

## **KANSAS CITY SCHOLARS POSITION DESCRIPTION**

### ***DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS***

#### **ABOUT KC SCHOLARS**

Kansas City Scholars (KC Scholars; [www.kcscholars.org](http://www.kcscholars.org)) is a 501(c)(3) public charity. KC Scholars removes barriers for low- and modest-income 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders and returning adults in a six-county, bi-state region – creating pathways to earning postsecondary credentials and degrees. KC Scholars supports two- and four-year degrees, and credit-bearing credentials/certificates. Supports provided include scholarships - renewable up to five years, incentivizing college savings, and college planning and persistence advising. The scholarship may be used at one of 17 campuses in the KC Scholars Postsecondary Network and engage Scholars in campus-based support once enrolled in college. Scholars are connected to career exploration and ultimately, to employment in high-demand sectors in the region. KC Scholars supports racial equity/inclusive prosperity by providing life-changing opportunity, establishing a regional culture of postsecondary completion, and connecting Scholars to high-wage jobs in the region while diversifying the regional workforce. The thousands of individuals benefiting are historically underserved populations based on economic status, race/ethnicity, and history of family college attainment.

KC Scholars launched in September 2016 and, in less than five years, has experienced widespread community engagement and rapid scaling. In Fall 2020, we had over 4,000 Scholars, with near 1,800 in college. KC Scholars awards another approximately 1,000 scholarships annually and is on the path to near 10,000 Scholars by 2027.

The goals of KC Scholars are to:

- 1) Increase postsecondary educational attainment in the greater Kansas City area;
- 2) Achieve a 75% degree or credit-bearing credential completion rate;
- 3) Increase economic independence for individuals in the program; and
- 4) Connect Scholars to career preparation opportunities in the region and to the regional workforce pipeline to achieve 80% of Scholar graduates remaining in the region to live and work.

KC Scholars began as and remains a “community asset”. Program planning included participation by 70+ community stakeholders, lessons learned and best practices from regional and national scholarship programs, and empirical research about which supports increase likelihood of college enrollment and completion, particularly for populations historically underrepresented in higher education.

KC Scholars is governed by a community-based Board of Directors. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation is the lead funder, with community funds, local and national grants, and other funding initiatives in place to increase the number of awards made annually.

Since September 2016, KC Scholars has experienced rapid growth, achieved a high level of community engagement, and exceeded goals for number of scholarships awarded and college enrollment and persistence rates. Early impact rates are significantly higher than for the region, state, and nation.

## **ABOUT THE POSITION**

The Director of Programs is responsible for managing and facilitating high-quality processes and best-in-class support services. The Director will be knowledgeable about leading and developing a team that is committed to a successful Scholar experience.

The Director provides strategic leadership and administrative management to a coordinated Scholar-centric program team that is focused on successfully supporting Scholars from time of application through college completion and ultimately into the regional workforce. The program team ensures that KC Scholars awardees are supported during planning for college and then complete all necessary steps to remain eligible and in good standing as they progress toward degree completion and move into the regional workforce. The program team is the program's frontline, the first impression for our Scholars and their families, and the ones whom Scholars turn to/look to for support.

The Director, and the Program team, is instrumental to KC Scholars achieving its 75% college completion goal, and specific benchmarks listed below:

- 90% enrolling in college the fall after high school graduation (Traditional)
- 91% persisting from freshman to sophomore year of college (Traditional)
- 90% persisting from sophomore to junior year of college (Traditional)
- 93% persisting from junior to senior year of college (Traditional)
- 100% enrolling in college the fall after being awarded (Adult Learner)
- 85% persisting from the first to the second year of college (Adult Learner)
- 88% of the 85% persisting from the second to the third year of college (Adult Learner)
- 75% of those that started college completing a credit-bearing credential or associate or bachelor's degree (Traditional and Adult Learner)

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Director of Programs will be a proven efficient, high-functioning professional with previous successful experience supporting students and navigating complex systems to administer multi-year, renewable college scholarships; provide college planning, persistence, and completion support; and track status of recipients.

The Director will provide strategic leadership, alongside the CEO and Senior Leadership Team, related to the overall effectiveness of the organization.

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Serve as an active member of the Senior Leadership Team, contributing to strategic thinking and action by the organization.
- Develop and execute strategic direction of the program functions of KC Scholars.
- Develop strategy and demonstrate previous experience and ability to produce measurable results – driving desired impact.
- Foster creation of an effective program team (hiring, supervision, development), including their continuing professional development to ensure deep content knowledge and expertise. Set clear expectations for team members and hold them accountable to drive progress toward outcomes – the program team is critical to KC Scholars' achieving its benchmarks, outcomes, and goals.

- Align program team staff expertise and capacity to ensure high-quality processes and provision of support services and college planning activities directly related to the Scholar experience – from the time of application through college completion – that increase likelihood of college enrollment and completion. As appropriate, activities should include family members of Scholars.
- Assess effectiveness of supports and processes on a continuing basis and make and/or suggest calibration to 1) keep pace with program scaling, 2) prepare for future growth opportunities, and 3) ensure that supports provided can be linked to demonstrable results and the program goal of 75% college completion.
- Oversee the online scholarship portal and all processes related to the annual application and selection cycle and track the status of current awardees (application, logic, communication, tasks lists, renewal documentation, all documentation maintained in or secured via the portal, processes to be ready for the next application cycle), identify and reduce existing duplications and identifying processes that would benefit from closer collaboration or increased communication.
- Monitor and support data analysis and reporting related to applicants, awardees, current Scholars, and previous Scholars, ensuring staff responsiveness to requests.
- Manage the appeals reviews and decisions process, with final consultation with the President and CEO.
- Understand and utilize data analysis and third-party evaluation findings to assess progress toward benchmarks, outcomes, and goals.
- Organize and facilitate data tracking, record keeping, inquiries management processes, and the documentation and following of established processes practices.
- Develop and maintain a relationship with the 100+ high schools in the six-county service region and the 17 Postsecondary Network campuses to ensure ongoing and effective communication and to collect and share data and best practices.
- Build and foster strong collaboration with the student support service providers that support Scholars, including clearly articulated expectations, tracking progress toward benchmarks, and problem-solving.
- Refine, implement, and manage the community volunteer scholarship reviewer recruitment, selection, training, assignments, and scoring process.
- Manage outreach and marketing and communication efforts with the external community that are directly linked to attracting applicants.
- Work with the Director of Finance and Business Operations to manage the scholarship payments and refunds reports and processes.
- Facilitate/co-facilitate unique initiatives designed to strengthen student supports services provided to Scholars.
- Represent KC Scholars in the community, building a reputation as a respected leader in the college access and attainment space.
- Remain abreast of best practices within college scholarship and college access and completion programs, regionally and nationally, that are achieving their goals and consider best practices that could be incorporated into KC Scholars.
- Identify and communicate process improvement efforts, when appropriate.
- Research, synthesize, analyze, and present information as requested.
- Attend meetings and events as appropriate.
- Other related activities and duties as assigned.

## **EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE**

- An undergraduate degree is required, while an advanced degree is preferred.
- A minimum of 5+ years of relevant experience in complex college access and completion programs which support aspiring college students to and through college.
- Deep knowledge of and practice in the college application process, admissions eligibility, financial aid, academic requirements, college enrollment, and college persistence – specifically for adult learners and students historically underrepresented in higher education.
- Previous and successful experience supervising and developing staff to achieve maximum performance and efficiency and reach organizational goals.
- Ability to work under competing deadlines/demands.
- Strong organizational skills, well-developed process skills, attention to detail, and ability to multi-task in a rapidly scaling organization.
- Ability to analyze data and recognize and articulate trends.
- Active listening and learning skills.
- Ability to be proactive, thoughtful, and consider the bigger picture.
- Excellent verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills, including ability to work with large diverse, multi-generational audiences.
- Exceptional judgment that augments an ability to be solutions-oriented and then act appropriately to solve problems.
- Experience working in a fast-paced, goal-oriented, start-up environment.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office (Outlook, Word, Power Point, and Excel) and ability to learn new applications and complex features.

## **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Commitment to and complete belief in the mission of KC Scholars.
- Quick learner with ability to develop a solid understanding of the content, processes, deliverables, and overall objectives of a complex, multi-faceted program.
- Personal values system that encompasses the highest standards of honesty, confidentiality, integrity, loyalty, and professional ethics.
- Passion for increasing college completion and workforce preparedness among students who are first-generation to college, low-income, or historically underrepresented in higher education and the regional workforce.
- Desire for feedback and ability to use it to drive quality.
- Strong organizational skills, attention to detail, and ability to multi-task and meet multiple deadlines.
- Keen sense of responsibility, high level of poise, ability to think independently, ability to maintain confidentiality, and a customer service orientation.
- Tactful and diplomatic with good listening skills and an approachable personality.
- Ability to self-direct, take initiative, anticipate demands, and problem solve.
- Ability to hold oneself and others accountable for enacting and following processes to ensure that work is accurate and complete and “completed correctly the first time.”
- Ability to maintain a calm and competent demeanor in uncomfortable and demanding situations.
- Cultural competency.

## **COMPENSATION**

A competitive non-profit compensation package as defined by the nonprofit agency's compensation guidelines, including base salary and benefits that correspond to the experience level, credentials, and personal characteristics of the candidate.

## **TRAVEL**

Occasional regional and national travel.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION**

KC Scholars firmly supports the principle and philosophy of equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of age, race, gender, creed, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other protected category pursuant to applicable federal, state, or local law.

## **REPORTING**

Reports to the President and CEO and is on the Senior Leadership Team.

All the statements in this position description are intended to describe the general nature of the work being performed and are not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, and skills required. This document describes the position currently available. The organization reserves the right to modify job duties or job descriptions at any time.

## **TO APPLY**

To apply for the Director of Programs position, submit the following items to [kcollins@kcscholars.org](mailto:kcollins@kcscholars.org). Use **Director of Programs Application** as the subject line of the email.

- Cover letter summarizing your experiences and skills that align with the scope of this position
- Resume
- Names and contact information for three professional references

The position will remain open until filled.