ***Youth Service Provider Panel Discussion: Advice for the Education System from the Perspective of Youth Service Providers – What Measures Are Meaningful for Students?***

The discussion continued with members of the Adult Panel—Greg Mooney, President & Executive Director of the Comer Education Campus and Anona Walker, Director of Post-Secondary Partnerships, Achieve Atlanta Discussion. These panelists offered advice on the Education System from the Perspective of Youth Service Providers, specifically, what skills are most important for postsecondary success and how these might be measured in a meaningful way.

The youth service provider panelists explained they work on cultivating the whole student, focusing on hard and soft skills. While the students are motivated, and often the first in their families to attend college, aspiration is not enough. As providers, they need to understand their students and their struggles. For many, there are several limitations—financial, stress, academic rigor—and the providers need to increase the students' motivation to succeed. Additionally, the providers work to close the gap between where their students are and where they want to be.

Mr. Mooney played a video that highlighted the role of the Gary Comer Youth Center in Chicago. Youth panelists who attended the center voiced their approval and commented how influential it was as a support system. All youth panelists expressed a desire for more centers

like Gary Comer. They had many wonderful teachers who supported them, but they noted that schools do not have the resources to reach all students.

The adult panelists indicated their relationships with students do not end with high school graduation. As a mechanism to bridge the gap, they work to identify and coordinate internship opportunities for students in college. With their network and connections, they can often arrange opportunities even for students attending schools in different states. The service centers prepare the students for professional life, and practice with them different skills needed for interviewing and presenting themselves effectively to employers.

The adult panelists agreed that internships should be based on factors other than grades and family connections. They feel businesses need to look at the whole student and that opportunities given to students with similar backgrounds to the youth panelists are often mutually beneficial.

The Gary Comer Youth Center is an established organization. However, Achieve Atlanta is still relatively new; this organization continues to build more connections and identify ways to better serve their students when they go to college. Ms. Walker cited financial difficulties and dependents as barriers to student success.

## Recommendations

Before ending the meeting, the young adult panelists were asked for recommendations the Governing Board should consider in helping other young adults prepare for and be successful in their postsecondary endeavors. They responded with the following:

- More training for guidance counselors to help minority students on the path to post-secondary education.
- Offer general education choices in schools that offer career paths, which would allow students to experience different options before committing to one.
- Make higher level mathematics classes available to all students.
- Increase publicity and more widely disseminate information about scholarships that are available to students.
- Offer assistance and support to students when completing college applications and financial aid forms.
- Increase the career path options and apprenticeship opportunities for high school students.
- Encourage a process that considers grades as well as other abilities and achievements when selecting students to participate in internship opportunities.

## Reflections

Mr. Mazany thanked the panelists for sharing their experiences and insights with the Governing Board. He encouraged them to continue to be prepared for changes and agreed that more services are needed that provide youth a safety net to succeed. He stressed the need for a strong foundational base and acknowledged the challenges that many young adults encounter

in achieving their goals. He commented on the perseverance and fortitude of the young adult panelists and asked them for concluding thoughts.

Panelists suggested that while they may not fit the current profile of a “normal” student, they are approaching the norm, and they hope that younger generations will not have their same struggles. They reminded the Governing Board that there is more diversity in their postsecondary environment and today’s students are socially conscious and civic minded. They hope future teachers will be more racially and culturally similar to the students they teach and that they attune to the social struggles that can dampen academic success. Panelists asked for increased access to educational and professional opportunities for all students and a stronger focus on financial literacy. Panelists expressed gratitude for their postsecondary journey thus far. Finally, they thanked the Governing Board for facilitating the discussion and the opportunity to help bridge the gap for the next generation of students.

## Appendix A: Meeting Agenda, Attendees, and Panelist Biographies

**Young Adult Panel**  
**Thursday, October 25, 2018**  
**11:00 am – 2:00 pm ET**

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta  
191 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 1000  
Atlanta, GA 30303

### Agenda

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<b>11:00 – 11:15 am</b>	<b>Welcome, Introductions, and Overview of the Ad Hoc Committee</b> <i>Terry Mazany, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Measures of Postsecondary Preparedness</i>  <b>Overview of the Discussion Topics and Goals for the Panels</b> <i>Emily Dickinson, HumRRO</i>
<b>11:15 am – 12:00 pm</b>	<b>Youth Panel Discussion: Life &amp; Choices After High School –My Path So Far</b> <i>Facilitated by Emily Dickinson</i>  <u>Guiding Questions:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How did you choose the path you are on?</li><li>2. What has influenced your path since you left high school?</li></ol>
<b>12:00 – 12:45 pm</b>	<b>Working Lunch and Youth Panel Discussion: How Prepared Was I for Life After High School?</b> <i>Facilitated by Emily Dickinson</i>  <u>Guiding Questions:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Were you prepared with the academic skills you needed for life after high school?</li><li>2. What other skills have been most important for the path you are on?</li></ol>
<b>12:45 – 1:00 pm</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>1:00 – 1:45 pm</b>	<b>Adult Panel Discussion: Advice for the Education System from the Perspective of Youth Service Providers – What Measures Are Meaningful for Students?</b> <i>Facilitated by Emily Dickinson</i>
<b>1:45 – 2:00 pm</b>	<b>Final Reflections of the Group</b> <i>Terry Mazany</i>

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*Conducted in Support of the National Assessment Governing Board's  
Ad Hoc Committee on Measures of Postsecondary Preparedness*

## **Attendees**

### **Youth Service Provider Panelists:**

- Gregory C. Mooney, President & Executive Director, Gary Comer Education Campus
- Anona Shugart Walker, Director of Post-Secondary Partnerships, Achieve Atlanta

### **Youth Panelists:**

- Ramon Diaz-Soria
- Kally Flores
- Jala Hawkins
- Kendreze Holland
- Joshua McNease
- Akira Morris
- Anh Thu Nguyen
- Demetrius Underwood
- Colleen Welker

### **Governing Board Members:**

- Tonya Matthews, Vice-Chair
- Terry Mazany, Chair, Ad Hoc Committee on Measures of Postsecondary Preparedness
- Alice Peisch, Massachusetts State Legislator
- Beverly Perdue, Chair, former Governor of North Carolina

### **Governing Board Staff Members:**

- Lily Clark, Assistant Director for Policy & Research
- Lisa Stooksberry, Deputy Executive Director

### **HumRRO Staff Members:**

- Emily Dickinson, Senior Staff Scientist
- Sheila Schultz, Manager, Educational Policy Impact Center
- Anne Woods, Research Associate

*Youth Service Provider and Young Adult Panelist Biographies*

**Gregory C. Mooney**

President & Executive Director, Comer Education Campus

Greg Mooney is the President & Executive Director of the Comer Education Campus, where he oversees all aspects of the dynamic relationship between the Gary Comer Youth Center, Gary Comer College Prep, Gary Comer Middle School, the college success initiative *UtmostU* and various community development partnerships. In addition to providing strategic direction for all school-based and community-based projects, he oversees the activities of Comer staff and collaborates with school leadership to support the activities of teachers, staff, and youth development professionals in the Schools and the Center. Greg also serves as a Vice-President of the Comer Science & Education Foundation.



Greg began his career as a junior high school teacher and coach on Chicago’s South Side. Prior to joining the Comer Science & Education Foundation in 2002, Greg served as Executive Director of the Inner-City Teaching Corps, where he helped to launch the first alternative teacher certification program in the State of Illinois. He also served as Vice President of 21st Century Urban Schools, assisting with the founding of Alain Locke Charter Academy on Chicago’s West Side.

A summa cum laude graduate of Villanova University, Greg received a Master of Business Administration from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Greg has served on the boards of Catalyst Schools, Leadership Greater Chicago, Cook County Justice for Children, the Frances Xavier Warde School, Catholic Network of Volunteer Service and Gary Comer College Prep, LLC. In addition, he serves on leadership committees for Future Leaders of Chicago, the Greater Chatham Initiative and St. Malachy School.

**Anona Shugart Walker**

Director of Post-Secondary Partnerships, Achieve Atlanta

Anona Shugart Walker graduated magna cum laude from the University of Southern California with a bachelor's degree in Public Policy and Management. She holds a master's degree in Policy, Organization, and Leadership Studies from the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University. As the Director of Post-Secondary Partnerships, Anona supports Achieve Atlanta's college success programming to ensure each Achieve Atlanta Scholar persists to complete college and earn a degree. Prior to joining Achieve Atlanta, Anona held roles in strategy, innovation, and community engagement at Fulton County Schools. Most recently, she developed and managed community partnerships in the Banneker High School feeder pattern as a part of a comprehensive school turnaround strategy. In addition, Anona spent several years working as a fifth-grade teacher in East Palo Alto, California, and held multiple roles at a family foundation based in Los Angeles, California.



## **Ramon Diaz-Soria**

Ramon Diaz-Soria is 20 years old and a 2018 graduate of North Atlanta High School. He is enrolled full time at Oglethorpe University. He works part time at Uncle Julio's and has an internship at Caminar Latino. His free time is spent participating in various on campus organizations and volunteer events.

## **Kally Flores**



Kally Flores is from Georgia and has lived in the Doraville/Dunwoody area all her life. She graduated from Dunwoody High School this past May. She is currently a student at the Georgia State University Perimeter Campus in Dunwoody where she is pursuing a major in early childhood education. She will have her associate's degree in two years and will be able to work as an assistant teacher. She will later pursue her bachelor's degree so she can become a pre-K teacher.

## **Jala Hawkins**



Jala Hawkins is a proud native of Atlanta, Georgia; and a proud graduate of Booker T. Washington High School, where she graduated Salutatorian. She is a sophomore at Spelman College majoring in mathematics with a concentration in secondary education. Academics has always been a focus for her; her determination and discipline has allowed her to maintain a steady 3.9 GPA. She is an active member of the Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society and NAACP Spelman Chapter Education Committee. The latter, in which she has helped organize events such as SpelMore where Spelman College and Morehouse College volunteer and mentor at local middle schools. She spends her free time volunteering at her former high school and teaching on Saturday's as part of being a Breakthrough Atlanta school year teacher. She aims to one day become a high school math teacher in order to join the fight against educational inequities. Her favorite quote is, "When we look for the good in things and expect it to show up, we'll always find it."

## **Kendreze Holland**

Kendreze Holland was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. He graduated from the B.E.S.T Academy high school in 2016. He currently attends Georgia State University as a chemistry major with a biochemistry concentration. Kendreze plans to conduct graduate-level research during his undergraduate semester. Afterward, He plans to pursue a Ph.D. in biochemical sciences and teach at the collegiate level. A few of his hobbies included reading and watching twitch streams during his spare time.



## **Joshua McNease**



Joshua McNease is from Atlanta, Georgia where he's lived for his whole life. He graduated in 2018 from Mays High School in Atlanta, Georgia. Currently, he is enrolled full-time in Atlanta Technical School, studying pc repair and network technician. He is learning to install computer hardware, optimize operating features, configure networks and perform basic troubleshooting operations. He works 30 hours a week at the AMC movie theater, where he is responsible for ushering, greeting and customer service. Additionally, he participates in Year Up Greater Atlanta, a one-year, intensive training program that provides young adults with a combination of hands-on skills development, college credit coursework, internships, and support. After trade school, He has two plans- one is do his internships and get hired after six months or take his college credit to another school to study sports management.

## **Akira Morris**



Akira Morris attended Gary Comer College Prep and is currently a Criminal Justice major at Clark Atlanta University. She plans to attend law school here in Atlanta and become a Criminal Defense Lawyer and receive her law licenses in Georgia and Illinois.

## **Anh Thu Nguyen**

Anh Nguyen is from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She graduated from North Atlanta High School in May 2017 with the International Baccalaureate diploma. She is currently a second-year chemistry major on the pre-health track at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She wants to be involved in undergraduate research next semester and has applied to several research project groups. Furthermore, she wants to volunteer at community pharmacies and clinics during her time as an undergraduate. She is planning to finish her B.S. in Fall 2020 and apply to pharmacy schools right after graduation. As of now, she is not sure if she wants to go into the pharmaceuticals industry or work as a pediatric pharmacist at a children's hospital.



## **Demetrius Underwood**



Demetrius is a student at Morehouse College. He graduated from Gary Comer Prep in 2018. While there, he was president of the class, a senior student council member, and vice-president of STEM. Demetrius participated in the selective New Trier Tyro Internship at Mesirow Financial in Chicago this past summer.

## **Colleen Welker**



Colleen Welker is from Marietta, Georgia and attended Joseph Wheeler High School in Cobb County. She is currently enrolled at Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville working to obtain a bachelor's degree in Business Management. She is working to have a career as an event planner on more the wedding side of events.