



LEAP TAMPA BAY RECEIVES 2021 MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FROM NATIONAL COLLEGE ATTAINMENT NETWORK

Tampa, Fla. – LEAP Tampa Bay College Access Network received the 2021 Member of the Year Award of Excellence from the National College Attainment Network. Since 2007, the Award of Excellence has recognized the work of one college access and success program that embodies NCAN's mission of building, strengthening, and empowering communities and stakeholders to close equity gaps in postsecondary attainment for all students. LEAP Tampa Bay is the first Florida network to win the award. Launched in 2016, LEAP Tampa Bay is a network of more than 60 community partners committed to changing lives by connecting residents to education and training beyond high school. The cross-sector partners include organizations from education, business, government and philanthropy, all working together toward LEAP Tampa Bay's goal to increase the number of working age adults in Tampa Bay with a post-secondary degree or high-quality certificate to 60 percent by 2025.

In her Nomination Letter, President of St. Petersburg College, Dr. Tonjua Williams, said "LEAP leverages this collective framework to lower systemic barriers, thus increasing 2- and 4-year degrees as well as 'stacking' credentials for limited-income, Black and Brown populations, and first-generation college students in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties."

- This is LEAP Tampa Bay's third national recognition in 18 months. In January 2020 LEAP was designated as a "Talent Hub" by the Lumina Foundation in Indianapolis for its overall work to support postsecondary completion. The network is one of 26 such "Hubs" in the country and just one of two in Florida.
- Last spring, LEAP received a national enrollment grant from NCAN to support helping students from the graduating classes of 2020 and 2021 to stick with their postsecondary plans. Just 12 such grants were awarded nationwide and LEAP was the only recipient in the State of Florida.

Additionally, in May of 2021, LEAP was invited to join the new Resilient Tampa Community Road Map, produced by the Office of Tampa Mayor Jane Castor as a strategic plan for reaching her "Transforming Tampa's Tomorrow" goals. LEAP Tampa Bay was invited as the implementation partner for the City's "Support Two-Year College Completion" initiative.

"LEAPs work in increasing degree completion is key in helping Tampa residents, especially vulnerable youth, bounce back from the impacts of Covid-19 and obtain jobs in the local high growth sectors" Mayor Castor said in a letter in support of the nomination. Tampa Bay Economic Development Council President and CEO Craig Richard also provided a letter of support.

“This award very much embodies the spirit that we’ve created for LEAP as a true catalyst of our collective strengths and impacts for the people of our community,” said Community Foundation Tampa Bay President and CEO Marlene Spalten. Community Foundation is a Founding partner of LEAP Tampa Bay and serves as the “Backbone” organization that supports its operations and sustainability.

The 17 founding partners, who make up the Vision and Leadership Councils for the network, include: Bank of America, City of Tampa, Community Foundation Tampa Bay, Florida College Access Network, Helios Education Foundation, Hillsborough Community College, Hillsborough County, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Hillsborough Education Foundation, Pinellas County, Pinellas County Schools, Pinellas Education Foundation, St. Petersburg College, Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce, Tampa Bay Economic Development Council, University of South Florida and University of South Florida - St. Petersburg.

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About LEAP Tampa Bay College Access Network

LEAP Tampa Bay is a network of more than 60 community partners committed to changing lives by connecting residents to education and training beyond high school. A cross-sector network convened to promote their community-wide commitment to college access and attainment, LEAP leaders use a collective impact model of collaboration to guide coordinated need-based strategies by partners from across business, education, government and non-profits. All the work is geared at increasing attainment of high-quality college degrees and career and technical training credentials to help build Tampa Bay’s workforce talent base.

Network partners collaborate on work with traditional age students through our College and Career Center model in local high schools. We also work with adults in our latest initiative, Complete Tampa Bay which re-engages local working-age adults in education and training. The program directly assists those with prior college or technical training experience by providing free, personalized coaching and support to help them complete their college degree and/or credentialing programs.

For more information on our Network, visit <https://www.leaptampabay.org/>.

About the Community Foundation Tampa Bay

Founded in 1990, the Community Foundation Tampa Bay connects donors, nonprofits, community and business leaders, professional advisors, volunteers and residents to make the maximum positive impact in the Tampa Bay region. For more than 30 years, the Community Foundation Tampa Bay has been dedicated to making giving easy and meaningful for donors as a way to strengthen nonprofit organizations and build a better, more vibrant community. Since its inception, its donors have enabled the Community Foundation Tampa Bay to award more than \$280 million in grants to nonprofit organizations across the country. Learn more at <https://cftampabay.org/>.

About the National College Attainment Network

The National College Attainment Network's (NCAN) mission is to build, strengthen, and empower communities and stakeholders to close equity gaps in postsecondary attainment for all students. NCAN was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 1995 by nine founding members that wanted to share best practices and spread college access and success services around the country.