



Council of the Great City Schools
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 4, 2012

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Council of the Great City Schools Selects 2012 Math and Science Scholars
Urban students receive scholarships from ExxonMobil Foundation and Dr. Bernard Harris

WASHINGTON, June 4 — Four high school seniors have been named recipients of the 2012 ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship by the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) (CGCS). Students were selected from several hundred applicants for their academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

The scholarship program was created by former NASA astronaut [Dr. Bernard Harris Jr.](#), the first African American to walk in space, and the [ExxonMobil Foundation](#) to help underrepresented students pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies and to increase diversity in the STEM workforce.

The awards are given annually to two African-American and two Hispanic seniors from high schools in the 67 urban school districts represented by CGCS.

“These scholarships provide an enormous opportunity for talented urban students who have the academic promise and drive to succeed in STEM postsecondary studies and careers,” said Michael Casserly, executive director, Council of the Great City Schools. “The generous support of the ExxonMobil Foundation and Dr. Harris will truly give our young men and women a boost in their pursuits.”

Each scholar will receive \$5,000 for continued education in a STEM-related field. This year’s award winners are:

Mr. Mark Ballard, Ramsay High School, Birmingham City Schools (Alabama)
Ms. Simone Biggers, Walter Hines Page High School, Guilford County Schools (North Carolina)
Mr. Michael Castaño, Southwest Miami Senior High School, Miami-Dade Public Schools (Florida)
Ms. Fiorella Vargas, Cypress Bay High School, Broward County Public Schools (Florida)

In the fall, Ballard will attend Auburn University to study electrical engineering. Biggers plans to major in biology at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Castaño is going to Massachusetts Institute of Technology to pursue a career in engineering and law, and Vargas will study biomedical engineering at Harvard University.

“These scholarships are one way of preparing promising youth for math and science achievement both inside and outside the classroom,” said Dr. Harris. “With the help of the ExxonMobil Foundation, I am proud to support the development of innovative young minds and honor these students as they create a brighter future for themselves and our country.”

Administration of the scholarship program, including the application process, pre-selection and presentation of awards, is provided by the CGCS. Dr. Harris participates in the final selection of the recipients.

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About The Council of the Great City Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 67 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best possible education for urban youth. www.cgcs.org

About ExxonMobil Foundation

ExxonMobil Foundation is the primary philanthropic arm of the Exxon Mobil Corporation in the United States. In the United States, ExxonMobil and the ExxonMobil Foundation support initiatives to improve math and science education at the K-12 and higher education levels. In 2011, together with its employees and retirees, Exxon Mobil Corporation (NYSE:XOM), its divisions and affiliates, and ExxonMobil Foundation provided \$278 million in contributions worldwide, of which \$120 million was dedicated to education. Additional information on ExxonMobil's community partnerships and contributions programs is available at www.exxonmobil.com/community.

About The Harris Foundation

Founded in 1998, The Harris Foundation is a 501 (c) (3), non-profit organization based in Houston, Texas, whose overall mission is to invest in community-based initiatives to support education, health and wealth. The foundation supports programs that empower individuals, in particular minorities and economically and/or socially disadvantaged, to recognize their potential and pursue their dreams.

The Education Mission of The Harris Foundation is to enable youth to develop and achieve their full potential through the support of social, recreational, and educational programs. The Harris Foundation believes that students can be prepared now for the careers of the future through a structured education program and the use of positive role models. More than 15,000 students annually participate and benefit from THF programs. www.theharrisfoundation.org