



**John M Belk
Endowment**
ELEVATE THROUGH EDUCATION

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For Immediate Release

John M. Belk Endowment Invests \$10M in College Advising Corps to Support Postsecondary Access for High School Students Throughout N.C. Endowment's Second Major Grant to College Advising Corps

Charlotte, N.C. (July 13, 2017) – The John M. Belk Endowment announced that it is providing a \$10 million leadership gift to College Advising Corps to increase access to higher education for low-income, underrepresented, and first-generation students in high schools throughout North Carolina. The three-year initiative will build on the Endowment's initial \$10 million investment in the non-profit organization, made in January 2014.

The ultimate goal of the grant is to produce long-term systemic change in the state by driving policy and practice to improve education and employment outcomes for North Carolina's students.

College Advising Corps places recent college graduates as advisers in high schools across the country. The John M. Belk Endowment's gift will support existing partnerships with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, Duke University, and Davidson College, which collectively placed 106 advisers in 127 high schools across North Carolina in service to more than 38,000 students in 2016-2017.

Advisers help students search for best-fitting college and career opportunities, complete applications for admission and financial aid, and support their successful transition from high school to a postsecondary degree or credentialing program. By aligning students' aspirations and career interests with their academic qualifications and socio-emotional needs, College Advising Corps advisers guide high school seniors across North Carolina toward postsecondary pathways that prepare them to make productive contributions to the state's workforce.

The John M. Belk Endowment is committed to transforming postsecondary educational opportunities to meet North Carolina's evolving workforce needs and recently announced a new goal for statewide postsecondary attainment. Together with its grantees, the Endowment is working to increase the proportion of North Carolinians attaining degrees, certificates, and other high-quality credentials to 60 percent by 2025.

“By investing in College Advising Corps, we hope to help North Carolina students overcome the barriers of access and affordability, empowering them to reach their own potential in postsecondary education,” said MC Belk Pilon, Board Chair of the John M. Belk Endowment. “This positive change to the trajectory of their lives will enable students to access better opportunities and in turn create a more educated North Carolina workforce.”

The partnership between the John M. Belk Endowment and College Advising Corps also aligns with the University of North Carolina system’s strategic plan, a key pillar of which is to provide North Carolinians – particularly those who are underserved – with the knowledge and encouragement they need to pursue higher education.

“There are far too many talented young people who are college ready, but do not apply to college because they lack the financial resources or understanding of how to access higher education,” said UNC System President Margaret Spellings. “This funding support will break through those barriers to help underserved students identify higher education opportunities that fit them best. More importantly, we know that greater higher education access can serve as a catalyst for positive change for students as well as communities across our great state.”

The John M. Belk Endowment’s mission is inspired by the vision of the late John M. Belk, who served as mayor of Charlotte and CEO of Belk, Inc., a family owned and operated department store company. Mr. Belk created the Endowment in 1995 with the initial purpose of funding a national merit scholarship program at his alma mater, Davidson College.

The John M. Belk Endowment is deepening its partnership due to College Advising Corps’ demonstrated results and ability to scale and innovate. According to a study conducted by a team of researchers from Stanford University, high schools served by a College Advising Corps adviser see, on average, a five to six percent increase in college enrollment over baseline rates after just two years.

In 2017-2018, College Advising Corps will serve an estimated 190,000 students across the nation, placing an anticipated 617 advisers from 24 partner institutions of higher education in 640 high schools. The organization’s virtual advisers, who leverage technology to connect with students not served through the in-school model, will reach an additional 10,000 high-achieving, low- to moderate-income students identified through a partnership with the College Board.

“We are excited to strengthen our partnership with the John M. Belk Endowment and continue to propel students to postsecondary opportunities together,” said Nicole Hurd, Founder and CEO of College Advising Corps. “The Endowment is playing a critical role in convening higher education, K-12, policymakers, businesses, and the philanthropic community and ensuring our students will be prepared for the future. Students across North Carolina will be able to compete and thrive due to increased opportunities and the leadership the Endowment is providing.”

About the John M. Belk Endowment

Based in Charlotte, N.C., the John M. Belk Endowment is a private family foundation committed to transforming postsecondary educational opportunities to meet North Carolina's evolving workforce needs. Its mission is aligned with the vision of its founder, the late John M. Belk, who served four terms as mayor of Charlotte and was CEO of the department store company Belk, Inc. He created the John M. Belk Endowment in 1995 to fund a national merit scholarship program for his beloved alma mater, Davidson College. Now led by Mr. Belk's daughter, MC Belk Pilon, the John M. Belk Endowment staff and board continue to partner with innovative, results-oriented programs in North Carolina to further Mr. Belk's values, legacy, and focus on the value of education as a means to personal fulfillment and community vitality. For more information, please visit <http://jmbendowment.org>.

About College Advising Corps

Based in Chapel Hill, N.C., College Advising Corps works to increase the number of low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented high school students who enter and complete higher education. To deliver on this mission, College Advising Corps places well-trained, recent college graduates from 24 partner institutions of higher education as full-time college advisers in high schools across the nation. Advisers provide the support that students need to navigate the complex processes of applying to college, securing financial aid, and enrolling in schools that will serve them well. In the 2017-2018 school year, College Advising Corps will serve an estimated 190,000 students across the nation, placing an anticipated 617 advisers in 640 high schools in 14 states. The organization's virtual advisers, who leverage technology to connect with students not served through the in-school model, will reach an additional 10,000 high-achieving, low- to moderate-income students identified through a partnership with the College Board. For more information, please visit <http://www.advisingcorps.org>.