



**Philadelphia Futures & Steppingstone Scholars Officially Merge,
Unveiling New Name and Brand:**

Heights Philadelphia

Now one entity, education nonprofit aims to take students to new “heights” with significant support from Philadelphia’s philanthropic community

December 13, 2022 – (Philadelphia) – [Philadelphia Futures](#) (Futures) and [Steppingstone Scholars](#) (Steppingstone) today celebrated their official merger by unveiling a new brand and name, Heights Philadelphia (Heights). Following the formal approval of the merger by Philadelphia’s Orphan’s Court on November 18, 2022, Heights will serve more than 3,000 students, becoming one of the most dynamic, expansive, and trusted educational nonprofits in the City of Philadelphia. With an \$11 million operating budget, 70 total staff members, and an endowment of \$30 million, Heights has garnered significant support from the Philadelphia community, including organizations in the financial services, technology, and philanthropy sectors.

Rooted in the bold vision that “all Philadelphia students graduate high school and achieve economic mobility through college and workforce success,” Heights’ work reflects a deep and abiding commitment to break the cycle of generational poverty, which has long challenged the City of Philadelphia. Heights connects students – especially Black, Latino, and first-generation scholars – with a network of people who believe, and invest in, their talents. The organization’s student offerings will begin in middle school and provide access to the critical academic, workforce, and college supports that break down systemic barriers and propel economic mobility. Its programming will include individualized advising, academic enrichment, internship opportunities, and financial support to create pathways to success through every critical step of students’ lives.

While its name and brand are new, Heights will be led by respected and veteran educational leaders, Sara L. Woods, Esq. (*former President of Futures*), and Sean E. Vereen, Ed.D. (*former President of Steppingstone*), serving as Co-Presidents. A reconstituted Board of Directors will be co-chaired by Deborah J.R. Hirtle (*former Steppingstone Chair*) and Raj Tewari (*former Futures Chair*).

“Investing in today’s students in such a significant way means a better Philadelphia for all of us,” said Sara L. Woods, Esq., co-president of Heights. “With our new organization, students will have multiple pathways to success. Their future, and ours, will be powered by their achievements. With Heights, we have the ability to scale and serve more students who will benefit from our comprehensive approach to advising, opportunities and resources.”

“In Philadelphia we are seeing less than 15% of students who start 9th grade graduate college 10 years later, while more than 71,000 adults in the city’s current workforce live in poverty. It doesn’t have to be this way,” said Sean E. Vereen, Ed.D., co-president, Heights. “Exposing students to opportunity is not enough. We have to create a path to educational and economic opportunity and support students as they move through it. We have to advise. We have to invest. We have to provide the tools to support them on their journeys toward economic mobility. We must push colleges, institutions, and businesses to see our students as we see them: As the future of our City – a future that is better than today.”

Since announcing its intention to merge, Heights has received several generous gifts and pledges, endorsing both its vision, mission, and programmatic initiatives for its students. Organizations that have provided significant philanthropic support for Heights include Comcast NBCUniversal; Hamilton Family Charitable Trust; Hirtle, Callaghan & Co.; Hess Foundation; Lenfest Foundation; Neubauer Family Foundation; as well as the William Penn Foundation.

“Futures and Steppingstone knew that while both were strong organizations alone, together true change could happen for the students of Philadelphia,” said Jennifer Stavrakos, Interim Director for Great Learning at the William Penn Foundation. “We are pleased to see these two organizations officially merge and now as Heights, offer outstanding educational experiences and support services to even more students in our City, creating greater access to academic and workforce opportunities.”

The official unveiling of the new organization’s name and brand was hosted today at George Washington High School, one of Heights’ 23 partner schools in the School District of Philadelphia. With a school-wide pep-rally, featuring a surprise guest appearance by Philadelphia Eagles’ All-Pro Center Jason Kelce and George Washington’s nationally recognized cheer squad, students came together with staff from Heights and its new co-presidents to celebrate this new chapter for the organization. This pivotal moment comes nearly six months after the respective Boards of Directors for Futures and Steppingstone unanimously approved to merge following a comprehensive 18-month period of due diligence, which was funded by the William Penn Foundation and The Nonprofit Repositioning Fund.

For more information about Heights Philadelphia, and how to get involved, please visit its new website: www.Heights.org

About Heights Philadelphia:

Led by respected and veteran educational leaders from Philadelphia Futures and Steppingstone Scholars, Heights is rooted in the bold vision that “all Philadelphia students graduate high school and achieve economic mobility through college and workforce success.” Heights’ work reflects a deep and abiding commitment to break the cycle of generational poverty, which has long challenged the City of Philadelphia, connecting students – especially Black, Latino, and first-

generation scholars – with a network of people who believe, and invest in, their talents. Beginning in middle school, students receive access to academic, workforce, and college support to propel economic mobility. Serving more than 3,000 students in Philadelphia, Heights works with students to provide not only programming including one-on-one advising, academic enrichment, internship opportunities, and financial support - but also pathways to success through every step of their lives.

For more information, visit [Heights.org](https://heights.org). Follow Heights on social media including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn @HeightsPhilly

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