



"Promoting the Pursuit of Lifelong Learning."

MEDIA KIT 2026-2028

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

PROMOTING THE PURSUIT OF LIFELONG LEARNING



On behalf of the Board of Directors of The Finer Alliance, Inc., thank you for taking the time to learn more about our organization and our commitment to *Promoting the Pursuit of Lifelong Learning*.

Education has the power to open doors, strengthen communities and create opportunities that extend far beyond the classroom. Through scholarships, partnerships and community engagement, The Finer Alliance, Inc. remains committed to investing in individuals who are pursuing their educational goals and preparing to make meaningful contributions in their communities.

As our organization has grown, so has our commitment to expanding educational opportunity. What began with the establishment of the Light of Candle Memorial Scholarship has grown into a portfolio of scholarships supporting students whose aspirations reflect academic achievement, leadership and service. We are proud of the scholars we have supported, encouraged by the impact they continue to make and grateful to the partners, donors and community members who help make this work possible.

As we look ahead, we invite you to learn more about our mission, celebrate the accomplishments of our scholars and consider how you might join us in advancing educational opportunity and lifelong learning.



Dr. Tiffany Johnson-Craddock
Board Chair



WHO WE ARE AT A GLANCE



ABOUT THE FINER ALLIANCE, INC.

The Finer Alliance, Inc. is a nonprofit organization committed to *Promoting the Pursuit of Lifelong Learning* through educational opportunity, scholarship, community engagement and collaborative partnerships.

We believe education can empower individuals, strengthen communities and create pathways to greater opportunity. Through our work, we seek to invest in students, encourage lifelong learning and build relationships that help advance educational and community impact.

MISSION

The Finer Alliance, Inc. 501(c)(3) is on a mission to elevate scholarship in the African American community through the procurement of post-secondary educational and financial resources that promote the pursuit of academic excellence.

VISION

Our vision is to create the next generation of African American change agents.

VALUES

The Finer Alliance, Inc. values a community that recognizes the importance of educational attainment and assures positive educational outcomes are accessible to all in the African American community regardless of economic circumstance.

PRINCIPLES

- **Partnership & Collaboration** - We seek collaboration and involvement in our work. We desire engagement with members and organizations within the community that share our vision.
- **Integrity** - We value honesty and integrity in our relationships.
- **Impact** - We are driven to make a positive difference in our society.
- **Success** - We evaluate our success based on how many lives we are able to touch.
- **Advocacy** - Connecting people with the right resources to advocate for themselves.
- **Lifelong Learning** - Ongoing voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge. It enhances social inclusion, self-sustainability, active citizenship, personal development, competitiveness and employability.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dr. Tiffany Johnson-Craddock
Board Chair



Judi Bradley
Board Secretary



Nakia Moore
Board Treasurer



Jeannie Alexander
**Director of
Scholarships &
Programs**



Kerilyn Merritt
**Director of
Marketing &
Communications**



Renée Spruill-Walker
**Immediate
Past Board Chair**

OUR STORY

The Finer Alliance, Inc. was incorporated in the State of Illinois on August 20, 2020. The organization was established to encourage and promote education and scholarship, educational research, community service and educational programs.

The Finer Alliance, Inc. serves as the official chapter partner of [Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated](#) – Tau Xi Zeta Chapter. Its specific objectives and purposes include soliciting, collecting and otherwise raising funds for charitable purposes, including scholarships, and contributing, disbursing and otherwise stewarding those funds for purposes relating to the aims and goals of The Finer Alliance, Inc. and [Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated](#) – Tau Xi Zeta Chapter.

The Finer Alliance, Inc. received recognition from the Internal Revenue Service as a public charity that is exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The organization is governed by its own Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

OUR HISTORY



WHY EDUCATIONAL INVESTMENT MATTERS

Postsecondary education plays an important role in helping individuals, families and communities across Illinois thrive. Education and training beyond high school can create pathways to greater economic opportunity, career advancement and long-term stability while helping prepare a skilled workforce to meet the evolving needs of our state. Illinois has made meaningful progress in postsecondary attainment, but the state's workforce needs continue to grow.

As the graphic below illustrates, the share of adults with a postsecondary degree or credential has increased over time, while an even greater share of Illinois jobs is projected to require education or training beyond high school in the years ahead.

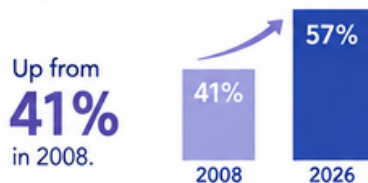
For The Finer Alliance, Inc., these realities reinforce our commitment to *Promoting the Pursuit of Lifelong Learning*. Through scholarships and educational investment, we seek to help create opportunities for students to pursue their goals and carry their knowledge, leadership and service forward into their communities.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT & WORKFORCE NEEDS IN ILLINOIS

A STRONGER, MORE PREPARED ILLINOIS

57%

of Illinois adults currently hold a postsecondary degree or credential.



70%+

of Illinois jobs are projected to require education or training beyond high school by 2031.

As the demands of today's workforce continue to evolve, education and training beyond high school will be essential for more than 70% of jobs in Illinois by 2031.



INVESTING IN EDUCATION STRENGTHENS INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES AND ILLINOIS' FUTURE.

Source: State of Illinois, Executive Order 2026-03, March 13, 2026.

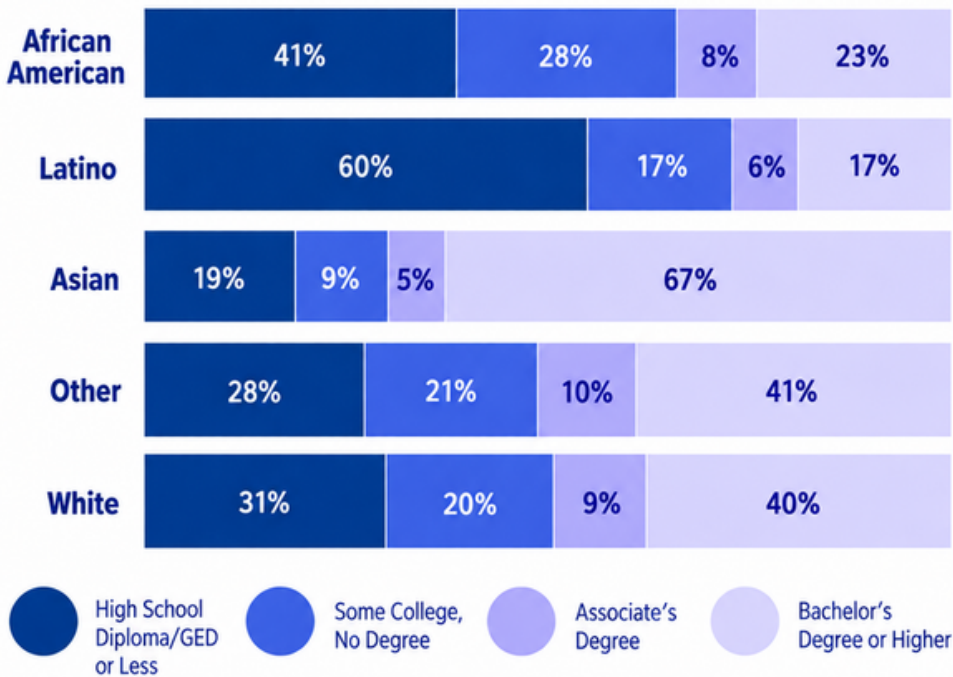
The Illinois State Attainment Working Group includes the Illinois Board of Higher Education and other state partners.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY & EQUITY

While Illinois has made progress in postsecondary educational attainment, statewide averages do not tell the full story. Significant disparities remain across racial and ethnic groups, demonstrating that educational opportunity and attainment are not experienced equally across our communities.

As the data below illustrate, differences are particularly evident at the bachelor's degree level. These disparities underscore the continued importance of expanding educational opportunity and reducing barriers that can affect a student's ability to pursue and complete higher education. For The Finer Alliance, Inc., investing in education is one way we can help expand opportunity and support students as they pursue their academic and professional goals.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN ILLINOIS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (AGE 25+)



Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2023). *Underrepresented Groups Report*.
Data from 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (IPUMS).

THE FINER ALLIANCE, INC. PRESENTS:

THE LIGHT OF CANDLE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

FOR ASPIRING TEACHERS




APPLICATION DEADLINE:
JULY 14, 2026

\$5000 SCHOLARSHIP

→ APPLY:
[HTTPS://FINERALLIANCEINC.ORG](https://finerallianceinc.org)

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- MUST BE A CURRENT STUDENT ENROLLED OR ACCEPTED IN A 4-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY
- MUST HAVE ACCUMULATED 12HRS TOWARD A DEGREE IN EDUCATION
- MUST HAVE A CUMULATIVE GPA OF 3.5 OR ABOVE
- RESIDE IN THE CHICAGOLAND AREA AND INTEND TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION AT A 4-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

Memorial Scholarship

Established in memory of Candle Hudson-Oden, the Light of Candle Memorial Scholarship honors her legacy as an educator and member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated – Tau Xi Zeta Chapter. The Finer Alliance, Inc. annually awards a \$5,000 scholarship to a promising future educator who demonstrates academic excellence.

THE FINER ALLIANCE, INC. PRESENTS:

THE FINER FUTURE SCHOLARSHIP - 2026

FOR FEMALE COLLEGE-BOUND HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
JULY 14, 2026

\$1000 SCHOLARSHIP

REQUIREMENTS**

- ✓ MUST BE A FEMALE, GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR OR CURRENTLY ENROLLED AT AN ACCREDITED COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OR VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL INSTITUTION FOR THE COMING FALL ACADEMIC TERM.
- ✓ RESIDE IN THE CHICAGOLAND AREA AND INTEND TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION AT A 4-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

FINER
THE FINER ALLIANCE, INC.

****SEE THE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION ONLINE FOR FULL ELIGIBILITY DETAILS...**

APPLY: [HTTPS://FINERALLIANCEINC.ORG](https://finerallianceinc.org)



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

INVESTING IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

With our scholarships, we seek to foster a culture of inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment. By providing financial assistance and resources, we help scholars overcome barriers and achieve their educational goals.

THE FINER ALLIANCE, INC. PRESENTS:

THE FINER IMPACT SCHOLARSHIP - 2026

FOR COLLEGE-BOUND HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
JULY 14, 2026

\$1000 SCHOLARSHIP

REQUIREMENTS**

- ✓ MUST BE A GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR OR PRESENTLY ENROLLED AT AN ACCREDITED COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OR VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL INSTITUTION FOR THE COMING FALL ACADEMIC TERM.
- ✓ RESIDE IN THE CHICAGOLAND AREA AND INTEND TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION AT A 4-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

FINER
THE FINER ALLIANCE, INC.

****SEE THE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION ONLINE FOR FULL ELIGIBILITY DETAILS...**

APPLY: [HTTPS://FINERALLIANCEINC.ORG](https://finerallianceinc.org)



College-bound High School Seniors

The Finer Future Scholarship and The Finer Impact Scholarship each provide a \$1,000 award to eligible students pursuing higher education.

Together, these scholarships broaden TFA's investment in students whose educational goals reflect academic achievement, leadership, service and the potential to make a positive impact.



Khadijah Bilal, Inaugural Light of Candle Memorial Scholarship Recipient (2022)

Khadijah graduated cum laude, earned an endorsement in English as a Second Language and demonstrated exceptional dedication and academic excellence throughout her journey.



SCHOLARSHIP IMPACT

CREATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHANGE AGENTS

Khadijah Bilal, the inaugural winner of the 2022 Light of Candle Memorial Scholarship for Aspiring Teachers, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Dominican University in May 2024.



The Finer Alliance, Inc. 2022 Board Members issuing a \$5,000 scholarship award to its inaugural recipient, Khadijah Bilal, at the Scholarship Award Brunch held on September 24, 2022.

Commitment to #LifelongLearning

Khadijah graduated with a cumulative GPA of 3.6 and has since achieved her goal of becoming a Chicago Public Schools teacher. Her journey continues beyond the classroom. In Fall 2025, she became a member of [Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated](#) – Tau Xi Zeta Chapter, furthering her commitment to education, leadership and service.

Her story reflects the lasting impact of educational investment and the meaningful ways our scholars continue to grow and give back.



**Tonja Harris,
Light of Candle Memorial
Scholarship Recipient (2024)**

As Director of Housing at New Moms, and a member of [Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated](#), Tonja supports young mothers and families as they transition from homelessness toward greater stability and independence. Her work reflects her commitment to creating opportunities that help individuals and families move forward.



SCHOLARSHIP IMPACT

ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH EDUCATION AND SERVICE

Tonja Harris, the 2024 Light of Candle Memorial Scholarship recipient, is pursuing a Ph.D. in Applied Social Justice at Dominican University. With a 3.89 GPA, she continues to pair academic achievement with meaningful leadership and service.

Tonja's scholarship extends beyond the classroom. She presented research on cultural transformation in Chicago's nonprofit sector at a national social equity conference in Maryland, bringing her academic work into broader conversations about equity, leadership and community change.

Commitment to #LifelongLearning

"Because of you, I'm not just earning a degree—I'm building systems that restore, uplift, and transform lives."

- Tonja Harris

Tonja's journey demonstrates how educational investment can create impact far beyond a single degree. Through research, leadership and professional service, she continues to use her education to strengthen communities and advance meaningful change.



PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

UNITED IN PURPOSE

The Finer Alliance, Inc. values relationships that strengthen our ability to advance education, scholarship and community impact. By working alongside organizations and individuals with shared goals, we can extend our reach and create meaningful opportunities for the communities we serve.

Working Together

Collaboration helps extend the reach and impact of our mission. By building relationships with organizations and individuals who share our commitment to education and community development, we can combine resources, expertise and support to create meaningful opportunities for the communities we serve.



DIAMOND LEVEL DONOR

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated
Tau Xi Zeta Chapter

The Finer Alliance, Inc. proudly serves as the official chapter partner of [Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated](#) – Tau Xi Zeta Chapter.

Through this relationship, we work together to raise funds and support scholarships and charitable efforts aligned with our shared commitment to education and community service.



DONATE

Dear Supporter,

Since our founding in 2020, The Finer Alliance, Inc. has remained committed to Promoting the Pursuit of Lifelong Learning. With the generosity of our donors and supporters, that commitment has grown from our inaugural scholarship award into multiple opportunities that help students pursue their educational and professional goals. Your support allows us to continue investing in students and advancing educational opportunity. Every contribution, regardless of size, strengthens our ability to provide scholarships and further charitable and educational efforts aligned with our mission.

OUR SCHOLARSHIP IMPACT CONTINUES

**3 Scholarship Opportunities | 10 Awards
9 Individual Scholars | 4 Cohorts***

**Impact through the 2026 scholarship cycle.*

The stories and milestones throughout this media kit demonstrate that educational investment can reach far beyond a scholarship award. Our scholars are pursuing their goals, advancing in their professions and carrying their education, leadership and service into their communities.

We invite you to help us continue building that legacy. Your generosity helps The Finer Alliance, Inc. expand educational opportunities and support scholars as they pursue what comes next.

**Thank you for investing in education,
opportunity and the future of our scholars.**

- The Finer Alliance, Inc.



DONATE SECURELY

<https://finerallianceinc.org/index.php/donate-3/>



Mailing Address

**P.O. Box 7055
Grayslake, IL 60030**



**Promoting the
pursuit of
lifelong learning.**

#TheFinerAlliance
#Scholarship
#LifelongLearning

CONTACT US

For more information or to connect with The Finer Alliance, Inc., please contact us by email, visit our website or connect with us on social media.



Email

General Information

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