NORMAN TOPPING STUDENT AID FUND

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021
Our commitment to stand with our Topping community is just as strong as it was 50 years ago when the Fund was established to address inequities in higher education. USC has made considerable strides toward this goal; yet, the scholarship and community provided by NTSAF are just as essential now as they were in the 1970s, as systemic racism and poverty exacerbated by the pandemic continue to burden our students.

This past year, the Governing Board and the NTSAF staff came together with the determination and resolve to do best by our Topping Scholars, Fellows, and alumni. This annual report highlights the essential work that was done to ensure our students felt supported both academically and financially. As we look ahead, the NTSAF will focus on cultivating the reconnection of the Topping family and working through our ongoing anti-racist and equity initiatives.

Hannah Franco

HANNAH FRANCO
2021-2022 NTSAF Governing Board Chair

Dr. Trista Beard

DR. TRISTA BEARD
NTSAF Director
MISSION STATEMENT OF THE FUND

The central mission of the Norman Topping Student Aid Fund is to empower our Topping Scholars and Fellows to realize their full potential at USC, in their communities, and in life beyond the University. To achieve this mission, the Fund provides support and guidance, community-building programs, and financial assistance. The Fund advocates for equity in higher education by selecting students with high-financial need who exhibit an extraordinary commitment to community.
A YEAR ONLINE
adjusting to a 'new normal'

Due to the pandemic, the Fund’s budget was severely impacted by a reduction in student fees across the university. Previous year’s reserves were utilized to cover staffing, operational costs, and a limited exceptional funding budget.

Determined to meet the Scholars and Fellows needs, the student-majority Governing Board developed an Emergency Grant Program to offer up to $500 of assistance to students struggling with basic needs.

NTSAF celebrated the 2021 Graduation of 37 Scholars and 12 Fellows, with a drive-thru event for USC sash distribution and photo opportunity.

The Topping Office hosted over 25 online events, workshops, and social gatherings this year, offering students 50 hours of programming. This gave Topping the perfect opportunity to welcome back NTSAF co-founder, Mr. Ron McDuffie, to speak with students about the inception of the Fund and his career over the last 50 years. A historic event!
$946K in scholarships grants were awarded to 152 students

38% from surrounding community

STEM 33.3%

Social Sciences 20.2%

Business 14.1%

Politics/Policy 14.1%

Law 4%

Humanities 14.1%

3800 hours of community service logged by Topping students

80% Undergraduate Scholars

68% Freshman Admits

32% Transfer Admits

20% Graduate Fellows

100% first-time freshmen maintained 6-year graduation rate

3.53 average cumulative GPA

5% average acceptance rate

3% of community service logged by Topping students

THE USC TOPPING PROGRAM WON 2 NATIONAL AWARDS FROM NASPA

2021 Gold Award for Excellence in First-Generation Student Success Programs

2021 Grand Gold Award for 2021 Program of Excellence

USC Topping Staff: Dr. Trista Beard, Director Carina Gonzalez, Lead Advisor
MISSION STATEMENT OF THE BOARD

The NTSAF Governing Board endeavors to accomplish the mission of the Fund, maintaining its integrity, while ensuring longevity and resilience. It will do so by facilitating communication between Topping Scholars and Fellows and the larger USC community, creating and implementing long-term policy, and selecting Topping Scholars and Fellows.
The Topping Governing Board remained responsive to the needs of our Scholars and Fellows throughout the hardships brought on by the pandemic. Grown out of Scholar and Fellow advocacy, the Board and the Provost’s office approved the disbursement of Emergency Grant Funds. In a year with almost no campus jobs available, the office was able to distribute these grants to 75 students in the spring semester, providing some financial assistance for many in need.

- Approved the creation of an Anti-Racism and Equity ad-hoc committee
- Increased anti-racist, anti-bias training for board members
- Allowed Scholars and Fellows to log up to 5 hours of anti-racist, anti-bias training and/or workshops towards their community service requirement
- Increased graduate student representation
- Expanded communication between the Scholar/Fellow Representatives and their constituency, creating an Opt-In waiver for sharing Scholar/Fellow contact information
The Topping staff are focused on students’ well-being and belonging, just as much as they are on academic progress and exploration. They are literally writing the book on holistic advising, with a contribution to the *Developing and Implementing Promising Practices and Programs for First-Generation Students* coming out next year from Routledge Publishing.

**SIGNATURE PROGRAMS**

- Annual Topping Retreat
- New Student Welcomes
- Faculty-Student Lunch and Learn Series
- Academic Success Seminars
- Graduation Celebration
- Mentor Program
- Volunteer Hours (10 per semester for '20-'21)

Being forced to move to all online programming did not stop the professional staff from delivering Topping's high-quality signature programs. The 2020 Topping Retreat kicked off the academic year with a virtual conference model, offering students 20 different workshops and social events over 3 days! The response was overwhelmingly positive and 95% of the Scholars/Fellows attended 3 or more events during the weekend.

"I know that I have my Topping family to turn to for help, support, and guidance. This community has given me so much and I have learned to embrace my identity."

"Resilience and determination are needed to succeed, but you have to have a support system to back you up during difficult times. Topping will provide that extra support I need to overcome any obstacles throughout my journey."

"My biggest takeaway was getting to reconnect with my Topping Family and knowing that they will be there if I need them."
One of our most well-known and highly-praised signature events was re-imagined to better suit our 'stay-at-home' lives. The traditional Faculty-Student Luncheons were converted to an online speaker series, called the Faculty-Student Lunch and Learn series. Rather than each student inviting their own faculty member to a formal lunch on campus, Scholars and Fellows attended at least one speaker series event. Faculty from various fields spoke in-depth about their lives, educational journeys, and professional careers. Scholars and Fellows were able to attend multiple sessions and meet professors from different schools at USC. Empowered to use their voices in these intimate gatherings, students participated in open dialogues with our faculty speakers. Until we are able to host large-scale events on campus again, Topping will continue this online series.
2020-2021 NEW ACTIVITIES

- Increased student leadership development opportunities, offering more student co-facilitator roles for workshops
- Adjusted signature programs to include multiple online sessions of events (i.e. the New Student Welcome and Faculty-Student Luncheons) to provide opportunity for smaller cohorts to interact
- Added B.E.A.T. (Black Excellence At Topping) community events to increase engagement opportunities for Black Scholars and friends.
- Increased social media messaging to celebrate students, alumni, and the history of NTSAF (Doubled followers on IG and LinkedIn Alumni group)
- Created digital promo kit for schools to use to promote the Scholarship
- Aligned evaluations to updated learning goals, for better program assessment

2021-2022 LOOKING AHEAD

- Further increase capacity for peer mentor program by developing and training pod leaders to run small group mentoring.
- Re-open the Topping Lounge and Office after 1.5 years of closure due to COVID.
- Offer hybrid programming for the mix of students taking in-person and online courses.
- Continue to offer high-touch, holistic advising services to assist students, especially those challenged by the transition back to campus activities.
Alumni!

Let's stay in touch! Use the QR code to update your contact information, join the Topping LinkedIn page, or leave a donation. As the Topping Scholars and Fellows begin to reconnect after a year online, we would be remiss to not include Alumni in our efforts to re-establish connections.