

A close-up photograph of a magnolia flower in full bloom, with its large, white, waxy petals and a prominent, yellowish-green, textured center. The flower is surrounded by dark green, glossy leaves. The background is a bright blue sky with some blurred greenery.

Magnolia Scholars

2023-2024

Magnolia Scholar Nathaniel Avery ('24) (Officer Lockstock) and Charli Head ('26) (Little Sally) performed in the musical *Urinetown* in spring '24.



Magnolia Scholars 2023-2024

Class of 2024

Brandon Adrian New York, NY
Stecia Aimihoue Houston, TX
Rosa Almonte Greenville, NC
Joao Araujo Raleigh, NC
David Asiedu Bronx, NY
Nathaniel Avery Groton, CT
Adriana Barnes Carthage, NC
Javiera Caceres Port Washington, NY
Celine Cardenas Gurnee, IL
Amani Davis Rex, GA
Minh Do Ocoee, FL
Deneaka Duncanson Bronx, NY
Keith Elam Henderson, NC
Manuel Guevara Nashville, TN

Kaily Harris Tobaccoville, NC
Leilani Herrera Winston-Salem, NC
Shon Howard Orlando, FL
Dulce Lopez Alvarez Browns Summit, NC
Sofia Maldonado Winston-Salem, NC
Vianney Manjarrez Houston, TX
Marcus Mathis Chattanooga, TN
Kendall Obando-Sanchez Advance, NC
Dimarvin Puerto Chicago, IL
Michael Reese Henderson, NC
Garrett Rich Mooresville, NC
Kennedy Rogers Lexington, NC
Aran Silva Arango Oceanside, CA

Class of 2025

Salma Akarramou Greensboro, NC
Ashanta Akins-Collier Miami, FL
Jonatan Batz Morganton, NC
Beatriz Blanco Lexington, NC
Jovanna Cruz Chicago, IL
Moussa Daramey Bronx, NY
Fatoumata Diallo New York, NY
Aisha Dukuly Lawrenceville, GA
Chinonso Ekezie Fresno, TX
Montserrat Estrada Chicago, IL
Ernsley Francois Orlando, FL
Esteban Gonzalez-Prudente Winston-Salem, NC
Matthew Grant South Ozone Park, NY
Kamren Harris Jamesville, NY
Xavier Hicks Henderson, NC

Jamarea Johnson Orlando, FL
Gabriel Martineau Richmond Hill, GA
Magdalena Miguel Candor, NC
Nicholas Nixon Milford, CT
Mariam Raja Winston-Salem, NC
Flor Rivas Morejon Thomasville, NC
Naomi Sanders High Point, NC
Dario Santiago Lopez Castle Hayne, NC
Anesia Taylor Winston-Salem, NC
Brithany Teran-Boza Winston-Salem, NC
John Tzintzun Kernersville, NC
Janissa Walker Hendersonville, TN
Abbie Warren Winston-Salem, NC
Adam Waszkiewicz Palm Coast, FL
Joshua Yama Chicago, IL

Class of 2026

Mekdes Agezew Denver, CO
Soany Aguilar Reidsville, NC
Erik Ambriz-Arteaga Mundelein, IL
Dayanara Andaya Walnut Cove, NC
Talia Austin Orlando, FL
Nicholas Beckom Thomasville, NC
Ellyana Birmingham Sandusky, OH
James Brown Winston-Salem, NC
Nashyah Brown Bronx, NY
Joshua Demontigny Scituate, MA
Jamisha Ferrari Orlando, FL
Anqayvious Fielder Atlanta, GA
Ethan Godinez Chicago, IL
Natalia House Salisbury, NC
Fahad Janjua Clemmons, NC
Anthony Jimenez Winston-Salem, NC

Class of 2027

Syed Abdullah Denver, CO
Sarita Adams Reidsville, NC
Makenzie Akins Mundelein, IL
Lexine Appiah Walnut Cove, NC
Victor Arzate Orlando, FL
Ar'Naishia Benford Thomasville, NC
Mariama Bojang Sandusky, OH
Revin Bray Winston-Salem, NC
Misael Castillo-Vidales Bronx, NY
Marleny Castro Scituate, MA
Eric Cisneros Orlando, FL
Esther Desroche Atlanta, GA
Fiorella Diez Cervantes Chicago, IL
Addison Flynt Salisbury, NC
Edwing Fraga Clemmons, NC

Kennedy Kirk McLeansville, NC
Exahalia Lawrence Far Rockaway, NY
Jennifer Lopez-Figueroa Candor, NC
Citlali Martinez-Arellano Mount Airy, NC
Camille Mueller Delhi, NY
Christian Roberts Milwaukee, WI
Hadiyah Smith New York, NY
Danesha Squire Garysburg, NC
Charles Taylor Anchorage, AK
Jaylen Thornton Houston, TX
Gialin Tran Orlando, FL
Hieu Tran Seattle, WA
Adrianna Udensi Moore, SC
Alydia Warden Elkview, WV
Callise Young Matthews, NC

Diana Gonzalez Winston-Salem, NC
Axel Juarez McLeansville, NC
Yeanaba Kamara Far Rockaway, NY
Zoe Kane Candor, NC
Akram Kawuma Mount Airy, NC
Wonhee Kim Delhi, NY
Derek Lember Milwaukee, WI
Emily Little New York, NY
Lizell Lizarraga Garysburg, NC
Emmanuel Lopez-Higuera Anchorage, AK
Immanuel Love Houston, TX
Jessmarie Mendez Orlando, FL
Winoka Reynosa Seattle, WA
Jennifer Udensi Moore, SC
Edinam Woka Elkview, WV

Magnolia Scholar Aisha Dukuly ('25) presented her research at the Undergraduate Research Day in fall 2022.





David Asiedu ('24)

On a fall day in 2019, David Asiedu was wavering on whether to meet the Wake Forest admissions official who had come to his charter school in Harlem. He wasn't particularly interested until his college admissions counselor grabbed Asiedu's attention.

"The counselor said, 'You should go talk to him,'" Asiedu recalled. "I thought I didn't want to do that. And then he said, 'If you don't, you'll regret that decision the rest of your life.'"

There are no regrets in this story. At least no big ones. Asiedu made sure not only to listen to what Wake Forest had to offer that day but to seize every connection, every experience and every moment that the University and the Magnolia Scholars program delivered thereafter. Maybe that high school teacher's proclamation wasn't so hyperbolic after all.

“I wouldn’t have been able to pay for this school out of pocket,” Asiedu said. “(The Magnolia Scholars program) has all been very helpful and has provided a lot of opportunities.”

Asiedu was 8 when his family made the move from their native Ghana to the Bronx in 2011. His father, a cab driver, knew the ins and outs of the city.

That informed his college advice.

“He was adamant about me not living in New York City,” David said.

That determination would become vital when COVID-19 besieged the nation’s most densely populated metropolitan area.

“I remember that March 13 was the day that school was canceled,” Asiedu recalled. “I don’t think I left my apartment until May 20. I remember really looking forward to coming to Wake Forest in that period. It was a time to start fresh.”

He had chosen Wake Forest sight unseen – another consequence of COVID. His faith was grounded in mentors’ advice and in the Magnolia Scholars program, led by Dr. Nate French (’93). The Foundation would help provide valuable programmatic support, and having a community within a community was always comforting.

“I had an understanding that the Magnolia Scholars program was going to support me,” Asiedu said. “I hadn’t been in an environment like this. Dr. French and other (first-generation) students, they understand where I’m coming from. That was reassuring. I knew I would find a place here even though I didn’t really know anything about the school.”

Asiedu began working for Athletics in its fan experience division during his sophomore year. In the summer of 2022, he served as a resident assistant and studied in the School of Business’ summer management program. By the fall, he was off to

a semester studying politics at the University of Cambridge.

“That was a transformative experience,” he said. “Learning from some of the best professors in the world while being around the smartest students in the world opened my eyes to a lot of different opportunities.”

“I knew I would be able to find a place here even though I didn’t really know anything about the school.”

Asiedu earned a spot in the University’s Washington program in spring 2023, interning with a House of Representatives member and taking classes at the Wake Washington center.

“Different professionals from a variety of industries in D.C. would come and speak to us about their careers – from journalism to the law to social responsibility to a whole plethora of opportunities,” Asiedu said. “It exposed me to the different pathways I could take with my career.”

Both the Cambridge and Washington experiences were made possible by Magnolia Scholars-related support. Asiedu returned to campus for his senior year and began quantitative, software-driven political analysis with a professor on an academic journal.

“That has given me the holistic experience I wanted at Wake Forest – not only having a liberal arts education but developing some hard skills as well,” Asiedu said.

Asiedu, an American citizen since 2021, is preparing for law-school entrance exams. He isn’t sure what he’ll be doing in five years, but he knows he has thrived.

He also knows the high school teacher was right.

Magnolia Scholar Rosa Almonte ('24) shares about her experiences in the AmeriCorps Public Health Program at the program's graduation ceremony in summer '23.



Academics

AVERAGE GPA

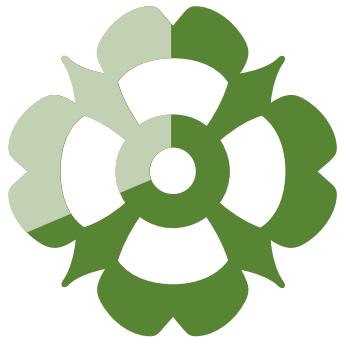
Magnolia Scholars
Class of 2024:

3.32

Wake Forest
Class of 2024:

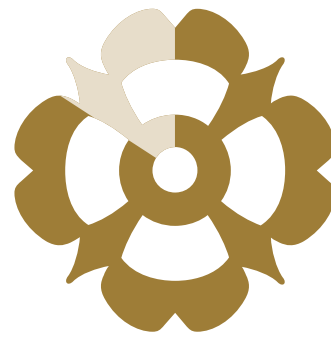
3.60

FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE*



Magnolia Scholars
Class of 2024:

69%



Wake Forest
Class of 2024:

84%

**Given the small sample size of each class of Magnolia Scholars, each student accounts for approximately three percent of the total (i.e. if one more student had graduated in four years, the rate would be three percent higher; if one fewer had graduated in four years, it would be three percent lower), resulting in a potentially substantial variance year over year.*

SECOND MAJORS

Magnolia Scholars
Class of 2024:

14%

Wake Forest
Class of 2024:

20%

Graduation rate, GPA, and second major data are based on an entering cohort of freshmen; therefore, the data above are based on the freshmen who entered Wake Forest in fall 2020. Among them, 30 are Magnolia Scholars.



Jamarea Johnson ('25)

Sometimes – maybe even when practicing archery – Jamarea Johnson ('25) thinks about what Shakespeare called “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” Or, more appropriately, others’ misfortune. And that gets her thinking about taking on some other metaphorical targets.

“I want to help homelessness,” the Magnolia Scholar and Accountancy major said, “with a program and a nonprofit to help the homeless get a job or learn trade skills so they’ll be able to get on their feet and off the streets.”

Creating a nonprofit to ease a pervasive and growing problem is a big task backed by an ambitious vision, but Johnson has been emboldened to think in those terms. She’s at Wake Forest thanks to the Magnolia Scholars program, and she comes from a place that sells itself on making dreams come true.

Disney World and its affiliated parks and properties attract millions with allusions to magic and joy. Eighteen miles north, in Orlando, Florida, the world isn’t always so benign.

Orlando is among the least affordable rental markets in the country. The average monthly rent in the region has increased by nearly \$400 a month – to \$1,800 – since the onset of COVID-19. The pandemic, natural disasters and private-investor purchase of homes for redevelopment have caused a major housing crunch and a fear that homelessness will rise in the coming years.

“When you feed the homeless, you see children and families,” Johnson said. “Yes, they have shelters, but the shelter capacity is only so big because it’s first-come, first-served.”

Johnson aspires to use her Accountancy degree – she originally figured she’d major in drama but changed her mind – to begin a successful career. She intends to work full-time and save enough money to buy property where she can start a nonprofit.

The group housing unit she envisions would have separate sections for families and include job-training programming.

“We would provide housing, but (residents) would have chores like you do at home,” Johnson said. “You’d help with gardening or cooking. You would learn how to take care of your environment, and the skills would help you in general.”

Johnson believes she can use her professional skills to administer the civic organization. Nonprofits have balance sheets and budgets, too.

To put it another way, the study of numbers doesn’t have to be dispassionate.

“There’s a problem with some things in America,” Johnson said, “when we try to hide the problem instead of facing it head-on and acknowledging it.”

Johnson won’t be guilty of ignorance. She is willing to set goals and believe in herself because she has seen what happens when good people help others.

Johnson’s mother, who forged a career in an insurance company, didn’t go to college but understood her daughter could take a different path.

“She pushed me to do better,” Johnson said. “She said, ‘I’m going to push you to reach higher goals.’ That was in middle school. And I started to get more into my academics.”

Johnson came to the attention of Elevation Scholars, an Orlando nonprofit that helps promising high school students with college

The Magnolia Scholars program has made a way for me to get a better education and to fulfill my future goals.”

preparation. Counselors encouraged her to consider Wake Forest, and the Magnolia Scholars program sealed that deal.

“After talking to other people, I said, ‘Let me take this dive and go to Wake Forest,’” Johnson said. “And I’ve loved it ever since.”

Johnson is a resident advisor, a member of the Accounting Club, the Black Christian Ministry and, yes, the archery club. All require different approaches, and she has found them all beneficial.

In the summer of 2024, she interned with Ernst & Young in Atlanta.

“The Magnolia Scholars program means everything to me,” she said. “It has helped me become the leader I am today by giving me the opportunity to come to Wake Forest. It has made a way for me to get a better education and to fulfill my future goals.”

One of the greatest impacts of the COVID pandemic was on students' ability to study abroad and participate in extracurricular activities. During the first couple of years at Wake Forest, the Class of 2024 was at times severely limited by travel restrictions, social distancing, and masking requirements. Restrictions varied widely from their arrival in 2020, depending on the number of cases on campus. The numbers below reflect study abroad and extracurricular activity over the course of the students' time at Wake Forest, and therefore include activities that took place during and after the pandemic limitations.

Extracurricular Activities

Average number of extracurricular
activities per student
(Magnolia Scholars Class of 2024):

4.3

Unique organizations in
which they participated:

66

Study Abroad

STUDENTS WHO STUDIED ABROAD

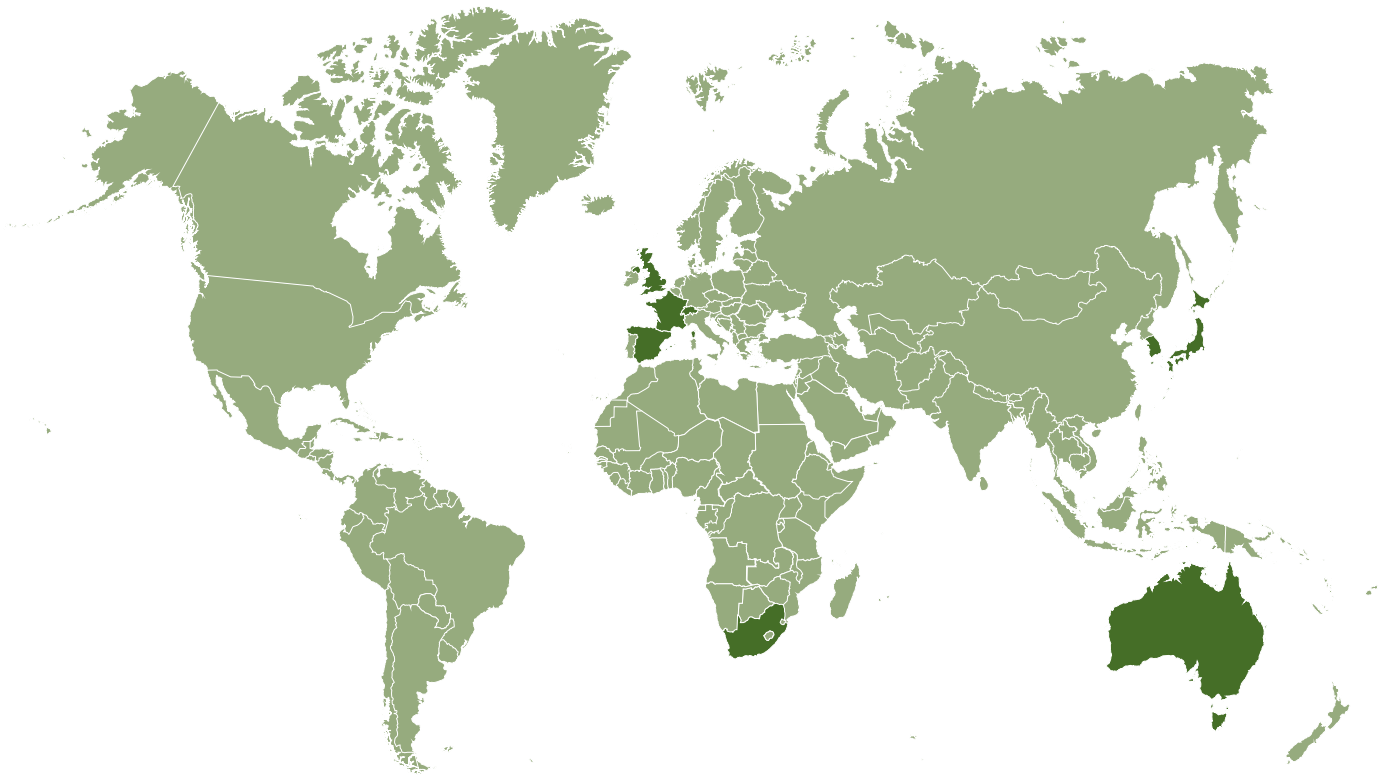
Magnolia Scholars
Class of 2024:

48%

8

Countries in which
they studied

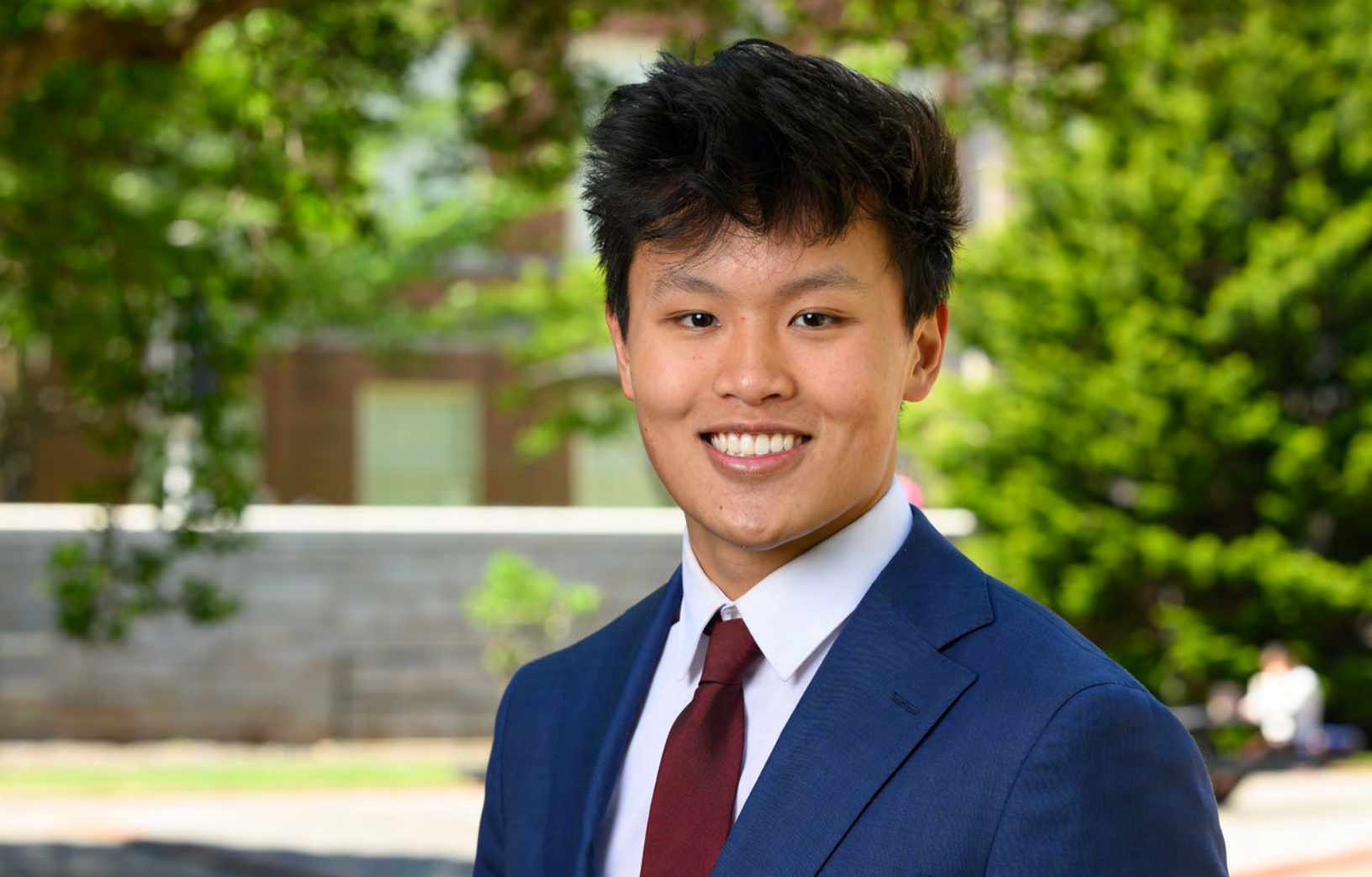
STUDY ABROAD LOCATIONS



Australia
France
Japan

South Africa
South Korea
Spain

Switzerland
United Kingdom



Hieu Tran ('26)

Hieu Tran ('26) has a question for the photographer taking the picture above.

“Is my tie straight?” he wants to know.

Like so many other things in Tran’s academic and professional life, the neckwear is perfectly aligned. And had it been off, he would have consulted his network of contacts to help avoid a repeat.

Curious, engaged and dedicated, Wake Forest’s first Magnolia Scholar from Washington knows he didn’t come from Seattle just to claim a degree. Majoring in finance with minors in economics and entrepreneurship, Tran is also active in student organizations, studying abroad and securing internships. And he has a group of informal advisors to help him.

“The personal Board of Trustees,” he said. “It’s a phrase taught to me by one of my mentors, a wealth advisor at Wells Fargo. It’s about having mentors and peers who you can point to for certain needs and at certain times of your life.”

Tran and his family arrived in Portland, Oregon from their native Vietnam when he was 3. He was in fifth grade in Seattle when he earned the attention of Rainier Scholars, a nonprofit that helps students of color become the first in their families to graduate from college. The organization offers 12 years of partnership – from elementary school through college – to those who qualify. But you’ve got to qualify through testing and interviews.

“Fourteen months of intensive academic training,” Tran recalled. “Hardest 14 months of my life, but it taught me a lot about education, and it taught me the core values of excellence, perseverance, integrity and courage.”

Rainier Scholars helped Tran earn a scholarship to Lakeside School, which counts Bill Gates and Paul Allen as alumni, and he was off and running. And wrestling (as a team captain). And weightlifting (as a school record-holder). And networking (with Lakeside grads and Rainier Scholars board members).

The Personal Board of Trustees identified Wake Forest as a good fit for Tran because of its national reputation for business education and study-abroad offerings. The Magnolia Scholars program soon joined the list of attributes.

“That was a game-changer,” Tran said. “Not having to worry about money and being able to take advantage of what college students really should be doing has been a blessing. I’m very grateful for that. It’s going to pay a lot of dividends.”

Tran took an interest in the study of immigration, and he learned of a Wake Forest program at Lampedusa, an Italian possession that has become a dangerous waystation for African immigrants en route to Europe.

“The only reason I was able to go,” Tran said of the May 2023 trip, “was money through Magnolia Scholars. But in a snap of the finger, I got to go.”

Tran then honed his skills in finance as vice president of the Case Competition Club and by earning a spot on the Wake Forest team in the Fed Challenge, a Federal Reserve System-sponsored intercollegiate competition in which participants tackle macroeconomic issues. Tran helped Wake

“Not having to worry about money and being able to take advantage of what college students really should be doing has been a blessing.”

Forest make the national tournament’s semifinal round for the first time.

He scheduled a second study abroad experience, this one to South Africa, and secured an internship with BMO Capital Markets’ Seattle branch. And that’s just in the summer.

In the fall, he’ll study in Barcelona. He’ll also be a member of the Undergraduate Business School Council and a President’s Aide for 2024-25.

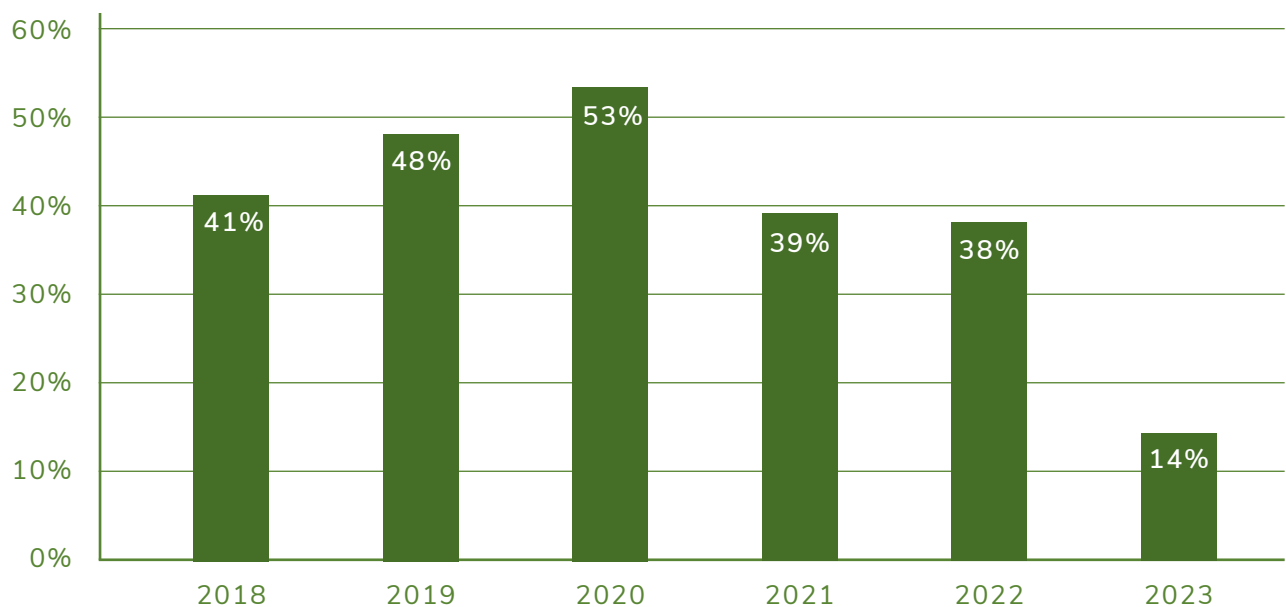
“I realize how privileged I am to have such a unique opportunity to have mentors from Rainier Scholars, from Lakeside, from Wake Forest,” he said, “and I want to open those resources to others.”

Long-Term Impact

Empowered intellectually and freed from excessive debt by the support they received at Wake Forest, Magnolia Scholars are likely to pursue graduate degrees at higher rates than other first-generation students nationwide. Since the Class of 2018, approximately three of every eight Magnolia Scholars, or 37% (82 of 222) have earned or were in the process of earning Masters and/or Doctorates.

According to a 2021 survey from the Pew Research Center, 35% of first-generation graduates have completed an advanced degree, compared to 43% for others. There is an important note attached to those numbers: Its sample audience ranged in age from 22 to 59 years of age. The oldest of the Magnolia Scholars for these purposes is only 28 or 29 today, so these numbers are likely to increase as the Magnolia Scholars mature. In other words, the Foundation's support is helping Magnolia Scholars close the gap found by the Pew study.

MAGNOLIA SCHOLARS PURSUING GRADUATE EDUCATION



**SOME OF THE INSTITUTIONS MAGNOLIA SCHOLARS
HAVE ATTENDED OR ARE CURRENTLY ATTENDING INCLUDE:**

Boston University	Johns Hopkins University	Vanderbilt University
Case Western Reserve University	University of Miami	University of Virginia
DePaul University	NC State University	Virginia Tech
Drexel University	Northwestern	William & Mary
Duke University	NYU	Wake Forest University
Emory University	University of Pennsylvania	London School of Economics
Georgetown University	University of Pittsburgh	Spanish National Center for Cardiovascular Research
University of Georgia	UCLA	
University of Illinois	UNC Chapel Hill	
University of Indiana	University of Washington	

SOME OF THE EARNED DEGREES INCLUDE:

Doctor of Pharmacy

Juris Doctor

**Doctor of
Medicine**

Masters of Accountancy

Masters of Business Administration

**Masters of
Accountancy**

**Masters of
Social Work**



Eric Cisneros ('27)

If you've got to start your college career in the back of a police car, Eric Cisneros ('27) reasoned, this was probably the way to do it.

"We had to go to the coliseum to pick up my room key," the first-year Wake Forest student from suburban Chicago recalled, "and I didn't know where that was. We just found a police officer and asked him for a ride."

True to his nature, Cisneros has been solving problems and adjusting to new surroundings ever since.

He got an early start in adaptation at age 3, when he and his family moved in with his cousins. The space was crowded and the options narrow.

"It taught me to share," he said. "A lot. It taught me patience – especially when we had to share toys or when we had a limited amount of money to buy certain things."

The experience led Cisneros to dedicate a lot of his time in high school to discovery. As a manager on the volleyball team at Cristo Rey St. Martin College Prep, he worked with assistant coaches to automate functions in Microsoft Excel so that statistics could be maintained more efficiently. That freed up his colleagues to work on other things, and it meant information always had a backup copy in the event that papers got lost.

When his top options for internships were unavailable, Cisneros created his own experience as an in-house information technology specialist at the school. He repaired fellow students' computers and showed faculty how to use software to facilitate their instruction.

"I learned how to take notes," he said. "I learned how to talk to people. I was really shy, but being in a working environment teaches you to talk to people and not to assume everything."

Cisneros decided he'd take that spirit of adventure to his college choice. He picked Wake Forest sight unseen. The Magnolia Scholars program had made the University affordable, and he liked the novelty.

"It was a re-start because I didn't know anybody here," he said. "I could be myself and do what I wanted to do without getting any judgment from anybody back home."

He packed all of his stuff into three suitcases and flew with his uncle to Greensboro, North Carolina, in August 2023. The Uber ride from the airport to the Reynolda Campus was a 35-minute revelation.

"All I knew," he said, "is that there would be a lot of greenery. At one point, we passed what looked like a school and I assumed it was Wake Forest. We kept on going. I was so lost."

But that didn't keep him from asking a cop to drive him to Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum,

the Wake Forest basketball arena and the site of student check-in. Cisneros ultimately made it to his dorm and, within a few days, to the Magnolia Scholars program's administrative offices.

"That really helped me get used to the environment here," he said. "At the beginning, I was shy, but I would see staff members at the Scholars' offices. I didn't always say much, but I enjoyed their company, and that's how I met most of my friends. I'm now a New Student Ambassador."

"At the beginning, I was shy... I'm now a New Student Ambassador."

Cisneros is also a leader in the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS), working in event planning and management.

Academically, his goal is to use technology to help the environment. Computer science and entrepreneurship are among the disciplines he's considering, and he has benefited from the facilities at Wake Downtown, the converted tobacco warehouses that are home to many STEM programs.

"I didn't know there was a Wake Downtown," he said of the satellite campus, located a 13-minute shuttle ride from the main academic hub. "You walk in there and it feels very professional, very powerful."

Cisneros has three years to figure it all out, and it's a pretty good bet that he'll succeed.

"I just know I'll do something that helps people – whether that be through creating some new technology or discovering something else," he said.



“The person that has impacted my journey through Wake Forest would definitely be Dr. Nate French. With me being a Magnolia scholar and him being the director of that program, I have built a relationship with him that started my first-year student year and taken it all the way to my senior year.

“Dr. French has always been there to reinforce the idea that I do belong here whenever I have doubted myself. He has always provided an ear when I needed advice, whether it was academic or just about my personal life or even when I just wanted to rant. He has opened many doors for me and has brought me along for many projects that have changed my experience for the better here at Wake Forest. I consider Dr. French to be like my on-campus dad, especially considering that he has helped me navigate this journey as a first-generation student who had no prior knowledge of how to do this.”

Vianney Manjarrez ('24)

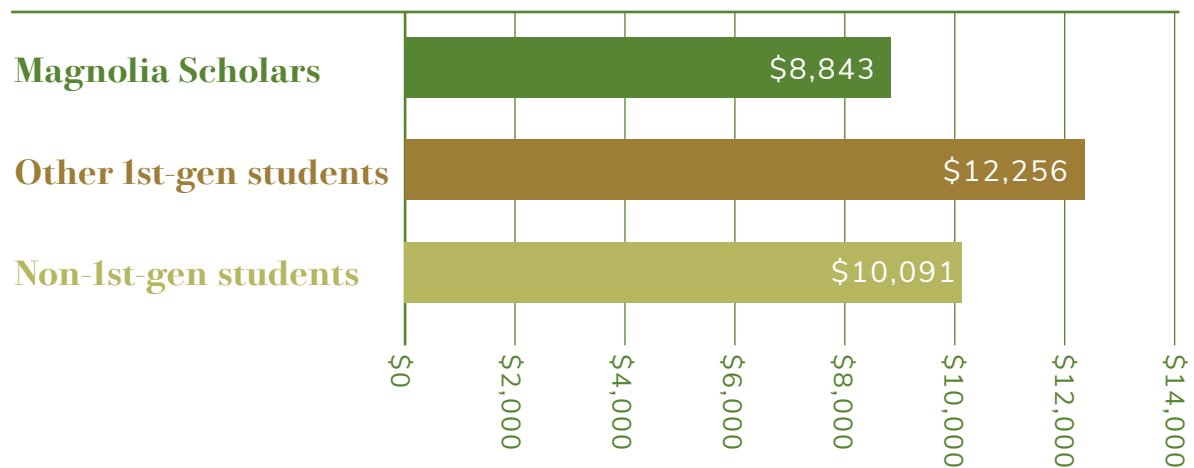
Financial Aid

COMPARISON OF AVERAGE FINANCIAL AID FOR THE CLASS OF 2024 OVER A FOUR-YEAR PERIOD (2020-21 TO 2023-24)

The support made possible by the Foundation will eliminate or reduce the loans of all Magnolia Scholars. While financial aid awards to these students vary according to need, the “best” package available to each scholar includes a \$4,000 annual award (\$2,000 per semester) to meet institutionally defined need for every Magnolia Scholar. In our experience, we find that many students borrow funds for expenses such as health insurance, and many more make choices to reduce their costs — perhaps foregoing travel abroad or other enrichment activities that increase financial or other pressures on them and their families. With your support, Wake Forest reduced or eliminated the loan component for all Magnolia Scholars enrolled in the 2023-24 academic year. This is the single most powerful step we can take to assist these students in reducing short- and long-term debt.

Of the 2024 Magnolia Scholars graduates, 10 graduated without any need-based debt, and of those who borrowed, the need-based debt is approximately 72% that of other first-generation students in their class.

AVERAGE NEED-BASED DEBT OF ALL BORROWERS



Although the amount of need-based debt will fluctuate each year depending on how students choose to borrow money, they will be able to do more with the support they receive: they may attend pre-orientation programs, study abroad, take on volunteer positions or join a club sports team. Your support has given them the flexibility to enjoy the same array of opportunities as most Wake Forest students.

The lasting impact of reduced debt — and the avoided compound interest — will be realized as students enter professions, buy homes, and start families. Recognizing that financial literacy is an essential and complementary life skill, the Magnolia Scholars program is working with campus colleagues such as the Office of Personal and Career Development, Financial Aid, the School of Business, and the Office of Wellbeing to offer programs that will help Magnolia Scholars establish and maintain healthy financial habits. Financial literacy courses continue to be offered annually to upperclassmen Magnolia Scholars, and more non-credit financial literacy offerings become available across campus annually.

Magnolia Scholar Dayanara Andaya ('26) plays table tennis in the dark at the Ready Set Glow orientation event.



For the past few years, I have reflected on Magnolia Scholars graduating classes in the context of their lives in the spring of 2020, when the world turned sideways. As I have told several Wake Forest audiences, every cohort has faced challenges shaped by unique years and circumstances.

The students who enrolled in the Fall of 2020 were taking a leap of faith – a faith in Wake Forest’s ability to manage the pandemic, and a faith in their own ability to handle multiple stressors as they began their college careers.

Among those stressors was distance. Geographically speaking, the cohort was one of the most diverse in the history of the Magnolia Scholars program. For the first time, less than half of the group came to Wake Forest from North Carolina or a bordering state. For many, home was not easily accessible. We had the privilege of becoming their home over the past four years.

It wasn’t easy, but unlike many of our peer institutions, Wake Forest kept students on campus, in physical classes, and engaged in their newfound community. Ultimately, the vast majority of Magnolia Scholars found an anchor in the Program and have thrived.

One student, DiMarvin Puerto, helped Wake Forest make history as the first school to sweep all three major intercollegiate debate titles in the same year. Another, Vianney Manjarrez, was a first-generation student ambassador for the University’s nationally acclaimed Office of Personal and Career Development. Several



students showcased their various talents in music performance groups on campus, and others were leaders in religious organizations.

A dozen of them ultimately studied abroad despite the obstacles presented by the pandemic, going on to experience Cambridge, Cape Town, Salamanca, Salzburg, Venice, Vienna and other remarkable places around the globe. They will continue to write their stories, informed each step of the way by their development here at Mother So Dear.

None of this would have been possible without your support and transformative vision for our program. On behalf of all Magnolia Scholars – past, present, and future – thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nate French". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Nate French ('93)
Director, Magnolia Scholars Program





WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY