



For Immediate Release

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3,000+ GATHER AT UPLIFT EDUCATION'S INAUGURAL COLLEGE SIGNING DAY TO CELEBRATE 100 PERCENT COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE FOR THE CLASS OF 2011

Fanfare at Moody Coliseum celebrates charter network's college-going culture

DALLAS (May 24) – More than 3,000 students, teachers, school leaders and community members gathered at SMU's Moody Coliseum this morning for Uplift Education's inaugural College Signing Day event to cheer on Uplift's 202 graduating seniors as they announced their intent to attend college in the fall. The event takes its cue from the fanfare typically reserved for college football's National Signing Day – but celebrates college acceptance and academic achievement instead of sports prowess.

Taking a nod from the Texas Aggie Yell Leaders, Uplift Yell Leaders from each school helped kick off the event with school spirit chants and dance moves. Then local basketball mascots Mavs Man and Champ led the parade of seniors as they entered Moody Coliseum. Each senior then took their turn on stage to enthusiastically unveil college-themed hats, shirts, pennants and flags as they announced where they would graduate from college in 2015 – showing their commitment to not only enroll in college, but to be successful once they were there.

The most popular schools for the Class of 2011 to attend were within the metroplex: The University of North Texas at Dallas, Texas Woman's University, The University of Texas campuses at Arlington and at Dallas, and The University of North Texas at Denton. But many seniors also committed to selective colleges both in Texas and beyond: Babson College, Carnegie Mellon University, Cornell University, Emory University, Loyola University, University of Michigan, Pomona College, University of Pennsylvania, Rice University, Vanderbilt University and Vassar College.

“We will do whatever it takes for our students to succeed, and that means whatever it takes to set the groundwork for our students to not only be accepted to college, but to arrive fully prepared, and to succeed once there,” said Uplift CEO Yasmin Bhatia as she formally kicked off the College Signing Day program. “At Uplift, we don't just believe all of our students can go to college. At Uplift we PROVE that all of our students will go to college.”

Uplift is known for its legacy of 100 percent college acceptance. The Class of 2011, however, marks Uplift's first year with graduating senior classes at all five of its high schools: North Hills Preparatory in Irving, Peak Preparatory in East Dallas, Hampton Preparatory in South Dallas, Williams Preparatory in Northwest Dallas, and Summit International Preparatory in Arlington. Despite the fact that many of the seniors are from minority, lower-income families and will be the first in their family to attend college, the Class of 2011 has achieved such honors as:

- 100% of graduates accepted to college, with 89 percent planning to attend a four-year university
- Awarded \$22.5 million in scholarships and grants, with 66 percent of graduates receiving financial aid for college
- 1 Gates Millennium Scholar (full-ride scholarship for undergraduate and graduate studies)

- 6 Dell Scholars (\$20,000 scholarship)
- 5 National Merit Scholarship winners and 7 Commended Students
- 72 students designated as AP Scholars or AP Distinguished Scholars

The seniors were encouraged by remarks from Uplift board member and retired Goldman Sachs partner Todd Williams, who shared his story of growing up in a working-class home in Dallas and going on to receive a full-ride to Austin College and then on to Wharton Business School.

“So my advice to you, at this fork in the road, is simple,” said Williams. “One. Work hard— there are no shortcuts. Two. Learn to be comfortable with being somewhat uncomfortable. And three. Remember, you don’t have to figure this out all by yourself.”

Uplift alumni Jaisy Joseph also encouraged the seniors to make the most of the college journey ahead of them and work hard to fulfill their dreams. Joseph graduated from North Hills Preparatory in 2005 and then went on to pursue a bachelor’s degree at Austin College in Sherman, Texas. She is currently pursuing her master’s at Harvard Divinity School.

“Each one of you has just as much—if not more potential, to stand before future classes from our schools and share with them how you are in the process of fulfilling your dreams,” said Joseph. “Seniors, look at the sixth graders sitting with you. The same amount of time that exists between you and them exists between you and me. What will you be sharing with them as you stand on this stage in six years?”

The event concluded with a poignant moment as Summit International Prep kindergartener Ariyn Collins congratulated Peak Prep senior Noe Nunez on his commitment to graduate from Vanderbilt University and promised him that she too would be a college graduate one day – in 2027 to be specific.

College Signing Day 2011 was made possible by donations from the Todd and Abby Williams Family Foundation, Ken and Stacy Murphy and the Goldman Sachs Foundation. Video from the event is available at <http://vimeo.com/uplifteducation/csd2011>.

For more information on Uplift Education, visit www.uplifteducation.org or www.facebook.com/uplifteducation.

About Uplift Education

Uplift Education is dedicated to operating schools that provide a quality education by raising and continually maintaining high expectations for students and staff. Our 17 schools provide a rigorous, multi-disciplinary curriculum, with an emphasis on college preparation for 4,700 students. It is Uplift's goal to dramatically increase the number of students from all backgrounds who are provided a high quality public education – 100% of seniors graduate and are accepted to college. Uplift Education is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more information, visit our [website](http://www.uplifteducation.org) or [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/uplifteducation) page.