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Council of the Great City Schools

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Four Urban Students Named 2020 Math and Science Scholars

Council of the Great City Schools Awards Bernard Harris Scholarships

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Four graduating high school seniors have been selected by the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) to receive the 2020 CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships. The students were chosen from several hundred applicants in urban school districts across the nation for academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

Now in its second year, the scholarship was created by former NASA astronaut, Dr. Bernard Harris, the first African American to walk in space, to encourage and assist promising students of diverse backgrounds who plan to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies after high school.

The awards were given to two African-American and two Hispanic seniors from high schools in the 76 big-city school districts represented by Council.

“Increasing cultural diversity in the nation’s STEM workforce is vital and has been a life-long mission for me,” said Dr. Harris. “I strongly believe in fostering the next generation of STEM leaders and am happy to help these talented students become the innovators and leaders of tomorrow as they pursue excellence in their chosen fields.”

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

- Raul Ayala, who attended the School of Health Professions in Dallas, TX
- Vanessa Cid, who attended Hialeah High School in Miami, FL
- Abani Neferkara, who attended Lincoln High School in Portland, OR
- Eliska Peacock, who attended School Without Walls High School in Washington, DC

In the fall, Ayala plans to attend Brown University to study mechanical engineering. Cid will pursue a degree in biochemistry at Stanford University. Neferkara plans to study molecular and cell biology at Brown University, and Peacock will study computer science at Stanford University.

“The Council is proud to partner with Dr. Bernard Harris on this important scholarship program to provide talented minority students in urban school districts a way to pursue STEM studies after high school,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. “The generous support of Dr. Harris helps advance these young men and women as they begin the next stage of their lives.”

Administration of the scholarship program, including the application process, pre-selection and presentation of awards, is provided by the CGCS. Dr. Harris makes the final selection of 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 76 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 to deliver the best possible education for urban youth. www.cgcs.org

About The Harris Institute

The Harris Institute is a 501 (c) (3), non-profit organization founded by former NASA Astronaut Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr., to serve socially and economically disadvantaged communities locally and across the nation striving to reach the most underserved populations in the areas of Education, Health, and Wealth. The institute 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 Institute is to enable youth to develop and achieve their full potential through the support of social, recreational and educational programs. The Harris Institute believes 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 50,000 students have participated and benefited from THI programs. www.theharrisfoundation.org/