

Introducing the Latest Cohort of Obama Foundation Scholars

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Thirty-two extraordinary individuals from around the world will conduct their groundbreaking work at Columbia University and the University of Chicago.

2019 Obama Foundation Scholars at Columbia University

Today, the [Obama Foundation](#) announced its second cohort of [Obama Foundation Scholars](#), 32 rising leaders from around the world who will study at the University of Chicago and Columbia University for the 2019-2020 academic year.

In service of the foundation's efforts to support the next generation of global leaders, the Obama Foundation Scholars program partners with Columbia and UChicago to combine academic research with one-of-a-kind experiences led by the Obama Foundation. The program's aim is to empower emerging leaders who have a proven commitment to service with the tools they need to make their efforts more effective upon their return home.

"The inaugural class of scholars emerged more energized and capable of creating lasting change in their communities," said Obama Foundation CEO David Simas. "They are one of the backbones of the Obama Foundation's global ecosystem of young leaders, and we are inspired by the connections they have made and the work they will go on to do. We are eager to grow this international network of change-makers with our second cohort of scholars."

The 12 Obama Foundation Scholars at Columbia University will participate in [Columbia World Projects](#), an initiative in which students, faculty, and researchers from Columbia partner with governments, nonprofits, the private sector, and intergovernmental organizations to use university research to create tangible solutions to real-world issues. The cohort at Columbia will participate in a rigorous, immersive program that brings together academic, skills-based, and experiential learning, designed by the university in consultation with the Obama Foundation.

"This program captures the essence of why Columbia University is such an inspiring institution," said Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger. "The Obama Foundation Scholars already have dedicated their lives to civic-minded projects that are helping to address problems in different regions around the globe. The academic year they will spend on campus is designed to strengthen their impact, individually and collectively—while the scholars' larger-than-life presence will enhance the experience of every member of our community. In just one short year, the Obama

Foundation Scholars program has come to embody the essence of a global university located in New York City.”

The 20 Obama Foundation Scholars at the University of Chicago will earn a Master of Arts degree focused on international development and policy at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. Outside the classroom, the UChicago scholars will have the chance to participate in experiences throughout Chicago, including on the South Side where the Foundation is located and where President Obama got his start in community organizing. By engaging with the local community, students will have the opportunity to complement what they learn in the classroom and also to share and exchange perspectives on service and change with local Chicago leaders.

“We are delighted to welcome our second cohort of scholars and grateful for the Obama Foundation’s support in ensuring that promising leaders from across the globe have access to the world-class education and leadership opportunities they need to achieve their ambitious goals,” said Katherine Baicker, Dean and Emmett Dedmon Professor, Harris Public Policy at the University of Chicago. “The Obama Foundation Scholars will enrich our vibrant community and bring diverse global perspectives to addressing the critical international development and policy questions facing the world.”

The Obama Foundation Scholars program was launched in 2018. The inaugural class of scholars recently graduated, having studied a core graduate curriculum supplemented with Obama Foundation sponsored leadership programming. The scholars developed, with the guidance of the Obama Foundation, an action plan and approach that they are now taking back to their home regions to scale up their work and reinvest in their communities.

Works in Progress

The 2019-2020 Obama Foundation Scholars are actively working to solve a diverse array of challenges, including:

- Advocating to make public resources more friendly and inclusive to LGBTQ people in China
- Encouraging the growth of technology and innovation in Africa by providing pathways for youth to get into software development
- Fostering collaboration between stakeholders and government on the implementation of policies regarding Sorcery Accusation Related Violence in Papua New Guinea
- Developing youth-centered public policy focused on social inclusion, health, and human rights in Argentina