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Hundreds of Delaware high schoolers get jumpstart on college applications with free “bootcamp” this week

Annual workshop spanning several weeks goes virtual, through TeenSHARP, Delaware Dept. of Education partnership to prepare students for college

Wilmington, Del.—As the pandemic-affected school year winds down, TeenSHARP and the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) are ramping up their annual college prep blitz—and they say it's more important than ever.

It would seem so: more than 500 students have registered for the Delaware Goes to College Academy (DGCA) Bootcamp, which began Monday, May 17, and runs through June 4, to give students a jumpstart on the college application process. The program is free and open to all Delaware high school freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and rising seniors.

TeenSHARP Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder Atnre Alleyne said that he is not surprised about the substantial interest in DGCA this year because college admissions has become more competitive and more complicated during the pandemic. Even before the pandemic, he said, waiting until the Fall to start getting ready to apply to college “is just stressful.”

“Starting early can make all the difference for a student, and at TeenSHARP, we see it does,” said Atnre Alleyne. This year, for instance, TeenSHARP students are celebrating banner wins, like five Early Decision admissions to Cornell on full-rides. That’s despite great challenges.

“In 2020, college admissions were historically competitive, with more students applying than ever before,” Alleyne said. “That won’t change much by the Fall. As schools will be preoccupied with the new school year, we’re getting students ahead of the curve with the DGCA Bootcamp.”

During the DGCA Bootcamp, students will learn about the college admission and financial aid process, assess their academic performance, coursework rigor,

leadership and service skills, design a personalized plan to address their gaps, and virtually meet with representatives of numerous in-state and out-of-state colleges.

"This partnership allows us to reach more students so that we can provide them with the extra supports they need to prepare for their chosen life paths after high school," said Delaware Secretary of Education Susan Bunting. "I have been encouraged to hear from the students who benefited from this bootcamp in the past and am excited to hear more success stories from this year's cohort."

Hasana Parker, a graduating senior at Smyrna High School, has proof that it works.

She joined TeenSHARP after attending a bootcamp session last year. In December 2020, Parker was accepted Early Decision to Pomona College on a full scholarship, through the prestigious Questbridge process.

"To get here, it wasn't just me," she said. "It was me and TeenSHARP."

Beyond the bootcamp, Hasana said TeenSHARP changed her entire summer by giving her something to work toward: a stronger portfolio of extracurricular activities and college classes, like sociology, stock trading, and creative writing—all of which she took through the program.

Other TeenSHARP students who first joined our program through the DGCA Bootcamp last year include Caelin Foley, who is now headed to Bryn Mawr; Lucia Gotera, who is headed to the University of Pennsylvania; Lizbeth Cortez, who is headed to the University of Notre Dame; and Josh McCrae, who is headed to Cornell University.

DGCA was co-founded by the Delaware Department of Education and TeenSHARP to provide high quality college advising to high-achieving students from low-income households across the state. DGCA supports a broad group of students throughout the state of Delaware in the college application and decision process. There is no cost for students to participate.

The program typically took place in-person in each county. This year, due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, sessions are taking place online.

To learn more about the DGCA Bootcamp, [click here](#). To learn more about TeenSHARP, please visit: www.teensharp.org

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About TeenSHARP: TeenSHARP is a Wilmington, Del.-based nonprofit that prepares Black, Latino, and low-income students to attend and thrive at America's top colleges. Founded in 2009 by Atnre Alleyne and Tatiana Poladko, TeenSHARP has evolved into a leading provider of innovative, at-scale college access and leadership development in Delaware; Camden, N.J.; and Philadelphia, Penn. Year after year, 100 percent of TeenSHARP scholars successfully pursue a 4-year college education, with 95 percent admitted to the most selective colleges; and the majority graduating with \$15,000 or less in college debt. Our mission is in our name; beginning as early as 8th grade and extending through college, TeenSHARP uplifts our students to become **Successful, High-Achieving, and Reaching Potential**. We're fulfilling a bold vision that, one day, our country's top jobs and most influential leadership positions will be held by those who reflect our rich diversity.

About the Delaware Department of Education: The Delaware Department of Education is a state government body led by Secretary of Education Susan Bunting to ensure every learner is ready for success in college, career and life. The mission of the Delaware Department of Education is to empower every learner with the highest quality education through shared leadership, innovative practices and exemplary services. The department's priorities are: engaged and informed families, schools, districts, communities, and other agencies; rigorous standards, instruction, and assessments; high-quality early learning opportunities; equitable access to excellent educators; and safe and healthy environments conducive to learning. To learn more, visit www.education.delaware.gov.