

# GOING TO SCALE

## NATIONAL IMPACT THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS



Per Scholas aims to break the cycle of poverty by providing technology education, training and job placement services for women and men in underserved communities.

By giving people the technical and business skills to gain meaningful employment and provide for themselves and their families, Per Scholas is building the foundation for stronger, financially stable communities, and shifting the paradigm of workforce development.

One of the most effective antidotes to poverty and unemployment is access to good jobs, along with the ability to succeed in them. We know that many of today's most promising career opportunities are in the tech sector, so we partner with leading employers, learning everything we can about the IT jobs they need to fill. We then invest in talented, unemployed and underemployed adults who have the drive and aptitude to succeed in IT, but not the technical skills, "soft skills," or experience.

The Robin Hood Foundation says Per Scholas is **"indisputable proof that the American Dream still lives."** The Social Impact Exchange named us to the inaugural S&I100, its national index of the top 100 proven, high-impact nonprofits that are poised to grow. Per Scholas has been recognized by [The White House](#), [Clinton Global Initiative](#), [TechHire initiative](#), [The New York Times](#), and [WIRED magazine](#).

Per Scholas is scaling impact nationally in regions where the tech industry is growing and where we can bridge the skills gap, training unemployed and low-income job seekers so they can secure sustainable, living-wage IT jobs.

In these positions, students earn starting wages that are almost four times their average pre-training income of \$7,000. Since 1998, Per Scholas has provided employer-driven IT training in New York City. To date, we have trained more than 5,000 individuals, helping them build life-changing, well-paying IT careers.

We have opened in **Columbus, Ohio** (2012), **Cincinnati, Ohio** (2013), Silver Spring, Maryland in the **National Capital Region** (2014), and **Dallas, Texas** (2014) and will enroll more than 750 women

and men (18+) in our IT training this year. We anticipate to launch our next site in Atlanta, where due diligence is underway. Our approach to national expansion is data-driven, deliberate, rooted in local partnerships, and strongly focused on sustainability. We determine feasibility of new sites through evaluating and ensuring market demand, labor supply, local partnerships, and sustainable funding sources.

Per Scholas jumpstarts careers for women and men through rigorous IT training and professional development. We provide the tools for people to shift from a low-income and unemployed status to gaining and retaining living-wage employment. Additionally, we address a highly studied and identified business need for entry-level IT talent. Our proven approach is carefully managed to sustain and enhance program relevance, quality and impact.

### PER SCHOLAS: A SNAPSHOT

Per Scholas was founded more than 20 years ago to break the cycle of poverty by providing technology access and education in underserved communities. We accomplish this mission today by:

**CREATING OPPORTUNITY:** For people who work hard, we create real opportunities to build better lives for themselves and their families.

**CLOSING THE SKILLS DIVIDE:** We prepare smart, dedicated people to work in key technical roles, always designing our courses in response to what employers tell us they need.

**ACHIEVING DIVERSITY:** We are building a more diverse technical workforce by creating on-ramps for women and people of color, groups staggeringly underrepresented in IT employment today. 90% of our students are people of color, a third are women and a third are disconnected young adults.

[www.perscholas.org](http://www.perscholas.org)

## THE LANDSCAPE

**“After 100 job applications, receiving rejection letter after rejection letter, I knew I needed a new plan. My nineteen years as a flight attendant wasn’t enough. It wasn’t relatable to many of the jobs I applied for. I knew I had to make my skills relevant to the job market today.” — RITA KNAFF, GRADUATE // POMEROY**

The American workplace evolved from industries dealing mainly with goods and materials into enterprises focused on providing information and skilled services involving information technology. High school diplomas are no longer enough to sustain a living-wage career in our country. This shift contributed to widespread unemployment and underemployment in the last decade.

For people without post-high school credentials, employment access is largely limited to manual and unskilled service labor compensated at less than living-wage. By contrast, people with higher education degrees and training fill jobs within fast-evolving, tech-dependent workflows. Yet employers are hard pressed to find IT talent. The U.S. Department of Labor projects the creation of 50,000 new non-managerial IT jobs per year from 2015-2022. The tech sector is one of the largest and fastest growing employment sectors nationally. Current and projected U.S. IT job openings exceed qualified domestic candidates. Yet the greatest IT staffing needs are not for managerial titles. A recent ManPower Group study found that businesses have the hardest time filling technician roles.

**These are the roles that Per Scholas aims to fill.**

Through training that narrows the skills gap and provides a bridge between job seekers and careers in tech, Per Scholas addresses both regional poverty reduction and workforce development. One solution to the skills gap is for low-skilled individuals to attend technical training programs. Millions enroll in trade schools and community colleges each year; less than 40% in community colleges graduate. And most two-year programs are not equipped to help graduates find and keep well-paying jobs. Few attempt to teach “soft skills” such as time management, conflict resolution, and effective communication that are critical for career success. In many business-oriented information technology

jobs, while experience and education always matter, employers will hire less educated or less experienced candidates (especially for entry-level positions) who demonstrate strong soft skills and the potential to learn, cooperate and grow. Our tuition-free IT training is tailored to meet today’s employer needs and is proven effective in helping unemployed and low-income individuals quickly train, then launch and succeed in family-supporting, long-term tech careers.

## OUR STORY

**“One in ten managers says, I’m looking for somebody who can solve problems, learn fast, with a quirky biography. With Per Scholas, that’s exactly what you find. Scratch the surface and there are people with amazing stories.” — JAMES BACH, PARTNER, CREATOR OF RAPID SOFTWARE TESTING**

Founded in 1995 as a neighborhood-based effort to create access to personal computers, Per Scholas helped bridge the early digital divide in the South Bronx. Per Scholas recycled end-of-life corporate computer equipment for earned income and refurbished it to distribute for free. Over 100,000 low-income families in 20 states were connected to computers. Our first technical training — the seed for our IT Support training today — was for the technicians involved in refurbishment. We soon found that those trained technicians — now equipped with a very in-demand skill — were quickly hired into higher-paying jobs, often with some of the same corporate computer recycling partners. The digital divide today is not as much about gaining access to hardware as it is the opportunity to learn marketable skills. Since 1998, Per Scholas has focused on ensuring the opportunity for adults (18+) to learn technological skills through rigorous, hands-on training leading to family-sustaining employment in IT.

**To date, Per Scholas has trained over 5,000 individuals, helping them build lasting, life-changing, well-paying IT careers.**

Our IT Support training is one of just two IT sectoral workforce development efforts nationally evaluated and found successful in independent, controlled and randomized scientific research – in our case, as part of a [Public/Private Ventures study](#). We are current-

**“Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. Never has this been more true than at Per Scholas.”**

**- FRANCISCO PEREZ MIRANDA, GRADUATE // VMTURBO**

ly participating in third party research on career advancement funded by the White House Social Innovation Fund, and have been recognized by the White House for effectively helping the long-term unemployed back to work.

## IT SUPPORT

### IT TRAINING

Our primary offering is IT Support, an 8-week, full-time, tuition-free training leading to CompTIA A+ professional certification.

Students are led through rigorous, hands-on curriculum by our technology instructors, learning about computer hardware and software, setting up networks, troubleshooting mobile devices, and much more.

With CompTIA A+ certification as their base professional certification, graduates can follow several tech career pathways. Two possibilities:

- **Service/Helpdesk:** IT Support graduates are prepared for entry-level employment in IT in positions such as Desktop Support Specialists, IT Support Analysts and Network Field Technicians. They can build careers within service and helpdesk IT functions, gaining on-the-job skills and experience within numerous sectors (financial, insurance, health, retail) and paying \$47K at midlevel.
- **Network Administrator:** IT Support graduates can gain additional certifications, such as CompTIA Network+, which with experience can lead to network job functions including System Administrator and Network Support Technician, paying \$75K at midlevel.

Without IT Support training, our students would not be able to reach this level of employment. Per Scholas provides a bridge between their stagnant former jobs and their future careers.

## WORKPLACE SKILLS

**“IT Support wasn’t just a free course to help us study or learn something new. It was to prepare me for the workforce. Once I realized and accepted that, I was proud I proved I could do this, and that I was serious about getting a job in IT.”**

**— MICHAEL CLEMENTE, PER SCHOLAS TECHBRIDGE GRADUATE**

Career development is an integral part of IT Support, developing essential business skills in demand by employers. Training helps participants chart a career path, find a job, enjoy job success, manage finances, and continue to grow in a career.

For students needing extra support, we work with co-referral partners to provide individualized wraparound services (e.g., behavioral health, financial coaching, transportation, childcare, etc.). We help graduates secure entry-level tech employment with 1-on-1 guidance and a network of committed employer partners.

As they develop their IT careers, Per Scholas graduates are supported for at least 2 years after graduation, with regular contact from career coaches. All alumni have the opportunity to earn additional professional certifications for free along with other services.

## PARTNERSHIPS

**“I was immediately captured by their vision and their work product. A visit to their home base in the Bronx convinced me that Dallas needed what they offered...We feel very fortunate to have them as close, great partners in our work of preparing men and women for productive careers in living wage jobs!” — LARRY JAMES, PRESIDENT & CEO, CITY SQUARE**

An innovation, and hallmark, of our approach is that it is employer-driven. We work hand-in-hand with employer partners to stay close to IT sector needs in a given market. Employers help us develop and refresh training curricula, volunteer as guest speakers, provide mentors for students, conduct mock interviews, offer internships and hire graduates to fill positions with the best entry- to mid-level IT talent. Our employer partners range from small businesses to regional employers to major IT staffing firms to international corporations. Employer partners include Bloomberg, Pomeroy, Time Warner Cable, JPMorgan Chase, TEKsystems, Nationwide, Magview, and more.

To recognize these impactful partnerships, Per

Scholas engages its partners in a [national corporate engagement program](#). Through our multi-faceted approach, funders are engaged and invested in the Per Scholas community on many levels. For instance, volunteers from cloud-based software company Workday participated in a day of service with a cohort of Per Scholas students this spring at our Dallas location. Workday employees facilitated mock interviews with students, reviewed graduate resumes, assisted with LinkedIn optimization, and provided a panel for interview and resume feedback and questions at the end of the service day. **Within four weeks of graduation, 50% of these graduates were employed.**

Our work is not possible without strong local partnerships and our local **Advisory Boards**. In fact, they are central to our success. Our local partnerships are key for co-referral, wraparound services, job placement and, importantly, for becoming part of a collaborative regional effort to address poverty, un/underemployment, local skills gaps and regional economic growth.

## IMPACT

IT Support training benchmarks are aligned with, and tracked against, our overall outcome goals for enrollment, graduation, certification, employment, and job retention. The performance of each class is evaluated on an ongoing basis so that Per Scholas staff can adjust program delivery and support to meet these ambitious goals.

Per Scholas is a data-driven organization; real-time and longitudinal data inform our training.

Historically,

- **85%** of students graduate
- **85%** of graduates obtain CompTIA A+ certification
- **80%** of graduates secure employment at an average wage of \$14.50 hourly, and
- **75%** of graduates retain employment for at least one year

We measure and track a large number of variables to assess and improve effectiveness, including those identified above. Organization-wide, every staff person who engages with any member of our service audience participates in capturing relevant data in our cloud-based Salesforce database. Staff review data and generate frequent reports on overall admissions, enrollment, training/instruction, graduation, certification, placement, retention, wage gain and other key outcomes. This data is analyzed at both the local site and national level to identify issues quickly, and ensure consistency of training

delivery and outcomes.

## REPLICATION GOALS: 2015 AND BEYOND

**“I had several reasons to strive. I strive because I am tired of fighting poverty and I am fighting for the better. Things are better than ever, but I will not settle. I continue to strive. Per Scholas was a life-changing — life-saving — experience for me.”**  
— KING OQUENDO, GRADUATE // ALPHASERVE

Per Scholas has grown from an organization with a single location in the South Bronx to one with an increasingly national footprint. By 2017, we will be operating in seven cities, scaling up our impact to enroll 2,000 students across our training network each year. Over the next year Per Scholas will proceed with national expansion while continuing to grow current sites and refine our training offerings. Per Scholas’ due diligence for expansion is a feasibility analysis with four key components.

The areas of analysis are:

Our sectoral workforce development model

- **Market demand:** minimum 3:1 ratio of entry-level technology sector openings to projected Per Scholas graduates
- **Labor supply:** more than 40% of population without post-secondary credentials
- **Local competition and partnerships:** not duplicative to market but additive, and committed local champion partners to build our network of support and complementary programming
- **Sustainable funding:** 50% of three years of local funding prior to entry, or approximately \$750,000

depends on partnerships for its success: with the communities we serve, with the employers who hire our graduates, with the community-based organizations we refer to and receive referrals from, and with the philanthropic community leaders who fund our work. The measure of any new site’s local partner development after its first years is a measure of its future sustainability and success.

# HIGHLIGHTS

**“At Per Scholas, the bar is set substantially higher.”**

WIRED MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2014

## NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

In partnership with Symantec, we've developed a pathway into cybersecurity careers for military veterans, with an emphasis on women vets. Per Scholas convened a regional cybersecurity task force of industry, workforce development, education and government leaders to address, with employers, the cybersecurity skills gap and to define the specific skills and experience that constitute competency. The task force is comprised of leaders from Accenture, Symantec, ManTech International, NIST, Anne Arundel Community College, Northern Virginia Community College, Business-Higher Education Forum, SkillSmart and other key partners. In early 2016, we will pilot cybersecurity training that enrolls our graduates, as we assist them in building upon their current career paths. This training will build on the foundation created through IT Support/A+ certification training. The cybersecurity pilot will lead to valuable industry recognized certifications and full-time employment with small, mid-level and large scale businesses.

## CINCINNATI, OH

This year, Per Scholas relocated to the CityLink Center for the opportunities to partner with CityLink and co-located nonprofits in a multiservice environment. CityLink is a collaborative site providing a variety of on-site social services to bring local residents out of poverty. Through our location at CityLink, Per Scholas benefits from enhanced student recruiting and screening assistance. Our students and graduates benefit from supportive services as they complete technical training and launch their IT careers. Per Scholas was named to a local coalition of 14 diverse partners that are collaborating to implement the TechHire initiative in Cincinnati. TechHire is a multisector effort to give Americans pathways to well-paying technology jobs launched by the Obama Administration in March 2015.

## BRONX, NY

In the past year, Per Scholas implemented an array of new youth-focused programming to create more robust pathways for out-of-school, out-of-work young adults to enroll and succeed in training at Per Scholas. TechBridge is a new collaboration between Per Scholas and The Door funded by the JobsFirstNYC funder collaborative. In 2015-16, TechBridge will pilot a transitional model, including basic technology skills training and contextualized academic brush-up education, to help increase the number of disconnected young adults who meet prerequisites for Per Scholas admission. Per Scholas is also collaborating with NYCHA, Bronx Youth Center, and DreamYard to create a career referral network for disconnected young adults. As an early result of this youth-focused programming, our percentage of young adult students has increased from 33% to 38% in less than one year.

## COLUMBUS, OH

During 2015-16 we are expanding our capacity by 25% to train 100 IT Support students in Columbus. All graduates are offered the opportunity to study towards Network+ and Security+ professional certifications as part of continued career development at no cost. These opportunities for alumni are available online. Additionally, starting this year we are offering in-person, boot-camp style classroom training to prepare up to 40 Per Scholas alumni for successful Network+ certification to accelerate their career advancement.

## DALLAS, TX

This year, Per Scholas graduates in Dallas will participate in our first Network+ Boot Camp. The three day camp will be led by a corporate volunteer - a practicing, professional Network Engineer - from one of our employer partners. The goal is to provide A+ certified grads with a solid push toward the Network+ certification. The first three days of the 8-week IT Support training is a crash-course in project management as it relates to the software testing and quality assurance cycle.

# OPPORTUNITIES & NEEDS

As Per Scholas opens throughout the U.S., we eagerly seek partners who can:

- Introduce us to key business, community, philanthropic, political and other local stakeholders
- Offer or help find jobs, apprenticeships, or internships for graduates
- Secure local philanthropic and other funding support
- Help us find low-cost training and office space
- Identify and recruit allied nonprofits and public agencies for co-referral and case management
- Volunteer as guest presenters, host site visits to IT workplaces and mentor students
- Join and promote local advisory boards and working groups

Today, we can make a difference, an impact, a change in America. Per Scholas is grateful for this opportunity to share our vision and our plans to expand. We look forward to helping many more Americans build brighter futures for themselves, their families and their communities.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Per Scholas welcomes queries from any interested party about its national replication and how to get involved. To learn more, please contact **Miriam Ackerman McBride**, Vice President of National Strategic Growth & Development, at **(917) 280-2089** or by emailing [mmcbride@perscholas.org](mailto:mmcbride@perscholas.org).



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