



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 17, 2008

Contact: Stephine Poston
(505) 379-6172 stephposton@msn.com

**150 American Indian and Alaska Native Students Awarded
Prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship
*Top Students Representing 37 Different Tribes Receive Award That Will
Support Their Post-Secondary Success***

Albuquerque, NM – This fall 150 American Indian and Alaska Native students will begin their college experience as Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS). These scholars represent 18 states and 37 different American Indian tribes.

Overall, for the 2008-2009 school year GMS awarded one thousand scholarships to highly talented students of color. The 2008 class of Gates Millennium Scholars graduated from more than 800 high schools, representing 47 states and American territories, and will attend 360 different institutions of higher learning. Through the life of the program, a total of 20,000 students will receive scholarships to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Since the program's inception in 2000, Gates Scholars have established a record of excellence—in school and in life. GMS recipients stay in school, are involved with both campus and home communities, and complete their education. They also continue to give back after their academic careers are complete. "The application process is competitive and rigorous but the caliber of the applicants we receive makes the selection process even more challenging. Impressive is the only word to describe these applicants," said Sam Deloria, Director of the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC). The Gates Millennium Scholars Program is administered by the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). To assist in the implementation of this program, the UNCF established a partnership with the American Indian Graduate Center Scholars.

Christa Moya, Director of Financial Aid and Student Services for the AIGC Scholars program stated, "Gates Scholars receive more than funding from the program. All Gates Scholars are engaged in an innovative leadership program designed to enhance their academic and leadership skills. As a result, Gates Scholars have a five-year graduation rate of 77.6% and are highly sought after by organizations and corporations when they complete their education."

-MORE-

The GMS application process is now open for the 2009 academic year. All materials for the 2009 GMS application are due January 12, 2009. For more information please visit www.aigcs.org or call 1-877-690-GMSP or AIGC Scholars at 1-866-884-7007 toll free.

**THE AMERICAN INDIAN GRADUATE CENTER
4520 MONTGOMERY BLVD. NE SUITE 1-B
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87109-1291
(505) 881-4584 www.aigcs.org fax (505) 884-0427**



More About the Gates Millennium Scholarship

To date, the Gates Millennium Scholars Program has helped students from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and American territories to enroll in almost 1,500 colleges and universities. GMS is administered by UNCF—the United Negro College Fund—the nation’s oldest and most successful minority higher education assistance organization. The Gates Millennium Scholars Program, which began in 1999, is funded by a \$1.6 billion dollar grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

More than 12,000 high-achieving students of color from low-income backgrounds have been awarded more than \$400 million in scholarships since the program’s inception. The program has an average freshman retention rate of 96.6 percent and a five-year graduation rate of more than 78 percent. By contrast, according to the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, the five year graduation rate for all students seeking bachelor’s degrees or equivalent degrees at 4-year institutions is 52.6 percent.

For Gates Millennium Scholars, the awards are far more than funding for an education. “This year’s class of Gates Millennium Scholars has a bright future ahead of it,” said Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D., UNCF President and CEO. “Not only will these scholarships give students the funds they need to attend college, they receive support programs that will help make sure they succeed and graduate.” GMS provides financial and academic support throughout the student’s educational career from undergraduate through doctoral programs.

Gates Millennium Scholars exhibit leadership roles across a wide variety of areas from the academic world to sports, to entrepreneurial pursuits, to social service. For example, inaugural year Gates Millennium Scholar Brian Barton now bats for the St. Louis Cardinals Major League Baseball team. Christina Lopez, a 2001 Gates Millennium Scholar and current Ph.D. candidate in education, raised funds and built a portable library for an impoverished school in South Africa. Tyler Corey (Cherokee/Creek), a 2002 Gates Millennium Scholar, is a 2008 recipient of the Morris K. Udall Native American Congressional Internship and currently interns in the office of U.S. Rep. Mark Udall. Chiwing Jessica Qu, a 2006 Gates Scholar, volunteered for Unite For Sight in Chennai, India. Antoine Stoval, a 2007 Gates Scholar, lost his worldly possessions to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and in 2007 was elected class president at the University of Virginia. With more than 5,000 alumni, there are many other examples of Gates Scholars making a difference in their communities as educators, authors, engineers, business leaders, etc.

Skyrocketing academic costs are among the challenges that make it increasingly difficult for millions of students to pursue higher education, particularly low-income and minority youth. Through the GMS scholarship program, students can pursue their academic and career goals without financial barriers that make it difficult for so many young people to attend and succeed in college. A renewable award, the Gates scholarship funds a student’s unmet need based on their cost of attendance, including tuition, room, board, books, meals and fees.* Gates Millennium Scholars can pursue any field of undergraduate study and can

receive funding through their doctoral degrees in fields of study including: computer science, education, engineering, library science, mathematics, public health and science.

The GMS program provides African-American, Asian Pacific Islander American, American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic-American students an opportunity to pursue their dream of receiving an education. UNCF has partnered with the American Indian Graduate Center Scholars, the Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund and the Hispanic Scholarship Fund to reach, coordinate and support the constituent groups.

The 2009 GMS application process will launch in August 2008 with a deadline of January 12, 2009. For more information and the list of GMS class of 2008 Gates Millennium Scholars scholarship recipients, visit www.gmsp.org.

**based on the students financial aid award letter and GMS awarding policies*

The **Gates Millennium Scholars** program, a \$1.6 billion initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was launched in partnership with the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). The world's largest private scholarship program provides awards to African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian Pacific Islander American and Hispanic American students who demonstrate academic excellence, community service and strong leadership skills.

About UNCF

UNCF—the United Negro College Fund—is the nation's oldest and most successful minority education assistance organization. Its mission is to increase minority degree attainment by providing financial support to its 39 member institutions, reducing financial barriers to college and serving as a national advocate for minority education. UNCF institutions and other historically black colleges and universities are highly effective, awarding 18 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. UNCF's recently redesigned logo and brand identity feature UNCF's torch of leadership in education and its widely recognized motto, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."[®] Learn more at www.UNCF.org.