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Press Release

60 Students Awarded \$600,000 in Scholarships for Helping Peers Get to College

Recipients Recognized by the Darden Restaurants, Inc. Foundation's "Recipe for Success" Program

FAIRFAX, Va., June 27, 2011 -- Sixty students from New York City, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., were named winners of the Darden Restaurants *Recipe for Success* Scholarship. Totaling \$600,000, the scholarships were awarded to promising students with clear future goals and a dedication to motivating their peers to go to college. The renewable four-or five-year scholarships award a \$2,500 annual cash grant to students who have demonstrated an unmet financial need.

Darden's *Recipe for Success* program is designed to enable and empower youth to pave their own path to success by providing them access to the tools and information necessary to navigate the process of postsecondary education. The scholarship was developed in partnership with UNCF (United Negro College Fund), College Summit, and Darden's family of restaurant brands – Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52 – to create a robust and nationally recognized pipeline of under-represented students who will not only become highly qualified college graduates, but who will also support their peers along the pathway to college.

The "Recipe for Success" scholarships will be administered by UNCF, the nation's largest and most effective minority education organization. Students from three regions of College Summit, the largest provider of college-going culture support in the U.S., were eligible to receive the scholarship.

"We are excited to award scholarships to this next generation of leaders that will enable them to go to college, launch careers and give back to their communities" said Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D. UNCF President and CEO. "We salute these students who understand the importance of an education and the doors it can open."

"Given my own personal journey, I understand the importance of having a network of supporters that can help you see the possibilities," said Clarence Otis, chairman and CEO of

Darden. “‘Recipe for Success’ reinforces our company’s commitment to creating opportunities for others and placing no limits on what someone can achieve.”

Darden's *Recipe for Success* Scholarship is an extension of the work over the past two years of Darden and College Summit to train and support student Peer Leaders who motivate and encourage their classmates to enroll in college and develop college-going culture in their schools.

"Peer influence is a powerful and unique part of College Summit's model, and it's at the heart of our partnership with Darden and UNCF," said J.B. Schramm, Founder and CEO of College Summit. "America's high schools will find true success when students aren't seen as 'vessels' into which we pour knowledge, but are rather as drivers of culture and higher academic standards."

One New York City student who received the scholarship, Roseline Sanon from Central Park East Secondary School, taught activities she learned during her College Summit summer workshop to her peers. She not only spoke to classmates about financial aid, applying early to college, and keeping up grades, but also checked back to be sure they were on track. "I reminded my peers in person and online about any assignments that were due or upcoming college events such as open houses or interview days," said Sanon. "I reminded them every day that we will not make much money and live how we want unless we get higher education."

Tyriq Simmons, a scholarship recipient and College Summit Peer Leader at Crossland High School in the Washington, D.C., area took a similar approach to helping classmates stay on track. "I had discussions with my peers about their postsecondary plans and what they needed to do in order to get there," Simmons explained. "If they had no plans then I helped them figure out what it is they want to do and helped them formulate a plan."

Research has shown the factor most likely to increase student enrollment is having a significant portion of friends who are also planning on going to college. Multiple studies have found "positive peer pressure" to go to college is a major factor in the students' decision. One study found the likelihood of four-year college attendance for low-income, urban minority high school graduates increases more than 10 times for students who report that most or all of their friends plan on going to college and who report that their friends want them to go to college.

In Los Angeles, Ramon Gomez enjoyed the challenges that come with Peer Leadership at Inglewood High School. "There are those handful of students who have this mindset that college is simply not for them, but it's these students I like to work with most because once I influence and inspire them, they wake up and realize it's the right decision to apply," said Gomez. "I absolutely love the excitement that flows through these students once they hit that 'submit application' button."

You can view the full list of winners here:

<http://www.collegesummit.org/supporters/dardenwinners>

About UNCF

UNCF—the United Negro College Fund—is the nation's largest and most effective minority education organization. To serve youth, the community and the nation, UNCF supports students' education and development through scholarships and other programs, strengthens its 38 member colleges and

universities, and advocates for the importance of minority education. UNCF institutions and other historically black colleges and universities are highly effective, awarding 21 percent of African American baccalaureate degrees. UNCF administers more than 400 programs, including scholarship, internship and fellowship, mentoring, summer enrichment, and curriculum and faculty development programs. Today, UNCF supports more than 60,000 students at over 900 colleges and universities across the country. Its logo features the UNCF torch of leadership in education and its widely recognized motto, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."® Learn more at www.UNCF.org

About College Summit

College Summit is a national nonprofit founded in 1995. It partners with school districts to increase their college-going rates by fostering a high school culture where college-going is the expectation, not the exception. College Summit is the largest provider of college-going culture support in the United States, currently reaching 25,000 students at 180 schools in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Learn more at www.collegesummit.org

About Darden

Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates more than 1,800 restaurants that serve 400 million meals a year and generate more than \$7 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, and employing approximately 180,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2011, Darden became the first full-service restaurant company ever to be named to the FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to Work For" list. Our restaurant brands – Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52 – reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit www.darden.com.

SOURCE United Negro College Fund