



## Per Scholas Diligence Trip Report September 13, 2018

### Program Visited

- Per Scholas and Platform in Dallas

### Focusing Philanthropy Staff

- Teresa Burton

### Per Scholas Dallas Staff

- Stephanie Valadez, Managing Director Dallas
- Meghann Bridgeman, Managing Director Social Ventures (Platform)

### Executive Summary

Teresa Burton visited Per Scholas in Dallas on September 13, 2018 in order to see a satellite office in operation and meet local staff. In April Focusing Philanthropy initiated conversations with Per Scholas (PS) and began due diligence efforts. Site visits were scheduled to meet leadership, board members, staff, teachers, students and to observe classes for the purpose of assessing the potential of a first-time grant in 2019.

### Background and Purpose of Visit

Per Scholas is a national nonprofit offering intensive, tuition-free classes, placement and career development services to prepare young people and adults for long-term careers in technology. Working closely with employers in each location, Per Scholas designs class curricula to teach students the technical skills they need for entry-level jobs in high demand locally. In 18 weeks or less, graduates have the knowledge and experience to apply for highly technical jobs at a range of companies. Per Scholas students are 90% people of color, one quarter are women, and before the program, all students report household incomes at 200% of the federal poverty level or below. After the program, Per Scholas graduates go on to earn first-year salaries between \$30,000 and \$40,000 with potential for more each year they continue in the industry.

### Programs Offered in Dallas

- Core programs – 1 classroom right now (24 students), 2<sup>nd</sup> classroom will open after funds are raised, 3<sup>rd</sup> classroom is being used for career development
  - IT Support (10 weeks)
  - Network Support (15 weeks)
- Platform – 2 classrooms (24 each), additional 3 classrooms located in Irving at Cognizant (32 students each)
  - Data Engineering
  - Quality Engineering
  - Application Software Management
  - New in October- Combo Data Eng. and Software Support

### Funding

In Dallas funding is 25% NYC and 75% local. Their largest local funders are United Way, AT&T, and JP Morgan.



### Local Employers

The Dallas office advertises student resumes to 100 employers. Tech Systems takes 50% of each class. Other employers are staffing companies for Toyota, Baylor, and Capital One.

### Student Recruitment

Most students hear about PS through word of mouth or are referrals from other social service agencies or Indeed digital marketing.

### Platform Demographics in Dallas

- 47% women
- 38% African American
- 36% South Asian, Indian
- 12% Latino
- 11% Caucasian
- 3% Other
- Average age of women is 35
- 90% of grads go to salaried jobs

### Community College Partnership

PS is working on Cedar Valley community college giving student CTE credits for PS classes. PS also sends students there for remedial work. The biggest challenge are the bureaucratic requirements for qualifying for school credit.

### HS Pilot Program

High school students can study Microsoft Office Specialist IT Support at PS and receive diploma plus certifications. This program will be most helpful for students from South Dallas who often can't afford college.

### PTech

This is a collaboration with several local technical high schools. After graduation, student can go from high school to the Platform classes. Each school program will be supported by one local employer. So far PTech only has 10<sup>th</sup> graders so it will take a couple years to see results. This effort is meant to participate in the trend of large tech employers hiring students after high school and paying for students to go to college while they work (e.g. Apple, Google, Facebook.)

### Other Local Job Training Programs

- Year UP
- Empower (for Veterans only)

### Benefits of hiring Per Scholas graduates cited by local employers

- Charitable donation for company
- Good publicity for company
- Quick access to new hires
- Diversity hires
- Savings in recruiting costs
- Customization of employee training
- Retention of loyal employees – still in early stages



- PS students are more prepared, reliable and customer-service focused.
- Students have stronger soft skills than other hires. They know what it means to be a customer-service company, how to be a consultant and have two bosses, be a brand representative, and care about the quality of their work.

### **Key Observations**

The Dallas office and classrooms were very bright and welcoming, and resembled a professional tech start-up. The technical class lessons I observed they were working on and presentations the students gave were very interesting. Staff was knowledgeable about the local market, their program and budget numbers and goals. It was also helpful to learn the Dallas office has a strong working relationship with the national office.

The Dallas office has a clear path for growth and is actively pursuing pipelines for student recruitment from low-income high schools and community colleges. They also have a head start with local employers such as Cognizant, AT&T and others. Now that the program is fully operational, they plan to diversity local funders to include more corporations, foundations and individuals in order to increase revenues and add new classrooms.

