



**Fall 2022**

## **Mission and Historical Background**

Quest scholarships offer high-achieving high school students from economically disadvantaged families in the St. Louis area the opportunity to step outside their local communities and develop a global vision by studying abroad.

Quest sent its first student abroad in 2017. The program grew to six students in 2018 and nine students in 2019. The pandemic suspended all international programs for the next two years.

In 2022 travel opened again. This past summer, 18 students from the combined classes of 2021 and 2022 experienced life in Argentina, Kenya, Denmark, France, and Spain.

## **The Program in a Nutshell**

Counselors from schools in the St. Louis region nominate high school juniors for Quest scholarships -- one candidate per school. The students must be high-achieving class leaders and live, or attend school, in neighborhoods where 75% of the student population is eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program. Students from 24 different high schools in the St. Louis area – including Metro East – have participated to date.

In many cases, the selected students have never been to other parts of the United States. They may not have flown on a plane or owned a debit card.

Quest is successful because it makes an active, personal investment in the students. From the time the students are selected in the fall of their junior year, until they depart in the spring, they receive strong adult support. Quest volunteers help them apply for passports, receive travel immunizations, make airline reservations, earn and save spending money and explore intercultural differences – all life skills that will boost them during their college years.

To date, Quest students have studied in Paraguay, Italy, Finland, Costa Rica, Japan, Ghana, Argentina, Denmark, Kenya, Spain and France.

The students' international programs are provided by AFS Intercultural Programs, one of the oldest and most respected non-profit educational organizations in the world. AFS-USA provides a portion of the program fee for each Quest student with an award from the national Faces of America Fund.

All of the students who have been awarded Quest scholarships have completed their international programs successfully. This fall, they are returning to their high schools for their senior year or are attending colleges across the United States. Many have earned prestigious scholarships. We expect to see Quest alumni/ae in leadership roles in St. Louis in decades ahead.

Quest is a component fund of the St. Louis Community Foundation and is featured on the foundation's homepage.

## **Goals**

The overarching goal of the Quest scholarship program is to provide equity of opportunity to outstanding young leaders who live in low-income neighborhoods in St. Louis. Ninety-seven percent of the students who have received Quest scholarships are Black, Hispanic or Asian. Several of the students have new-citizen parents who immigrated from Mexico, the Philippines, Haiti and Ghana.

The long-term goal of Quest is to be able to offer each low-income high school in the St. Louis region the opportunity to participate in the program.

## **Outcomes**

Local Quest volunteers gather information as they work closely with students in the months before departure, focusing on the most important outcomes – educational goals, language skills, confidence, self-awareness and worldview.

The program interviews students at length when they return. Volunteers expect to remain in contact with students during their college and early career days to observe their growth.

Based on national studies, we anticipate that the students who receive Quest scholarships will gain self-confidence, intercultural skills, foreign language proficiency, and a wider network of friendship and experience.