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Helios Education Foundation and USAmeriBank Foundation commit up to \$2.5 million to establish scholarship fund

*The scholarships, awarded to financially disadvantaged students
in the FUSE program, aim to improve their chances for college success*

TAMPA, Fla. (November 29, 2017) – Community Foundation of Tampa Bay is pleased to announce the commitment of up to \$2.5 million by Helios Education Foundation and the USAmeriBank Foundation to establish a scholarship fund for the FUSE program, which provides students a “graduation pathway” to a bachelor’s degree at the University of South Florida as they earn their associate degrees.

The initial scholarship fund of \$1.5 million was seeded with a \$500,000 gift from the USAmeriBank Foundation and matched on a 2-to-1 basis by Helios. Additionally, Helios has pledged another \$1 million in future 2-to-1 matching funds.

FUSE involves the University of South Florida (USF) and Hillsborough Community College (HCC), along with other regional institutions within the Florida College System (FCS). Students seeking an associate degree in an identified “pathway” are co-advised and tracked as FUSE participants, and then receive guaranteed admission to their USF major upon successful completion of their associate degree.

FUSE is one of four strategic pillars for LEAP, Tampa Bay’s College Access Network. LEAP is a cross-sector regional network of leaders focused on increasing college access and attainment, with the goal of ensuring that Tampa Bay has a globally competitive workforce. LEAP’s goal is to increase the number of 25- to 64-year-olds in Tampa Bay with high-quality postsecondary degrees, certificates, and other credentials from the current 48 percent to 60 percent by 2025. The Community Foundation of Tampa Bay is the backbone organization for LEAP.

Upon earning eligibility, students receive scholarship allocations each semester as they accumulate credits toward a degree. Eligible students can receive up to \$5,500 as they move along their pathway. The goal is to award up to 100 scholarships to financially disadvantaged students in the first year and continue awarding scholarships in the future as the scholarship fund grows. By helping overcome financial hurdles, scholarships accelerate the timeframe for earning a degree, reducing costs for students and getting them in the workforce more quickly.

“Ensuring that more students - particularly first-generation, minority, and underrepresented students - have a clear pathway and now the financial support to complete a postsecondary degree is an exciting evolution of the FUSE program,” said Paul J. Luna, President and CEO of Helios Education Foundation.

Currently, roughly 500 students are enrolled in the FUSE program across the state. FUSE students can select from numerous degree pathways that address critical workforce needs, such as biomedical sciences, finance, elementary education, information technology and public health.

“As a corporate partner, USAmeriBank is proud to join this meaningful collaboration focused on postsecondary success and workforce development,” said Mark Fernandez, Senior Vice President, of USAmeriBank. “Helping to fund these scholarships is a perfect way to make a lasting impact in helping more students go from earning their associate degrees to earning four-year degrees.”

About USAmeriBank

USAmeriBank, which has established the USAB Foundation, is an independent, non-public bank based in Clearwater, Fla., that has established itself as an outstanding middle-market financial institution. The bank serves the needs of individuals and businesses in the Tampa Bay area in Florida, and in the Birmingham, Montgomery and Tallapoosa areas in Alabama, by providing a high-level of personalized service and attention to a targeted customer base. USAmeriBank’s parent company is USAmeriBancorp, Inc. More information is available at www.USAmeriBank.com.

About Helios Education Foundation

Helios Education Foundation is dedicated to creating opportunities for individuals in Arizona and Florida to achieve a postsecondary education. Our work is driven by our four fundamental beliefs in Community, Equity, Investment, and Partnership, and we invest in initiatives across the full education continuum.

In Arizona, where Latino students comprise the largest percentage of the K-12 public school population, the Foundation is implementing its Arizona Latino Student Success initiative focused on preparing all students — especially students in high poverty, underserved Latino communities — for success. Through our Florida Regional Student Success Initiative, Helios is helping first-generation, minority and underrepresented students from the state’s large population centers in Tampa, Orlando, and Miami achieve a postsecondary education. Since 2006, the Foundation has invested over \$200 million in education programs and initiatives in both states. To learn more about our efforts, visit us online at www.helios.org.

About the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay

Founded in 1990, the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay (CFTB) 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 25 years, the Community Foundation of 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 of Tampa Bay to award nearly \$200 million in grants to nonprofit organizations across the country. CFTB serves as the backbone organization for the LEAP College Access Network.