

GENERATION WORK

Promoting the Career Advancement of Young Adults



BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

This is a brief report about young adults, ages 18 to 29, who received Alaska Airlines/Airport University scholarships from Port Jobs. All were served by Port Jobs as part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation funded Generation Work initiative. A full report, focusing on a larger number of Generation Work scholarship recipients will be released in the fall of 2020.

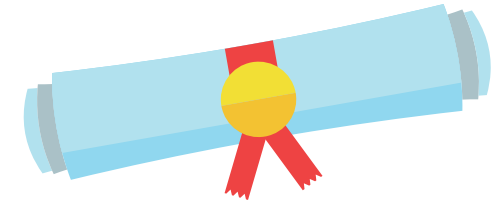
To date, scholarships have been distributed to 135 young adults between the fall of 2015 and the summer of 2020. Awards have totaled \$185,000. In addition to receiving scholarships, young adults access customized education and career advice, and other assistance designed to build their assets and skills along the career pathway of their choice. Port Jobs' assistance includes information about colleges, labor market demand, financial aid, tuition assistance, and other resources that are instrumental to supporting the career advancement of young adults. The vast majority of scholarship recipients are low income persons of color, including large numbers of individuals for whom English is an additional language. Scholarship recipients are employees of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Port Jobs invites all to utilize employment assistance at their

Airport Jobs office, and the free college-credit bearing programs they offer in the Airport University program.

The scholarships, though modest in amount, have a powerful influence. Some young adults received more than one scholarship. All awards were made following a competitive process. Young adults coupled these resources with grants and hard work from their earnings. Some young adults used their awards to buy books and earn certificates, as well as to pursue college degrees in high demand sectors where skilled workers are vastly needed. Because Port Jobs is located on site at the airport, staff is a heartbeat away to provide career navigation support dedicated to building equitable and inclusive job pipelines to airport employment.

Unlike most employment-focused programs, Port Jobs staff is co-located at the workplace, and are acutely aware of the day to day opportunities and circumstances facing airport workers. At perhaps no time, other than 9/11, has this proximity to airport workers been more important or pivotal to ensuring that workers feel supported and know that they have a place to turn. Though the Port Jobs office is currently not open to the general public, staff are on site still working and reaching out to clients and airport workers who have

been laid off. They have also accommodated their office to provide a safe environment and have scheduled on site 1:1 appointments since mid-May 2020. In addition, they continue to reach out to employers, post jobs and track the status of airport employment, and connect workers who have been laid off or furloughed to continued health care coverage.



REPORT PURPOSE AND METHODS

Port Jobs conducted phone interviews with scholarship recipients. The purpose of this snapshot report and the forthcoming larger report is twofold: (1) to find out how the scholarship recipients used their scholarships to support their education and career aims; and (2) to determine how during the COVID crisis their circumstances may have changed, in order to target services most strategically to promote their ongoing career advancement.

This report provides examples of the ways that young adults are using the scholarships, and the benefits that accessing these scholarships have on their career advancement efforts. The information below summarizes data on fifteen young adults who have been interviewed to date. All received \$25.00 gift cards for their contributions to this report. Port Jobs plans to continue the interviews through August 2020 before preparing a final report.



“The scholarships were life-altering. They made me want to think of the future. Build my skills and plan. Having Port Jobs on site where I work was huge for me. My employer shared the flyer. I am so grateful.”

Scholarship Recipient

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Interviewees included: 3 Somalian; 2 Eritrean, 1 Arabian, 1 Bosnian, 1 Amhara, 1 Pacific Islander, 1 Spanish, 1 Latina, 1 Bangladeshi, 1 Iraqi, 1 Pakistani and 1 Caucasian. Sixty percent self-identified as female, and 40% male.

Their ages ranged from 21 to 27; 66% fell into the 21 to 23 year old age group, and 34% were in the 24-27 year old group. The majority (92%) spoke at least two languages. Four were primary supporters of their families, all of which included both younger and older household



“I interviewed with my employer on site at Port Jobs to get my first job. And I took an Airport University class at the airport that was required for my AA degree. That saved me time and money as the courses on site are free.”

Scholarship Recipient

members. In addition, one of these four young adults also sent money home to relatives in their home country. Two young adults were parents of children under four years of age, and two were the only income earners in their families, each of which included three other household members. Five still lived at home, and three had younger school aged siblings, who since the onset of COVID-19, were often competing to use the only laptop which the family owned.

Young adults lived in the city of Sea Tac (5); Des Moines (2) and Seattle (2). Others were residents of one of the following cities: Auburn, Bonney Lake, Federal Way, Kent, Sammamish and Renton.

They worked at different airport companies, in customer service, cargo, cabin cleaners, curbside assistant, food server, customer service, or other entry level jobs. Their companies include Huntleigh, DAL Global Service, G2 Secure Staff, Clear, Primeflight Aviation, Singapore Airlines, Floret, Horizon Air, Delta, United Airlines, Dilettante and Horizon.

Perhaps the most important thing to know about this group of young adults is that they are incredibly hard working. Many balance work and school, and scheduling challenges



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that are necessary to meet the often changing demands of both arenas. Despite this many scholarship recipients find working at the airport to be very fortuitous and compatible with going to school as there are more opportunities in a 24-7 job environment to adapt their work schedule to match their school schedule. Unlike their more affluent age counterparts, many simply can't afford to go to school full-time, as their family would not survive were they to make that choice.

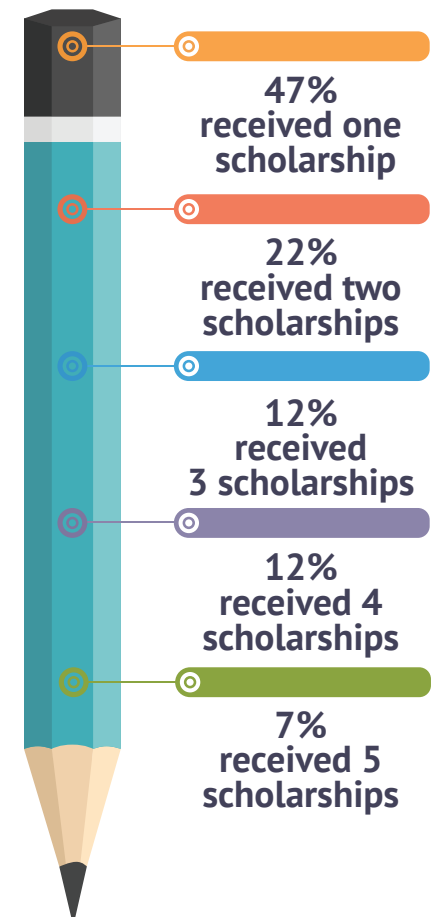
The career advancement goals of young adults were often in aviation-focused careers, and included areas ranging from aeronautical science, homeland security and emergency management, supply chain management, computer science, political science, health information management, cyber security and forensics, communication, hospitality and tourism, and careers as a pilot. They went to many different colleges, including the University of Washington - Tacoma and Seattle locations, Highline Community College, Green River Community College, South Seattle College and Pierce College.

WHAT WE HEARD

- 100% said that scholarships helped them to afford to go to school, and 86% received satisfactory (2.0 or above) grades in the courses they took, averaging an estimated grade point of 3.1.
- 33% reported that receiving a scholarship made it possible for them to take one additional course at the same time – thus accelerating their education and career goals.
- 51% appreciated that they could apply for more than one scholarship.
- 52% augmented the scholarships they received with other types of tuition assistance, and 61% also used their own savings to supplement scholarships and pay for books.
- 13% were grateful that the scholarships provided enough extra resources to quit second jobs, positioning them to more squarely focus on their education.
- 33% explained that the scholarship awards helped them have more money to support their family.

- 26% said getting the scholarships was particularly helpful to them during the busy holiday season at the airport when they were often required to put in extra hours, and could only take 5 credits during that semester. This meant they were qualified for only 25% of a Pell grant. The scholarship helped to fill this gap.
- 53% found their first job at the airport with the help of Airport Jobs, and 6% were able to enroll in and complete credit bearing classes on site at the airport. Many of these students noted that Port Jobs' full service model, which included site-based services, employment assistance, and access to free on site, college courses was extremely beneficial.
- 67% experienced wage gains since initially receiving their first scholarship – prior to the employment changes related to COVID-19, described later in this report. Some attributed these gains to the fact that they had learned new skills at school, and were demonstrating these at work, often sharing new knowledge with co-workers.

- 13% earned certificates since receiving their first award and 13% earned advanced degrees (e.g. AA in Dispatch and a B.A. in Supply Chain Management and B.S in Computer Science). An additional 33% are on a path to earn AA or BA degrees by June 2021.



- 60% are still in school and continuing to take courses that will build their skills, and lead to higher paying employment in career areas which they value and want to pursue.
- 75% like working at the airport because of the camaraderie, dynamic environment, and opportunity to be in a culturally diverse workforce; and 46% said that they hoped that their education might ultimately, after more education, lead to a high paying job in the port economy.
- 30% say one of the main reasons that they stayed in their job at the airport was because of the Alaska Airlines/Airport University scholarships and free Airport University courses.

POST-COVID-19 EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULTS

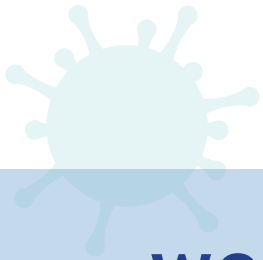
The COVID-19 crisis influenced the lives of all of these young adults. Many found their career path goals and education aims threatened or interrupted. In response, Port Jobs staff is busy connecting them to vital education, employment and community resources. Staff is also offering on line courses through Airport University and is meeting individually with students who need different types of assistance. All receive ongoing invitations to career fairs, featuring jobs, health care and other resources. As with all Post-COVID 19 activities sponsored by Port Jobs, for example, the upcoming Health Insurance Enrollment Fair will include the provision of masks and safe distancing procedures. As part of this fair Port Jobs will join Public Health-Seattle & King County to engage young adults,

former airport workers, their families and members of the nearby airport community to provide free in-person assistance to help attendees enroll in an affordable health insurance plan and talk with certified Navigators who speak multiple languages – including Spanish, Amharic and Somali and get their health insurance questions answered.

The COVID-19 crisis also interrupted the access of two young adults to care for their young children, and to the senior day care that one young adult relied on to care for his elderly grandmother while he worked. In addition, two young adults lived in families where a household member tested positive for coronavirus, thus requiring the whole family to shelter at home for two weeks. At the same time as their jobs were unexpectedly ending, so were many of their lifelines to meals and care for children and

elders. Though the Unemployment Insurance (UI) that some young adults ended up receiving was appreciated, the UI application process was regarded by many as convoluted and time-consuming, resulting in three young adults being initially denied UI before being accepted.

Their school attendance was also disrupted, as all schools shifted to on line learning. Perhaps surprisingly, two young adults found the COVID-19 shift to on line learning to be more convenient and cost-effective, because they saved money on transportation and childcare. One student, however, disliked the timing of her course because it came at the same time as her child needed to eat and nap. The childcare program she used had been closed down and she didn't want her grandmother to care for her children, as she could potentially be exposed to the coronavirus. Another downside to on line courses identified by two young adults was that they needed to delay taking hands-on tests required for their degree, until the college enacted necessary safety accommodations. Young adults preferred on line courses that could be accessed at any time more than those that were scheduled, because they often needed to accommodate the needs of other family members during those times.



WORKING AND STUDYING PREPARING TODAY FOR TOMORROW

Forty percent of the young adults were still working, but with vastly reduced hours; four were also receiving partial unemployment benefits.

All of the young adults who were employed were fearful that they would continue to have their hours cut and lose their jobs by the end of September if a dramatic economic recovery was not underway.

60% of the young adults were laid off; four were receiving unemployment; one was not eligible, and one was in the process of appealing their unemployment denials. Most had limited contact with employers. Only two young adults, both of whom had high seniority in their jobs, were called by employers and told they would be notified and called back when the job market improved.

46% of the young adults were not receiving health care insurance. None of these adults had health care insurance prior to COVID-19, either because it was too expensive, or not offered, and 40% were receiving health insurance through other sources. Two young adults thought their insurance was still covered by their companies, but were unsure. In addition, two of the young adults lived in families where an immediate family member had been tested and found positive for COVID-19.

NEXT STEPS

Port Jobs will continue to support young adults' access to jobs, education and community resources. They will also connect young adults to Apple Health (Medicaid) or subsidized plans through the Health Benefit Exchange. Staff will work with policymakers, funders, Generation Work partners, and others to understand the enormous challenges associated with closing childcare and senior centers, and of enacting requirements for families to support the home-based education of school age children on the equitable access of young adults to resources that advance their careers. The words, experiences, and insights of young adults will be the guiding force behind the system reforms needed to address all of these challenges.



Prepared by:

Business Government Community Connections



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