



WILLAMETTE
ACADEMY

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

Academic Year
2016-17

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Since starting as executive director in October 2016, I have spent much time listening and learning about what makes Willamette Academy so special. In talking with our students and families, I clearly realize that they find great value in this place — especially the unique community that the academy fosters and supports.

However we need to continue to develop and build an academy that helps students live up to their potential and attain their lofty goals. In response, I've continued our dialogue with district officials and community organizations to understand how we can better address students' and parents' challenges. I've also traveled to other college access programs and conferences across the country, forging new relationships and a network so we can share and understand best practices.

To continue to build stronger bonds in the Willamette University community, we've partnered with professors and their service learning courses to engage more Willamette students in the support, assessment and future development of the academy.

With the help of Michael Niño, assistant professor of sociology, and his students, we've gathered data to lay the foundation for a strategic plan to be developed in the next few months. The data will help us understand not only the academy's social effects but also its academic impact — ultimately leading to curriculum and program changes that are in the best interest of our students.

Building on a solid foundation of support provided by loyal donors since the academy began in 2001, within the past year or so the academy has also received four grants: \$10,000 from the Juan Young Trust, \$15,000 from the William G. Gilmore Foundation, \$27,000 from the William Swindells Sr. Memorial Fund of The Oregon Community Foundation and \$99,500 over two years from the Oregon Department of Education's Youth Development Council. This grant work could not have been done without the incredible support from Willamette University.

Between grants and continued donor support, the academy has been able to maintain its successful core components — the summer program, Saturday sessions, mentoring and the family program.

Willamette Academy is not simply a university program, but a community program. I am confident in our ability to evolve and live out our mission: to educate, inspire and empower students from historically underrepresented communities who have the desire to advance and achieve a higher education.

Emilio Solano '09
Executive Director





SOLAR ECLIPSE PRESENTS EXCITING OPPORTUNITY FOR ACADEMY STUDENTS

The moon and sun may have been the main attractions during the total solar eclipse over Salem on Aug. 21, 2017, but Willamette Academy students also played a starring role.

The rare celestial phenomenon presented a prime opportunity for students to engage in academic and experiential learning on the Willamette University campus.

In the hours leading up to the eclipse, a dozen academy students worked with scientists from the National Solar Observatory to conduct experiments on the university's north lawn. They also appeared on CNN Español's television coverage of the eclipse, explaining their work to a reporter.

During totality, when the moon completely obscured the sun, two academy students gave a live play-by-play description to Oregon Public Broadcasting, which was also transmitted over National Public Radio (NPR).

“Watching the eclipse was absolutely magical and mesmerizing. I will never forget it,” says Crystal Llanos, a Salem 12th-grader. “My heart was racing, and I teared up at the beauty and the experience of seeing such a marvelous example of our amazing universe.”

Crystal helped run a series of experiments and demonstrations to highlight the science of the eclipse and our solar system. She used scaled-down models to demonstrate the size and distance of the sun and the moon. A 55-inch orange circle stood in for the sun, with 109 blue dots, each representing the size of the Earth, stretched across its diameter. About 500 feet away, a large orange arrow pointed at a model of the moon that was the size of a drawing pin.

The students' experiences captured what Executive Director Emilio Solano '09 describes as one of Willamette Academy's key goals — “to build bridges to places students never dreamed of before, places that seemed outside the realm of possibility.”

Academy students, including Joshue Fuentes-Ventura, helped leading solar scientists carry out experiments on the Willamette University campus during the total solar eclipse over Salem.

Academy students
receiving free or
reduced-cost
school lunches

90%

“Willamette Academy taught me that I am responsible for my future, regardless of my background. That’s what keeps me going.”

— Amanda Zuniga
Class of 2012

Approximate cost to the academy
per student per year

\$2,340

Willamette Academy serves 8-12th grade youth from communities that are historically underrepresented in higher education. It provides students with academic support, mentoring and access to technology, as well as programs such as summer camps, leadership skills development and college entrance exam preparation. Students are accepted into the academy based on their potential and desire to further themselves and their families through higher education. In addition, they must meet at least one of four qualifying factors: being low-income, a student of color, a recent immigrant or a first-generation college student.

“As a first-generation college student, I found it really powerful to be able to interact with current college students and share college-related experiences with peers. It made the dream a reality.”

— Rachel Meza Rojas
Class of 2014

Salem-Keizer
School District
students (8-12th
grade) currently
enrolled at the
academy

153

“Willamette Academy taught me that first-generation college students can make it a normal thing to attend college; that we are capable of accomplishing our dreams and breaking cycles; and that if we have the will and drive to attend college, it can happen.”

— Leone Davila
Class of 2015

Academy students
who will be first-
generation college
students

96%



WILLAMETTE
ACADEMY

Students who've completed the academy
program since 2002

240

Academy alumni
selected as Gates
Millennium Scholars

7

Academy alumni who've either
graduated from or are currently enrolled
at a two- or four-year college

68%

Academy alumni
selected as Ford
Scholars

6

"Both of my parents are immigrants with little education, and their dream has always been for their children to get an education. Willamette Academy made that dream possible by giving guidance and answering questions — not only for me but also for my parents."

— Yaritza Torres
Class of 2011

"The academy is a place where people with the same passion for higher education can bond, support each other and work together towards the common goal of attending college."

— Thalia Vargas
Class of 2012

2016-17 HIGHLIGHTS



Ta-Nehisi Coates



Alma Flor Ada



Willamette Academy graduation



Delia Olmos-García

This year, **students participated** in more than 50 workshops, campus visits, lectures and events.

During a seven-day summer program in 2016, **students took classes** on topics such as college-level writing, narrative and personal storytelling, as well as elective courses such as animal behavior, which included an off-campus field trip to the Oregon National Primate Research Center.

In February academy students attended a campus lecture by 2015 MacArthur “Genius Grant” recipient **Ta-Nehisi Coates**, author of “Between the World and Me,” which won the 2015 National Book Award for Nonfiction.

Students met with Oregon State Representatives Brian Clem and Teresa Alonso Leon and learned about the recently passed Ethnic Studies Bill from Representative Diego Hernandez.

In a six-week film series, academy **students watched and analyzed feminist films** – and then hosted a screening for Willamette University students.

Students benefited from stronger curricular ties between the academy and Willamette University’s College of Liberal Arts. Willamette students in a service-learning course tutored, chaperoned and mentored at the academy, while sociology undergraduates gathered and analyzed data from the academy’s 15-year history.

Award-winning author **Alma Flor Ada met and engaged with students** in a three-part workshop series.

A new partnership between the academy and **Willamette University College of Law** set up a program for law students to **mentor academy students**.

Admissions counselors from colleges and universities across the country **presented academy students information on college applications**, financial aid and how to navigate the college selection process.

Saturday Sessions **engaged younger academy students** in community-building exercises, goal-setting activities and conversations about transitioning to high school.

College Track sessions **provided the academy’s high school seniors** a College Fair and workshop sessions on financial aid, college and scholarship applications, and matriculating and transitioning into college.

Students visited six regional colleges – Western Oregon University, Oregon State University, Linfield College, Lewis & Clark College, the University of Oregon and the Willamette University College of Law.

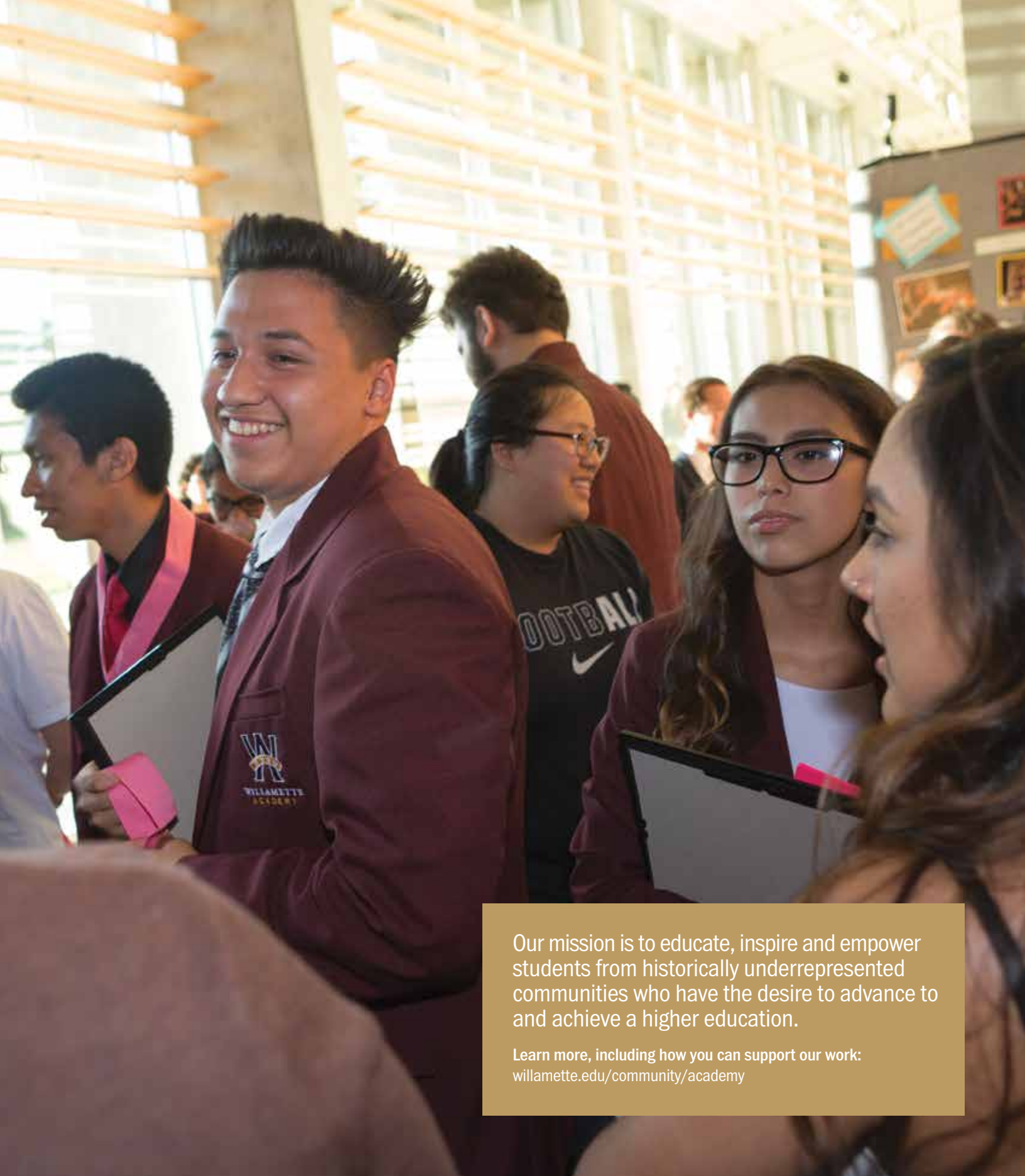
In May, **the academy celebrated 20 graduates** from the Class of 2017. Of those, 14 enrolled at Willamette University – the largest class to enter Willamette in the academy’s history.

Two 2017 graduates were selected as Ford Scholars by the **Ford Family Foundation**.

In June the academy welcomed **32 rising 8th graders** and **34 rising 9th graders**.

Also in June, the academy hired **Delia Olmos-García** as its academic and college access coordinator. A 2010 Willamette Academy graduate, Delia is the daughter of immigrants and the first in her family to graduate from high school and college. She earned her BA in sociology from Willamette University.





Our mission is to educate, inspire and empower students from historically underrepresented communities who have the desire to advance to and achieve a higher education.

Learn more, including how you can support our work:
willamette.edu/community/academy