

+ ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Achieve Atlanta (AATL) is a nonprofit organization that envisions an Atlanta where race and income no longer predict postsecondary success and upward mobility. To achieve that vision, AATL partners with Atlanta Public Schools (APS) administration, school counselors, students and parents to encourage the pursuit of postsecondary education and to provide need-based financial aid and success support services to APS students as they embark upon a postsecondary education and throughout their journey to a degree.

AATL originated in 2014 as the result of a Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta and Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation (Whitehead)-commissioned study that found that only 1 in 7 APS students entering ninth grade was projected to earn a postsecondary degree of any kind within six years of high school graduation. The study also confirmed that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds were even less likely to pursue or earn a postsecondary degree. With these findings in mind, Whitehead provided the financial investment to create an organization focused on increasing the number of APS students earning a postsecondary credential, putting them on a path to upward mobility.

Since its founding in 2015, AATL has provided over \$57 million in need-based scholarships to nearly 6,000 Scholars to help cover tuition and other educational and living expenses. Ninety-six percent of AATL Scholars are eligible for Federal Pell Grants, meaning they have demonstrated significant financial need. Ninety-four percent of AATL Scholars are Black or Latinx, and fifty percent are first generation college students. Scholars receive \$5,000 a year in bachelor's programs and \$1,500 a year in associate/technical programs. Eighty percent of Scholars choose to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Recognizing that financial aid alone is not enough to support the success of AATL Scholars, the organization provides additional services, often through a network of trusted nonprofit partners. Services include college access advising, application assistance, campus onboarding services, mental health services, mentorships, and career counseling. AATL's focus on outcomes (graduation and career success) differentiates the organization from other financial aid programs that focus only on access, and the program works. AATL Scholars graduate at a much higher rate than other classmates with similar academic profiles and family circumstances and at a comparable rate to their more affluent peers. It is also noteworthy that nearly thirty percent of AATL Scholars reported graduating with no debt, and nearly fifty percent reported less than \$10,000 in debt upon graduation. Studies

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show that people with a bachelor's degree will earn, on average, seventy-five percent more than those with only a high school diploma. Studies also indicate that postsecondary education correlates strongly with better health, stronger personal relationships and greater civic engagement. By supporting Scholars in their pursuit of a postsecondary degree, AATL positively impacts the lives of students and families and strengthens communities.

A recent graduate of Georgia State University, Taleah Shropshire, said:

“Thanks to Achieve Atlanta, I was able to receive a scholarship that helped cover my college tuition, a mentor who helped me navigate the college process, and my first internship opportunity. I’m looking forward to seeing what the future holds, and I know that their continued assistance will be a valuable asset in helping me achieve my goals.”

AATL relies on private philanthropy to fund its work. Whitehead generously covers the cost of AATL’s scholarships and a significant share of its operating expenses. Because AATL is recognized as a model program in promoting equity and upward mobility, other notable donors are following Whitehead’s lead. Recent gifts from MacKenzie Scott and the Gates Foundation are an encouraging sign that AATL’s vision resonates with significant donors outside Atlanta.

With nine years of operations, outcomes, and learnings to draw from, AATL has recently completed a new strategic plan focused on even greater success and expanding reach. The plan has three pillars that support its core program: developing a strong postsecondary success plan for every Scholar, providing seamless access to the resources needed to succeed, and creating an engaged and successful community of Scholars and alumni. The plan also envisions expanding aspects of the program to other Atlanta-area school districts and driving more advocacy and policy work at the local and state level. To achieve the goals of the new strategic plan, AATL needs to expand its funding base more broadly in Atlanta as well as with non-Atlanta foundations, corporations, and individuals who are focused on education as a primary driver of equity and upward mobility. To support AATL’s goals of expansion and diversification of funding sources, the organization seeks to hire a newly created role of Vice President (VP), Development.

+ THE ROLE

Reporting to the President/Executive Director, Dr. Cheryl Watson-Harris, the VP, Development will be responsible for raising funds from current and new donors outside of the Whitehead Foundation, to support AATL’s future regional expansion, basic needs

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support for Scholars, emergency grants, completion grants, and policy/advocacy work. AATL expects that Whitehead will continue its generous support of the organization, but because Whitehead primarily supports financial aid, AATL needs to attract additional financial support to continue to grow the essential “wraparound” services they provide as well as to drive the policy/advocacy work needed to address systemic inequalities in educational opportunities.

The VP, Development will work with the President/Executive Director, the Board and other senior leadership peers to craft and implement the ideal development strategy. Given the start-up nature of the role, first year fundraising goals will be moderate (\$600,000). In years two and three, the budget forecast calls for fundraising in the \$1.2 million range. AATL expects fundraising efforts will be focused on a combination of foundation, corporate and individual giving, with a particular emphasis on corporate and private foundations with a stated interest in education and equity/upward mobility.

Over time, the VP, Development may hire additional staff to support fundraising efforts, but at present, the VP, Development will be an individual contributor. Budgetary resources exist to support investments in CRM/donor management and research software, as well as other investments the VP, Development may deem essential. In keeping with the entrepreneurial culture and energy of AATL, the VP, Development must solve problems creatively and in close collaboration with peers.

Specific responsibilities will include:

- Demonstrates the ability to provide oversight and strategic vision to meet organizational and programmatic needs
- In concert with the President/Executive Director, establish near and long-term fundraising objectives for AATL; track and report on progress toward goals
- Support the President/Executive Director and the Board of Directors, as required, in their efforts to secure financial support for AATL’s key institutional priorities
- Cultivate, solicit, and secure major gifts from foundations, corporations, and individual donors in Atlanta and nationally where opportunities exist
- Oversee the development of all collateral material related to AATL’s fundraising efforts
- With an emphasis on major gifts, direct and oversee ongoing prospect research to identify new potential prospects for AATL

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- Oversee the administrative functions of AATL's development operation, including gift processing, donor and prospect information and moves management, and grant reporting
- Oversee the stewardship and proper recognition of all donors
- Develop staff understanding of the development role and strategy, and build internal capacity to tell AATL'S story and support development opportunities

+ THE CANDIDATE PROFILE

The ideal candidate is an experienced, accomplished development professional with a track record for building a fledgling development function into a successful operation. Whether this person has worked for an organization that focuses on education or equity/upward mobility in the past, s/he must have a great appreciation for the need and have a passion to become part of a team that is making a difference in this area. Experience engaging productively with Board members and/or senior-level volunteers and donors is critically important.

Candidates must have a balance of local and national perspective and would ideally have established relationships with donors who align with AATL's mission. In concert with the President/Executive Director, this executive will be one of the organization's primary "storytellers" and must be comfortable crafting and communicating that story in one-on-one and in broader public settings. Candidates should be politically savvy and have an understanding and perspective on how systemic frameworks have impacted education and upward mobility. Personally, candidates must be of strong character and have great energy, relationship building, collaboration and communication skills. Given the early stage of this function within the organization, candidates must exhibit an entrepreneurial spirit and an ability to innovate and pivot as needed.

+ PERFORMANCE COMPETENCIES

Building Relationships and Using Influence:

- Builds and sustains excellent relationships at multiple levels within the organization and externally, including with private and corporate foundations and individual donors
- Takes a leading role in soliciting and stewarding donors

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- Communicates a vision with passion, energy, intensity and excitement
- Demonstrates effective communication across diverse mediums, tailoring messages to positively influence stakeholders with exceptional written and verbal communication skills
- Builds trust by delivering on commitments, demonstrating transparency in sharing information, and being willing to have difficult conversations
- Readily connects with others with a diplomatic and collaborative style
- Builds effective coalitions to move an agenda forward; proactively solicits the view of others before making key decisions

Executing for Results:

- Consistently meets/exceeds stretch fundraising goals
- Demonstrates creativity in solving problems and generating new ways to attract financial support
- Can lead others indirectly, through influence, and in a collaborative fashion to achieve the organization's strategic goals
- A track record for driving meaningful change and building organizational capacity/impact
- Views ideas critically and objectively and makes sound decisions based on the facts

Strategic Thinking and Decision Making:

- Demonstrates the ability to provide oversight and strategic vision to meet organizational and programmatic needs
- Demonstrates the ability to think strategically, anticipate future trends and challenges, and develop solutions
- Exhibits comfort and agility in developing guiding frameworks, organizing ideas, and providing clarity in ambiguous situations
- Demonstrates a proven ability to analyze complex problems, navigate ambiguity, and develop actionable solutions to drive effective outcomes