



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lt. Gov. Gilchrist Joins MCAN and MiLEAP to Announce 50 Michigan Students Awarded Nearly \$1M Through Ticket to Tuition Giveaway

Over 21,000 entered to win, winning students highlight the power of FAFSA in unlocking financial aid for college

DETROIT, Mich. — On July 28, Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II joined Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) and the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) at Wayne State University (WSU) to celebrate 50 Michigan students who were each awarded up to \$50,000 through the state's Ticket to Tuition giveaway. Launched by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and MiLEAP in partnership with MCAN, the initiative awarded forty \$10,000 prizes and ten \$50,000 prizes to first-time FAFSA filers through a [Michigan Education Savings Program](#) account, promoting FAFSA completion, removing financial barriers and putting more students on the path to success.

"Every student in Michigan deserves a fair shot at success, no matter their background, zip code or income," said **Lt. Gov. Gilchrist II**. "Through the Ticket to Tuition giveaway, we awarded nearly \$1 million to 50 students from every region of our state. While this funding is truly life-changing for those selected, completing the FAFSA is a win for everyone because it unlocks scholarships that make college more affordable. We will continue making historic investments to make the first two years of community college tuition free and ensure all postsecondary education is more accessible. Let's keep working together to break down barriers and build a stronger Michigan where everyone can build a brighter future."

"The Ticket to Tuition giveaway was an innovative way to spark urgency around FAFSA completion, one of the most important steps a student can take toward accessing college," said **Ryan Fewins-Bliss, executive director at MCAN**. "It proved that when we show up for students with encouragement, clear information and real incentives, they respond with action. We're incredible proud of these students for taking that first step toward their futures. At MCAN, our mission is to make college a reality for every student in Michigan, especially those who face the highest barriers. This giveaway helped bring that mission to life in a powerful way."

"We launched the Ticket to Tuition giveaway with a clear goal to help more students complete the FAFSA and access the resources they need to pursue college or career training," said **Dr. Beverly Walker-Griffiea, director of MiLEAP**. "The 50 winners we announced today, and the thousands of other FAFSA filers, now have a head start on their future. College, skilled trades and career training aren't just for some, they're for everyone. At MiLEAP, we'll continue striving to ensure every learner has the support they need to take that next step."

Completing the FAFSA unlocks access to a range of federal and state financial aid programs, including federal Pell Grants; the Michigan Achievement Scholarship and Community College Guarantee, which offer recent high school graduates the opportunity to earn a skill certificate, associate degree or bachelor's degree at reduced or no-cost



tuition; and Michigan Reconnect, which allows adults ages 25 and older to attend their local community college tuition-free.

By the end of the giveaway entry period in May, approximately 50,000 students had completed the FAFSA, and 21,112 of them entered Ticket to Tuition.

“Before winning, I knew I wanted to go to college, but I was unsure how I was going to afford it and I didn’t want to take on massive student debt,” said **Cadie Benedict, a \$50,000 winner attending Michigan State University (MSU) in the fall.** “MSU was my dream, but I was leaning toward community college because it would be a lot cheaper and I could live at home to save money. Now, I get to join my sister at my dream school, and I don’t have to worry about how I’m going to pay for it.”

“I always knew I wanted to go to college, but like everyone else, me and my family were never quite sure how we were going to pay for it all,” said **Lukas Gojcay, a \$50,000 winner attending WSU in the fall.** “Now, a big chunk is paid for. The impact of this is not just about me and my future though, it is also about my two brothers and my sister and their futures. I am the oldest and the first to go to college. This award allows my parents to save even more money for my brothers and sister so that they can go to college when the time comes and that is very important. So, this took a lot of pressure off of me and impacted six futures in our family.”

“To anyone considering enrolling in college or career training, it’s not too late,” said **Michelle Richard, deputy director for Higher Education at MiLEAP.** “You can still complete the FAFSA and enroll in classes this fall. Completing the FAFSA continues to be the most important step for students to access critical federal and state financial aid, and the application that now takes less than 15 minutes to complete.”

MCAN and MiLEAP urge all eligible Michiganders to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible to take full advantage of available programs, including the [Michigan Achievement Scholarship](#), [Community College Guarantee](#), [Michigan Reconnect](#) and more.

COMPLETE LIST OF TICKET TO TUITION WINNERS

\$50,000 winners:

- Cadie Benedict, Chelsea
- Maya Dakroub, Dearborn
- Lukas Gojcay, Farmington Hills
- Angel Griffith, Detroit
- Calli Heleski, Riverdale
- Nathan Herbert, Detroit
- Elinor Molesta, Ada
- Tessa Prough, Otsego
- Gavin Willis, Blanchard
- Blake Woodliff, Burton

\$10,000 winners:

- Maya Bingle, Zeeland
- Kazhmier Burns, Monroe



- Ayah Chahine, Dearborn
- Bryan Cortez, Muskegon
- Nicholas Curry, Adrian
- Emily Fuller, Eaton Rapids
- Malakai Gallant, Michigan Center
- Kennedy Glentz, Harbor Springs
- Jackson Hoorn, Belmont
- Tyler Johnson, Otsego
- Giovanni Kadets, Fraser
- Kathryn Kuptz, Davison
- Airyana Lott, Buchanan
- Melaina Magnusson, Spring Arbor
- Ah'ja McCoy, Pontiac
- Esmeralda Mendoza-Segura, Lansing
- Skylar Metro, Almont
- Cecilia Moore, Canton
- Taya Motto-Polaski, Wallace
- Hassan Mustapha, Dearborn
- Maddox Podmokly, Royal Oak
- Connor Riker, Pentwater
- Carson Riopelle, Atlas
- Lamya Robinson, Roseville
- Ryan Rowland, Livonia
- Deanna Ruiz, Saline
- Lauren Skidmore, Dearborn
- Justin Stewart, Wyandotte
- Tasnim Sultana Omi, Warren
- Jayden Swanson, Palmer
- Graceful Tompkins, Interlochen
- Lauren Trader, Albion
- Kathryn Weatherford, Caledonia
- Emma Witbrodt, Frankenmuth
- Nathan Wittbrodt, Hudsonville
- Keren Ventura, Benton Harbor
- Long Vo, Dearborn Heights
- Ariana Wolfe, Farmington
- Elia Yvon, Essexville
- Milton Zhou, Ann Arbor

ABOUT MICHIGAN COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK (MCAN)

As the leader in the state's college access movement, MCAN works to improve the futures of Michigan's students and communities by making college accessible to all. MCAN's work centers on one main goal: To increase Michigan's postsecondary educational attainment rate to 60% by 2030. MCAN engages partners statewide who are committed to systems-level change and the reduction of barriers to increase college readiness, participation and completion rates, particularly among low-income students, first-generation college-going students, and



students of color. MCAN has helped Michigan's postsecondary attainment rate increase for the 10th consecutive year. For more information, visit micollegeaccess.org.

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