

VANGUARD SCHOLARS



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Who is BlackNorth Initiative?

We are a Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to ending systemic anti-Black racism in Canada.

Founded in 2020 by Wes Hall, Executive Chairman & Founder of WeShall Investments & BlackNorth Initiative.

Our mission is to support Black Canadians with the opportunities to reach their greatest potential through providing mentorship, scholarships, career development and more - creating a meaningful change.



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About BlackNorth

Our history

- The BlackNorth Initiative was started by Canadian business leaders in 2020 to combat systemic anti-Black racism
- Our team now runs programs focused on:
 - Supporting the education of Black Canadians
 - Improving access to careers and supporting career growth
 - Supporting Black entrepreneurs
- Looking forward, we're focused on driving impact in the Black community through 3 pillars; **Learning, Economic Stability, and the Pledge**
- Through the Pledge, we will work with Signatories like your organization to build inclusive and equitable workplaces

Highlighted programs

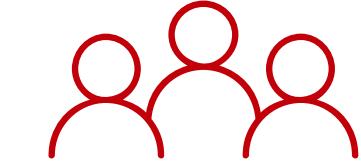
Bursaries Programs

- Several [bursary programs](#) supported by corporate partners and post-secondary institutions, providing tuition assistance, mentorship, and pathways to secure paid internships through BNI partners



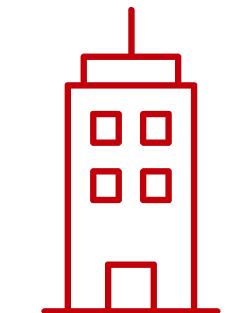
BlackNorth Connect

- [Online platform](#) that provides access to internships, job postings, mentorships, and scholarships and bursaries
- More than 30 Signatories representing 3,000+ job opportunities



BlackNorth B.E.G.I.N.

- [Digital platform](#) that provides access to educational resources, funding sources, and mentorship opportunities to support Black Entrepreneurs' success
- 15+ service providers offering discounted or pro bono expertise



Introducing Vanguard Scholars

A transformative six-year program of support and opportunity beginning in the summer after the 11th grade and continuing through University and into your career.

The program is designed for high-achieving Canadian Black Youth from equity-seeking communities to ensure success in high-ranked universities and high-trajectory careers. It is modelled after the highly successful Thrive Scholars Program in the US. (thrivescholars.org).



Our Objectives

- ✓ Empowering Future Leaders
- ✓ Strengthening Academic Foundations
- ✓ Enhancing Career Readiness
- ✓ Fostering Long-term Engagement
- ✓ Driving Systemic Change



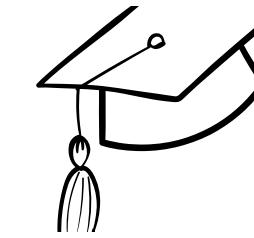
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BACKGROUND



Origins of Vanguard: Thrive Scholars

Vanguard is modelled after the highly successful Thrive Scholars in the U.S. The long-term results for the 6-year Thrive Scholars Program are as follows:



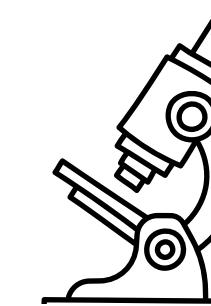
College Success

10% more likely to graduate from top-ranked universities compared to peers.



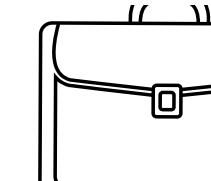
Academic Performance

Higher STEM retention, with Scholars completing degrees at a 3.4 GPA or above.



Field of Study

25% more likely to choose majors in STEM or medicine.



Career Success

45% of alumni now lead in top professions—and you can too.

As a result, Thrive Alumni are streaming into medicine, law, engineering, computer science, business, finance, banking, and consulting.



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Why Join Vanguard Scholars?



The Challenge

High-achieving Black students from under-resourced communities continue to face systemic barriers that hinder their access to opportunity

The Gap

They remain significantly underrepresented at top universities and in high-impact career pathways.

The Result

This leads to limited representation in fields such as science, medicine, law, academics, research, business, finance and banking.

Vanguard Scholars exists to change that!



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Systemic Factors Influencing the Experiences of Black Youth

Educational Contexts

- Unequal access to enriched learning opportunities and advanced programs due to systemic inequities in educational streaming.
- Disproportionate disciplinary practices that interrupt learning and belonging.

Economic Contexts

- Structural barriers limiting equitable access to financial resources and employment pathways.
- Underrepresentation in mentorship and career networks that support economic mobility.

Social Contexts

- Discrimination and limited access to culturally responsive mental health supports.
- Need for greater representation and mentorship to foster belonging and success.



Why do Black Students from underserved communities continue to struggle?



Unequal Access to Pathway Counselling

Limited access to culturally responsive guidance can restrict students' awareness of diverse postsecondary options, leading to pathways that don't fully reflect their goals or potential.



Limited Culturally Relevant Mentorship

The underrepresentation of Black educators and mentor's limits opportunities for students to receive identity-affirming guidance and career support.



Inequitable K-12 Resourcing

Schools serving Black and equity-seeking communities often face funding and resource disparities, reducing access to enriched programs and academic supports that promote postsecondary readiness.



Barriers to Equitable Career Opportunities

Systemic barriers often restrict access to internships, experiential learning, and skill-building programs, highlighting the need for more inclusive pathways to career success.



Why is Mentorship & University so Important?



"Mentors help students build a foundation of self-confidence, critical thinking and independence, which are essential for long-term success.

Moreover, the relationship between a mentor and mentee can evolve over time, becoming a source of ongoing support as students progress through their studies. Mentors can offer advice on how to navigate these transitions, ensuring that students remain on track and continue to succeed."



24%

Graduates with a bachelor's degree earn on average \$68.3 thousand dollars per year, 24% more than the national average income.

115%

Since 2015, jobs requiring a bachelor's degree increased by 115%. Jobs requiring higher qualifications increased by 170%.

88%

88% of students say their courses will positively impact their ability to secure a job in their field of study

Source: Facts and Stats, Universities Canada ([Link](#)), 2024

Mentorship Programmes, University World News ([Link](#)), 2024



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Vanguard Scholars Program

Introducing an UNMATCHED opportunity!



6-week summer
academy and support throughout
the University!



Calculus, academic writing,
leadership, and critical thinking
skills.



Mentorship from top industry
leaders for a total of 6 years!



Personalized career guidance and
support, industry networking, and
internships.



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Vanguard Scholars: Key Components



Summer Academy

Two 6-week summer sessions at the U of T with university-level courses taught by professors.



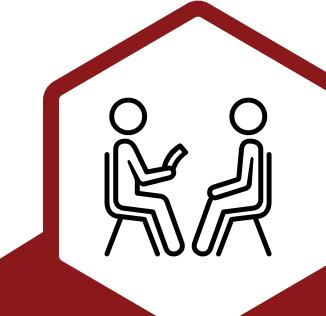
University Counselling

Each student is paired with a counsellor for personalized guidance on university selection, essays, & financial aid.



Mentorship

Students are matched with mentors in their field of interest who offer guidance through university and into their careers.



Career Counselling

Internships, interview preparation, résumé support, and exposure to job opportunities.



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6-Year Roadmap to Leadership and Success



PROGRAM YEAR 1

Summer Academy 1
6-week residential program focusing on academic enrichment & leadership development.

University counselling & Transition
Personalized guidance on university & scholarship applications.

PROGRAM YEAR 2

Summer Academy 2
A 6-week summer program for returning Grade 12s and incoming Grade 11 scholars.

University counselling & Transition Continued.

PROGRAM YEAR 3-5

Mentorship
Ongoing personalized professional guidance & support in students' fields of interest

Career preparation
Internship opportunities to build real-world experience.

PROGRAM YEAR 6

Vanguard Alumni Network
Community network, job opportunities, career support & professional networking.



Summer Academy



Core to Vanguard Scholars

Prepares students for top universities and high-impact careers.

Two 6-week Residential Sessions

Delivered after Grades 11 and 12 at the University of Toronto.

Focus on Academic Enrichment

Rigorous university-level coursework in key subjects taught by university professors.

Leadership Development Training

Training to build confidence and real-world skills for post-secondary success.

Immersive Campus Experience

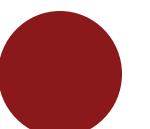
Students live on campus and connect with a high-achieving peer community.



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Program Eligibility



Identify as Black

The program is dedicated to empowering talented, young Black students.

Students in Grade 11

Currently enrolled in Grade 11 at a high school in Canada.

Cumulative GPA of at least 3.7+

Equivalent grade average of 84%.

Demonstrate financial need

Students will receive a laptop and a \$1,500 stipend to help reduce financial barriers and support their academic journey.

Demonstrate leadership qualities

Students must show leadership potential and community involvement.



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Vanguard Scholars Expected Outcomes



Students receive support to help reduce financial strain.



Higher internship and job placement rates through strong professional networks.



More Black students securing university placements & scholarships.



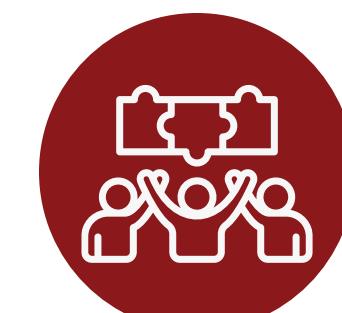
Igniting Potential, Inspiring Futures



Enhanced Academic Performance and Confidence.



Increased retention & graduation rates for Black students.

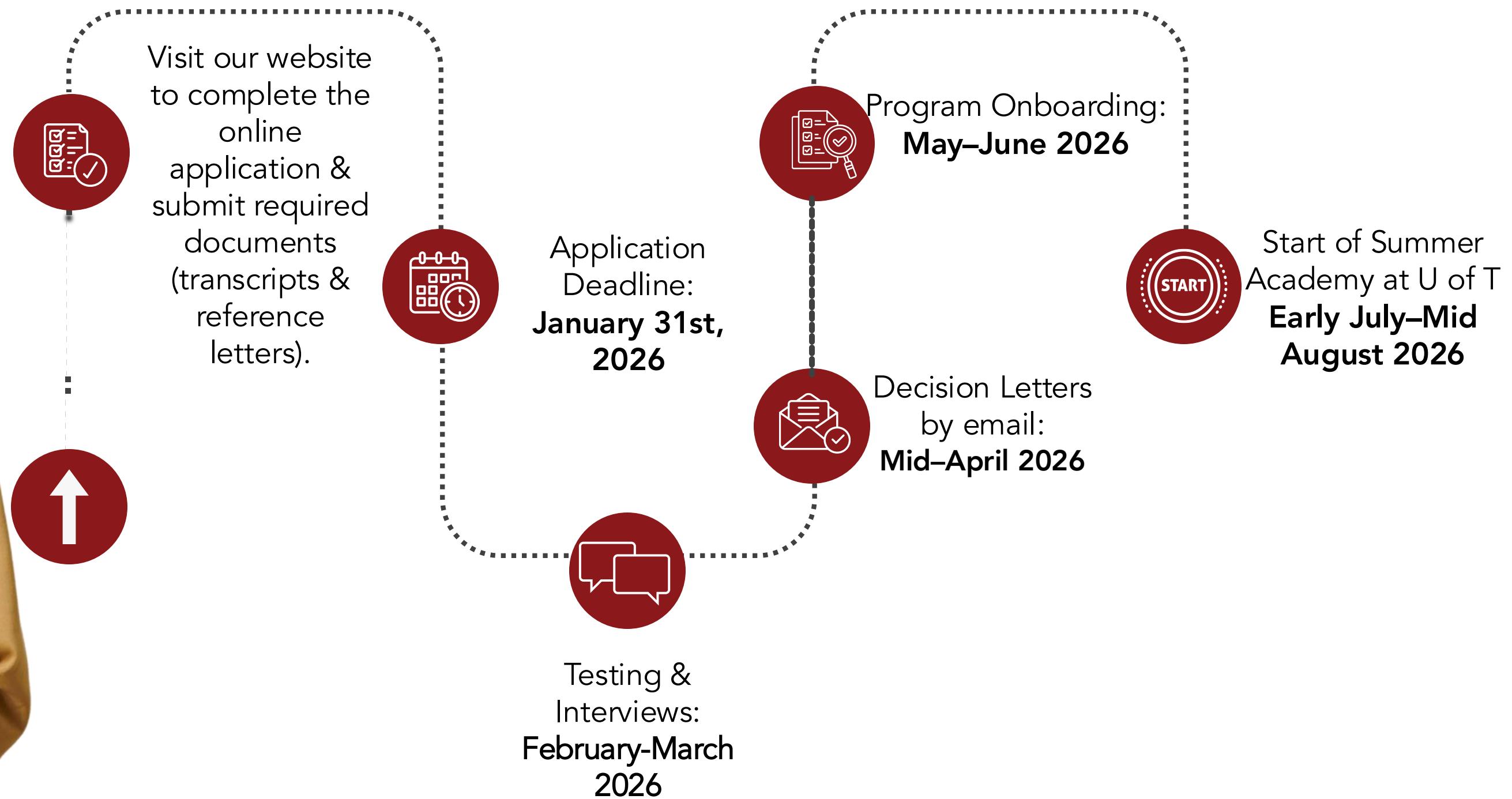


Increase in Black professional participation in leadership roles.

APPLICATION PROCESS & CHECKLIST



Vanguard Scholars Application Process



Application Checklist



- ✓ Online Application
- ✓ 1 Essay and Video
- ✓ High School Transcripts
- ✓ Financial Forms
- ✓ Two Reference Letters
- ✓ Pre-test (Online)
- ✓ Math & Reading Assessment



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Your Journey Starts Here – Stay Connected!



Email: vanguard@blacknorth.ca

Website: www.blacknorth.ca



Follow us for updates:



APPLICATIONS CLOSE
JANUARY 31ST, 2026



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