



MINDS MATTER

PORTLAND

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College Acceptances for our Seniors

It's an exciting time of year for Minds Matter Portland! Our Seniors are currently evaluating offers from these schools, with more anticipated:



American University

Boston University

Carnegie Mellon University

Connecticut College

Cornell University

Drexel University

Lewis & Clark College

Macalester College

Mount Holyoke College

Occidental College

Olin College of Engineering

Oregon State University

Pacific Lutheran University

Pomona College

Portland State University

Reed College

Skidmore College

Spelman College

St. Olaf College

St. Johns College

Tufts University

University of Oregon

University of Rochester

Union College

University of Portland

University of San Francisco

Vanderbilt University

Wesleyan University

We love hearing inspirational updates from Minds Matter alumni!

My name is Haedon Brunelle, and I attended college at Pacific Lutheran University, Class of 2019. I am now the Session Committee Assistant for the House Committee on Behavioral Health for the Oregon State Legislature in the Legislative Policy & Research Office. My college experience was fun, educational (as one would hope), thought provoking, and challenging in great ways that led me to grow more as a person. The Minds Matter lessons and experiences that I found most helpful were the explanations of the step-by-step process of applying for colleges, having multiple editors to review my applications for summer college programs, and of course, the overall college process. This was extremely helpful as a first generation college student. I would say my favorite part of Minds Matter (besides the lunches), were the civics discussions we had. I haven't kept up with Minds Matter members and alumni as much as I would have liked, but Kathy Garrett and I catch up once in a while!



Haedon Brunelle

Minds Matter Alumnus 2015
Pacific Lutheran University Graduate 2019
Double-major in Political Science and
Economics
Associated Students of PLU President 2018-
2019

Pacific Lutheran University Professor joins Minds Matter students for Virtual Q & A



Dr. Lathiena Nervo, a Biology Professor at Pacific Lutheran University, joined our Minds Matter Seniors for a virtual Q & A in early March. She was recently named to Cell Mentor's list of "1,000 inspiring Black scientists in America" and spoke about her own path to college and teaching, as well as life at PLU. She highlighted multiple support mechanisms for first generation students on campus, the accessibility of the professors, small class sizes, the curriculum flexibility, and also encouraged students to explore clubs and new interests. Incredibly, Minds Matter Portland has had 31 students attend PLU (including 15 there currently), largely thanks to generous additional scholarship support provided by Dale and Jolita Benson, both PLU alums. Thank you Dr. Nervo, Dale and Jolita!

Read more about Dr. Nervo here:

www.plu.edu/nsci/news/plus-lathiena-nervo-discusses-her-work-and-being-named-one-of-the-1000-inspiring-black-scientists-in-america

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Interview with Debby Barany, Lead College Counselor, Minds Matter Portland

Debby Barany is one of six members of the Minds Matter Portland counseling team, which includes Kathy Garrett, Kathleen Grant, Kathleen Reid, Giovonne Vernaccia and Jen Holguin. The team starts working with the students the summer before their senior year, focusing primarily on applications and scholarships for college –researching colleges that will help the students with future career plans and access resources for financial aid. The students spend months writing applications and essays. As of March they are wrapping up the scholarship applications.

Q: How does your role compare to that of a mentor?

Mentors start with their students' sophomore year and they're together for three years. Our role as college counselors is to help our students plan, organize and write essays, in order to submit college applications. We help our students identify colleges and figure out what needs to be prepared in order to complete application requirements. We continue working with the senior class throughout the year including the summer before college. We value working with the mentors and students to provide continuity and support even through their first few terms at college.

Q: How were things different this year, given the pandemic?

Usually we hold a summer weeklong workshop in person – an intensive week with the students in August – jump starting the process, getting their heads into the game. During the summer of 2020 this happened virtually. Given that our students were already exhausted from virtual meetings and classes in high school, our summer program went really well. I'm really proud of them. All of our students "leaned in." Each of the counselors have a caseload of three to four students. We work closely with the mentors through the process, too. I think we were lucky that this particular class had their sophomore and junior year in person to bond together and get to know their mentors; that made a huge difference in the collaboration we were able to achieve starting from the summer, which persisted throughout the year.

Q: So here we are in March – where do things stand?

We're not done yet. All of their college applications were submitted by January, and our students are completing scholarship applications and interviews. In March and April, which is our favorite time of year, we begin to find out where the students were admitted and which scholarships they've won. We will be working with the students, helping them to analyze their finances and financial aid offers. All of this leads to helping our students make wise financial choices. It's exciting! By May 1st they will commit to a college. We have many

volunteers to help our students. Terri and Reed are working with students on financial literacy, teaching about how to set up bank accounts, how loans work and how to manage their money while in college. It is important to help the students think about a college education like an investment. They really understand that college is not just for themselves but they see it as part of their whole family's future, and it's something just astounding about our students. Every week I'm in awe of our students.



**Debby Barany,
Lead College Counselor**

Q: Tell us about the Torch Scholars Program

Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts is a highly selective university. The Torch Scholars Program is a full-ride scholarship which includes additional academic and financial support for the four years. We nominated several of our students this year and four of them made it to the finalist round. Out of 500 applications, they picked 50 students and four of the 50 were from Minds Matter Portland. Out of those 50, I believe they usually choose 13-15 students for their freshman group. We won't know until April.

As part of the selection process, our student attended a day long virtual interview with the faculty. The students said they loved it. I was amazed that a bunch of Zoom-exhausted seniors went to a Zoom event and came back completely excited about the day. One of my students said, "If this is what college is like, I can't wait." We have two alumni of Minds Matter Portland who are currently Torch scholars and we have one who graduated from Northeastern as a Torch scholar.

This particular group of seniors is impressive with their commitment, persistence, resilience, and grit. While their parents are at work they care for younger brothers and sisters while keeping up on college prep high school classes, juggling all the technology that has to be functioning for them to continue and persist at school. Many of our students have jobs; several of them work up to 30 hours a week on top of being a full time student. The determination of these students... I mean they're incredible kids - hard working and determined and persistent and positive about their futures... it's something to celebrate.

Chapters are feuding! In a fun way.

In late March, Minds Matter Portland Seniors Lien, Thomas, Eduardo and Somes took on students from the Chicago chapter in a virtual Family Feud competition. They faced categories around high school life, YouTube stars and more, and then joined forces with the Chicago students to handily defeat a team of adults.



The event raised over \$7,500 to be put toward student programming and was a great chance to connect with members of the Minds Matter community elsewhere. Thank you to our student participants and organizers!

"Thank you to our students for your perseverance and commitment during the past year. We just hit the one year mark since making the switch to virtual Saturday sessions. It works, but we are looking forward to being back in person soon! And thank you to our volunteers and donors. You continue to make this program possible!"

Reed Harrison, Executive Director

Interested in joining our team?

We are always looking for more volunteers. We have opportunities to work directly with our students on Saturdays as mentors, tutors, college counselors, or by supporting Saturday operations. If you might be interested in volunteering with us please reach out to Mike Chowdhury at OpsDirector@mindsmatterportland.org.



Minds Matter of Portland

PO Box 12089

Portland, OR 97212

Web: www.mindsmatterportland.org

Facebook: [mindsmatterofportland](https://www.facebook.com/mindsmatterofportland)

Instagram: [@mindsmatterofportland](https://www.instagram.com/mindsmatterofportland)

Twitter: [@mindsmatterpdx](https://twitter.com/mindsmatterpdx)