Golden Apple Scholars in Illinois
Policies and Procedures Handbook

Golden Apple

May 2022
Welcome to the Golden Apple Scholars Program

Congratulations on the continuation of your journey as a Golden Apple Scholar. We have high expectations for you as we ensure that you are well prepared to help thousands of students achieve their potential.

This handbook is intended to serve as both a guide and a resource, providing you with a clear understanding of the policies and procedures of the Golden Apple Scholars Program. As a Golden Apple Scholar, you are dedicated to becoming a highly effective teacher in a school-of-need in Illinois for a minimum of five years. This handbook details the basic tenets and requirements of the program.

We expect to prepare you to positively and significantly impact the lives of students across Illinois. We thank you for aspiring to this high level of service, where students need you the most.

As you realize your dreams, you will provide your future students the opportunity to realize theirs too.

Alicia Winckler
Chief Executive Officer

Alan Mather
President

For more information on Golden Apple, please visit www.goldenapple.org.
**Policy and Procedures Not a Contract**

The policies and procedures described in this Handbook do not constitute contractual or other guarantees, but instead are there to help Scholars generally understand The Golden Apple Foundation’s expectations of them. There are a variety of other expectations of Scholars not found in this Handbook, including those in your individual Scholar Contract.

The Golden Apple Foundation reserves the right to amend, update or revise these policies and procedures as the need arises, without prior notice to Scholars. We typically will, however, inform Scholars when revisions have occurred as soon as practicable thereafter, if not before. Unless specified, all Scholars in pursuance of a bachelor’s degree and teacher licensure as well as Scholars in process of fulfilling the teaching commitment are subject to the most recent policies and procedures as amended from time to time.

Furthermore, Scholars in no event shall be deemed to be employees of The Golden Apple Foundation or authorized to formally represent it without explicit written permission.

Finally, compliance with the Handbook is a requirement, but it does not guarantee continued participation in the Scholar Program.
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Mission Statement, History, and Purpose: Transforming Teachers and Teaching

Mission Statement

At Golden Apple, our mission is to inspire, develop, and support teacher excellence, especially in schools-of-need. Because the critical contributor to student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom, Golden Apple provides exceptional, evidence-based preparation and development for teachers at all stages of their careers. Through our innovative programs offering methods, resources, and mentorship, we work to transform teachers and teaching, enriching both student and teacher lives.

History

Founded in 1985, Golden Apple strives to advance the teaching profession at critical phases of educators’ careers by: 1) recruiting and preparing aspiring teachers, 2) developing current teacher practitioners and school leaders, and 3) recognizing exemplary educators.

Golden Apple honors outstanding teachers each year throughout the State of Illinois via the Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Teaching and exemplary principals with the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership generously sponsored by the Stanley C. Golder family. Golden Apple award recipients are master teachers and leaders, highly engaged in many aspects of Golden Apple programming, thus ensuring that the organization can sustainably recognize, engage, and leverage the best educators to support and develop the next generation of teachers.

Since its inception in 1989, the Golden Apple Scholars in Illinois program has created partnerships with primary and secondary schools, universities, governmental agencies, and community organizations. In 1993, the program expanded statewide, providing more Scholars the opportunity to develop into excellent teachers for classrooms in schools-of-need throughout the state.

Purpose of Scholars Program

The purpose of the Golden Apple Scholars program is to recruit and prepare high school graduates and college undergrads that have the promise for successful careers as excellent teachers for students in schools-of-need across Illinois. In the Scholars program, master teachers and expert third-party partners provide appropriate methodology and subject matter through Scholar Institutes. Golden Apple Program staff provides recruiting services, academic and social-emotional supports, placement services, and mentoring during the first years of teaching to inspire Scholars to develop the skills and knowledge required to excel in the profession.
### Key Words & Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Academy</strong></th>
<th>Golden Apple Award recipients become lifetime members of the Golden Apple Academy of Educators. The Academy supports the selection of future Award recipients and the professional development of Undergraduate and Teaching Scholars in addition to another Golden Apple Program - the Golden Apple Accelerators. The Academy consists of Fellows, Teachers of Distinction, and Leaders of Distinction.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumni</strong></td>
<td>A Scholar who has fulfilled their commitment of teaching in a school-of-need for five years to Golden Apple. Additionally, he/she/they is a Crystal Apple recipient and considered a Completed Scholar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crystal Apple</strong></td>
<td>Scholars who complete their 5-year commitment receive a “Crystal Apple” to celebrate their completion of the mission. Crystal Apple Recipients are Alumni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exit</strong></td>
<td>The action of being removed from the Golden Apple Scholars program, which includes revocation of all benefits associated with being a participant in the program and results in an obligation to repay up to all of the tuition assistance received.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fellow</strong></td>
<td>A member of the Golden Apple Academy or Educator who won the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching or the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in School Leadership (Golder Award). Typically, there are ten recipients of the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching and 1-2 recipients of the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership across the state of Illinois. In order to qualify for these awards, you must have at least five years of teaching experience or five years of school leadership experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Induction</strong></td>
<td>Induction is an event that celebrates the newest class of incoming Scholars.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ISAC - The Illinois Student Assistance Commission</strong></td>
<td>The state agency that provides information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable for Illinois families. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information on education and financial aid for students and their families—giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, including the state’s flagship Monetary Award Program, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. ISAC presently serves as the fiscal agent for the appropriation for Golden Apple’s Scholars and Accelerators Program and administers the tuition assistance component of our work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders of Distinction</td>
<td>Leadership Award Finalists whose superior work in education was noted by the Selection Committee and were runners-up for the Excellence in Leadership Award. The Leaders of Distinction are recognized for their distinguished contribution to education and are asked to participate in Golden Apple programs. Leaders of Distinction have at least five years of school leadership experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Teaching Experience (Formally referred to as Onsite)</td>
<td>A Scholar’s summer school teaching placement during Scholar Institute where they receive hands-on training in the classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholar Institute</td>
<td>A rigorous, multi-week teacher preparation program that Scholars participate in during summer months. Alumni, Academy members, and Golden Apple partners also participate in programming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers of Distinction</td>
<td>Teacher Award Finalists whose superior work in education was noted by the Selection Committee and were runners-up for the Excellence in Teaching Award. The Teachers of Distinction are recognized for their distinguished contribution to education and are asked to participate in Golden Apple programs. Teachers of Distinction have at least five years of teaching experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Scholar</td>
<td>A Scholar who has graduated with an educator license who has not yet completed the five-year teaching requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Scholar</td>
<td>A Scholar who is currently pursuing their undergraduate degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Liaison</td>
<td>An individual who connects Scholars at their university with Golden Apple staff. University Liaisons may host events, support Scholar recruitment, or participate in other Golden Apple-related activities.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Scholar Outcomes

As a result of this program, Scholars:

● Advance student learning to help them reach their full potential;
● Demonstrate instructional best practices while meeting the diverse learning needs of all students;
● Serve to facilitate civic leadership in their classroom, school, and community;
● Personalize learning to meet the unique needs of all of their students;
● Develop an awareness of their own identity, addresses cultural competence, and how it impacts others;
● Build collaborative relationships and work effectively as a team member;
● Demonstrate professionalism in the classroom and school community;
● Commit to being lifelong learners; and,
● Improve educational outcomes for students.
Golden Apple Expectations of Scholars

The State of Illinois, philanthropic organizations, corporations, many generous individual donors, and partnerships with districts and schools collectively provide funding for our Scholars program.

Because the Scholars program is supported in part by state funding, changes in this funding could alter or remove aspects of the program, including the amount of the scholarship provided to Scholars. **Regardless of changes in funding or scholarship, all Scholars are expected to complete the commitment to teach in a school-of-need in the State of Illinois for at least five years.**

Expectations for Scholars include meeting requirements set by Golden Apple, including requirements in the Scholar Contract, the university the Scholar attends, and the State of Illinois. If any of these requirements are not met, a Scholar may be exited from the program.

Rules and requirements from the State are available on the ISAC website at:

[https://www.isac.org/students/during-college/types-of-financial-aid/scholarships/golden-apple-scholars-of-illinois.html#program_requirements](https://www.isac.org/students/during-college/types-of-financial-aid/scholarships/golden-apple-scholars-of-illinois.html#program_requirements)

Golden Apple, University, and State of Illinois Requirements

**Before Induction:**

- Meet all eligibility requirements;
- Provide an approved state or government-issued photo ID;
- Be a U.S. Citizen, a legal resident of Illinois, or eligible non-resident such as an actively enrolled DACA student;
- Provide an official copy of a birth certificate AND a Social Security or Permanent Resident Card or Non-expired DACAmentation; and,
- Sign ALL contracts, promissory notes, and university transcript release forms.
- Inform Golden Apple if you’re planning on participating in a five year Master’s level education program.

**While an Undergraduate:**

- Reside in Illinois (i.e., Scholar and Scholar’s legal guardians must have an Illinois permanent address throughout the acquisition of their undergraduate degree);
- Earn a minimum 2.5 GPA for each term (on a 4.0 scale). Please note Golden Apple does not round GPA in any case;
- Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) throughout one’s undergraduate preparation. Please note Golden Apple does not round GPA in any case;
- Submit grades and transcripts (official or unofficial) within seven days from the conclusion of each term. Tuition for the following term will NOT be released without a qualifying transcript from the prior academic term;
- Meet eligibility requirements to receive teacher licensure at a partner university. Please note that some of the university GPA requirements may be higher than the requirements by the Golden Apple Scholar Program and MUST be followed to remain “On Track” as a Scholar;
- Remain “On Track” with coursework to be a licensed teacher in the State of Illinois (30 hours entering sophomore year; 60 hours junior; 90 hours senior);
- Successfully complete ALL requisite Scholar Institutes;
● Participate in one (1) campus cohort sponsored event per semester and one (1) Golden Apple coordinated event per semester (not including Scholar Institute);
● Report Student Teaching Placement to Golden Apple before finalizing Placement;
● Successfully complete Student Teaching at your university;
● If the EdTPA is required by the state, pass and submit evidence of your successful completion of the EdTPA (i.e., the Teacher Licensure pre-requisite examination and requisite evidence); and,
● Graduate from a partner university within 6 years.

For Placement:

● Submit a resume on the official Golden Apple template, that follows the guidelines put forth in the format guidelines BEFORE interviewing for and accepting your first teaching position;
● Submit Placement Preferences indicating desired regions, level, and content specifications for your first position;
● Participate in a minimum of THREE placement events while Student Teaching;
● Submission of EdTpa before attending Scholar Institute 4 (if required by state); and,
● Earn Illinois Teacher Licensure and submit Illinois Educators Identification Number (IEIN) to Golden Apple.

While Teaching:

● Meet and confer with your Golden Apple mentor on not less than three occasions each year, during your first two years of teaching;
● Submit employment verifications for each of the first five years of teaching by the fall deadline;
● Submit a copy of your formal teacher performance evaluation for each of your first five years of teaching as appropriate; and,
● Teach in a school-of-need (as defined by Golden Apple) within Illinois for at least five years within the first seven years of obtaining your undergraduate degree.

Communication Expectations

As a requirement of continued participation in the Program, Golden Apple Scholars must keep current university and home addresses, non-university email addresses, and phone numbers on file with the Foundation. Any changes for Teaching Scholars are to be reported within 10 days to Ann Rowell at rowell@goldenapple.org. Any changes for Undergraduate Scholars are to be reported within 10 days to Cheryl Flores at flores@goldenapple.org. It is essential that Scholars maintain open and frequent communication with Golden Apple throughout their undergraduate and teaching careers.

Scholars are responsible for submitting materials to the Foundation throughout their undergraduate and teaching careers. These documents include but are not limited to:

● Unofficial transcripts at the culmination of each term;
● Signed Code of Conduct and Policy and Procedures Handbook Book on an annual basis;
● Student Teaching Placement to Golden Apple before finalizing Placement;
● If the EdTPA is required by the state, submit the EdTPA Score Page at least one month before attending your final Scholar Institute;
● Resume and cover letter;
● Illinois License Number (IEIN);
● Employment Verification Forms; and,
● Teacher Evaluation Summative ratings for the first five years of teaching.

Additionally, Scholars are to respond appropriately to all Golden Apple communications within two business days to practice and promote professional expectations. Golden Apple encourages Scholars to be proactive in their communications in order to build agency and professionalism. Failure to respond after several attempts will result in an out-of-compliance notification and may result in an Exit from the program.

Consequences of Non-Compliance with Regard to Transcripts, Behavior, and Requirements

Scholars found to be “out-of-compliance” due to lack of communication, failure to submit documents, or any violation of the Scholar Code of Conduct (page 13 of this document) or the Scholar Contract are at risk for a change of status up to and including an exit from the Golden Apple Scholars Program. Scholars who do not submit term transcripts by the appropriate deadline will not qualify for tuition assistance the following term regardless of GPA standing.

Consequences of Non-Compliance with Regard to Funding Payback

There are financial consequences if a Scholar does not fulfill the contracted commitment entered into with the Golden Apple Foundation. If a Scholar fails to complete the requisite commitments and is exited from the Program, the tuition assistance afforded to the Scholars converts into a student loan to be repaid with interest. The collections process is largely managed by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) – which must charge interest in accordance with the collection of all student loans.

For each completed year of effective teaching in an approved school-of-need as a full-time teacher in Illinois, 20% of the tuition assistance distributed is forgiven.

Scholars enter the Golden Apple contract with the understanding that the benefits of participating in the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program can only be offered and sustained as sufficient funding is received from the state and/or federal government. Please see your separate Scholar Contract or Contracts for full obligations and details.
Definition of a School-of-Need

In order to fulfill their commitment to the Golden Apple Foundation, Scholars must teach at a school-of-need in Illinois. The Golden Apple Foundation uses two criteria to designate schools in Illinois as "of need": an economic definition and an academic definition. Each is helpful to identify underserved schools whose students would benefit from Golden Apple Scholars on faculty.

The **economic definition** of an Illinois school-of-need is as follows:

An Illinois school that has 30% or more students receiving free and reduced lunch, according to the School Report Card from the Illinois State Board of Education on https://www.illinoisreportcard.com.

The **academic definition** of a school-of-need is as follows:

An Illinois school in which the combined percentage of its students who approached, met, or exceeded state standards for **both** English Language Arts and Math is less than or equal to 60% according to the School Report Card from the Illinois State Board of Education on https://www.illinoisreportcard.com. Please see below for the standardized test for each grade level:

- Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for high school
- Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) for elementary & middle school

**Note: For the 2022-2023 school year, only economic need will be considered.**

If a school is not represented on the Illinois Report Card, it is the responsibility of the Scholar to provide documentation that their employment meets one of the standards listed above under acceptable standards as defined by The Golden Apple Foundation.

The expectation is that Scholars teach at a school-of-need for five years. If that school's designation changes, Scholars must reach out to the Director of Placement and Alumni Relations to determine the next steps.

Scholars must teach for 10 full weeks of a semester in order to receive half a year's credit toward their teaching commitment. For all questions regarding a school-of-need, Scholars should contact the Director of Placement & Alumni Relations, Talyia Eve Riemer, at triemer@goldenapple.org.
Scholar Code of Conduct

It is essential that all Scholars hold a high ethical standard. Scholars represent great promise to their future students, the teaching profession, and the Golden Apple Foundation. To protect the integrity of this program, and indeed that of the teaching profession, we require that certain academic, ethical, and legal standards of conduct be maintained, both during the school year and while Scholar Institute is in session.

Expectations of a Golden Apple Scholar

Scholars, as representatives of the Golden Apple Foundation, while participating in the Program, must exemplify excellence. Any conduct that negatively affects the good order, welfare, reputation or name of the Golden Apple Foundation, the Scholars of Illinois, and/or the Academy is considered a serious breach of trust and a breach of the Scholar’s obligations under his/her Scholar Agreement and these Policies. It is expected that:

1. Scholars model professionalism in attitude, demeanor, and behavior.
2. Scholars display a growth mindset in all learning and collaboration.
3. Scholars adhere to collegiate codes of conduct, Golden Apple Scholar Codes of Conduct, and all aspects of the law.

The following are non-exhaustive examples of misconduct that will not be tolerated and will cause for immediate Review and possibly Exit:

- Use of violence, force, or intimidation which endangers the safety or welfare of staff, citizenry, or fellow Scholars;
- Discrimination or harassment of anyone that the Scholar interacts with during his/her participation in a Golden Apple-sponsored event or program, regardless of relationship or status;
- Gang membership or participation in any gang activity;
- Conviction of a felony, provided that Golden Apple may also review any criminal charge which results in a consensual plea to a misdemeanor offense and in its sole discretion, adversely change a Scholar’s status;
- Misuse of technology/internet/social media that disparages or otherwise casts Golden Apple or any of its staff, university partners or Scholar Institute partners in a negative light; or,
- Illegal drug use.

Equal Opportunity

In the provision of the Scholar Program, The Golden Apple Foundation does not discriminate or limit access to the benefits of the program on the basis of race, ancestry, color, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, or disability, or any other factor prohibited by law. In addition, The Golden Apple Foundation will reasonably accommodate disabled Scholars in their enjoyment of and access to its programs. Should you wish to discuss such an accommodation, you must contact Golden Apple’s Chief of Staff, Pamela Witmer, at pwitmer@goldenapple.org.

Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy

Golden Apple is committed to maintaining a Scholar environment that encourages and fosters appropriate conduct among its Scholars, students, employees, interns, contractors and others, as well as respect for individual values and sensibilities. Furthermore, Golden Apple is committed to preventing unlawful discrimination and harassment, even when directed by or at non-employees, such as Scholars.
Accordingly, Golden Apple intends to enforce this Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy at all levels within its programs, as well as with its Scholars, Fellows, vendors, suppliers, visitors, employees and other non-employees, in order to create program environments free from discrimination and harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment and harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, ancestry, national origin, age, disability, religion, veteran status, marital status, citizenship status or any other basis prohibited by federal, state or local laws.

Such harassment can be illegal, is a violation of this policy, and will result in a status change up to and including Exit from the program.

What is Unlawful Harassment or Discrimination?

For the purposes of this policy, unlawful harassment is any unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct on the basis of the factors referenced above (e.g. race, sex, sexual orientation, age, etc.) where: (a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s participation; (b) a program decision affecting a participant is based on that individual’s acceptance or rejection of such conduct; or (c) such conduct interferes with an individual’s performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or participation environment.

Unlawful discrimination generally occurs when a person is subjected to different terms and conditions of program participation because of the prohibited factors referenced above. It includes unlawful harassment on the basis of those prohibited factors, as well as a variety of other decisions (e.g. scheduling, promotion, pay, discipline or termination) based on prohibited factors. Bear in mind that conduct on the basis of the factors referenced above may not technically violate the law, but are prohibited by this Policy.

In particular, sexual harassment can take a variety of forms, ranging from the less severe though still inappropriate (e.g., unwelcome comments and jokes) to more severe (e.g., subtle pressure or innuendo, inquiries about another’s sex life, preferences or habits, and requests to date) to the most severe (e.g., express requests for sexual favors or dates, actual physical contact or exposure). The examples above and below are for purposes of illustration only – they are not meant to be an exhaustive list of conduct that might rise to the level of sexual or other harassment:

- unwelcome comments about someone’s clothing, hair or body;
- unwelcome flirting, pressure for dates, and/or touching;
- sexually-suggestive jokes, gestures, emails or texts directed to or at another;
- sexually-oriented or degrading comments about another;
- unwelcome sexual inquiries about a person (e.g., their sex life, their preferences, etc.)
- preferential treatment or promise of preferential treatment in exchange for dates or sexual conduct;
- the denial or threat of denial of program benefits or advancement for refusal to consent to sexual advances; and/or
- the display of sexually-oriented pictures, posters, or other material unwelcome or offensive to others.

Scope of Policy

This policy against discrimination and harassment applies to every officer, manager, employee, Scholar, Fellow, intern, and independent contractor of Golden Apple. In fact, where such conduct is directed by a supervisor (or someone in a management position) toward a subordinate, the former will generally be held to a higher standard of accountability because of the degree of control and influence they have or are perceived to have over the program conditions and benefits of the subordinate. Similarly, Golden Apple will not tolerate harassment from (or of) its Fellows, Scholars, vendors, suppliers, or other non-employees who conduct business with Golden Apple. Finally, harassment
is not only unacceptable at program and institute events; it is unacceptable in any Foundation-related setting, for example, trips and social events.

Complaint Procedure

All Scholars are encouraged but not required to immediately object to conduct which might be sexually or otherwise harassing or discriminatory and to tell the individual engaging in the conduct that is unwelcome and inappropriate. **Additionally, any conduct that may be a violation of this policy must be reported as promptly as possible in accordance with the following complaint procedures.** Without such reports/complaints, Golden Apple cannot effectively address the problems of discrimination and harassment. Retaliation against any person for making such reports/complaints is also a violation of this policy and warrants a separate complaint.

**Reporting of Incident:** All officers, managers, employees, Scholars, Fellows, interns, and independent contractors must report any reported, witnessed, known or suspected sexual or other harassment by another as follows: (1) an immediate supervisor or supervisor above them; (2) the Chief of Staff; or if any of these people are implicated in the harassment (3) the CEO or President of Golden Apple. The point is that you have multiple places to go with a complaint and need never report it directly to the alleged harasser or feel that your complaint will not be taken seriously. This reporting procedure exists for your benefit and following it will reduce the number of people who have knowledge of the complaint. This, of course, helps us to preserve the confidentiality of the matter and the integrity of the investigation and to reduce the likelihood of any retaliation. **All those who receive a complaint or notice of alleged discrimination or harassment from another have a duty to pass it on via the reporting procedures referenced above.**

In making reports of discrimination or harassment, it is crucial for investigative purposes that you report each and every act that may be a violation of this policy and every witness to such acts. Thus, at some point you will be asked to make a complete written complaint1 or, if you prefer, to sign off on our written summary of your verbal complaint. If our summary leaves anything out, or is incorrect in any way, do not approve it until it is complete and accurate.

**Investigation:** A prompt (within five (5) working days of the complaint whenever possible) investigation will be commenced by Golden Apple or one of its designees (e.g., outside counsel). To the extent possible, confidentiality must be preserved. Accordingly, do not discuss the allegations or the facts of the investigation with anyone outside of the person investigating it without prior approval (excepting, of course, governmental bodies). That includes but is not limited to the complainant, the person accused and other witnesses.

The alleged offender (called the Respondent), however, must be given notice of the complaint and given an opportunity to respond to the complaint. The complaining party (called the Complainant) and the Respondent will both be interviewed as part of the investigation. Other actual or potential witnesses to the acts complained of may also be interviewed. We necessarily depend in large part on you in determining whom to interview, so please make sure you let us know of all potential witnesses. During the pendency of the investigation, either the Complainant or the Respondent may request that they be temporarily separated such that they are not required to directly interact during the course of program activities (when practical), or that there be another person present during such interaction.

**Decision:** The person responsible for conducting the investigation will ordinarily prepare a written decision to the investigation, usually within two weeks of the initial complaint, unless extenuating circumstances exist. This decision will typically include a finding that sexual or other harassment or discrimination occurred, it did not occur, or there is inconclusive evidence as to whether it occurred. A copy of any written decision will be given to the Complainant, the person to whom the harassment or discrimination was allegedly directed (if different from the Complainant) and the

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1 A copy of a complaint form is available on request from the Chief of Staff, Pamela Witmer.
Respondent. When written decisions are given, the individuals receiving them shall acknowledge in writing receipt of the conclusion. In most instances, written decisions shall be final.

**Review Process:** In extraordinary cases, Golden Apple may entertain either the Complainant, the victim (when different from the Complainant) or the Respondent’s request for a decision to be reviewed. Any of these dissatisfied parties should submit written comments or objections to the decision within seven days. Requests for review should be directed to the Chief of Staff or, if they are implicated in the complaint, to the CEO or President. If a request for review is granted, a designee of Golden Apple will endeavor to review the request and issue a determination within seven (7) days of receipt. This determination shall be final.

**No Retaliation**

It is unlawful to retaliate in any way against anyone who has complained about, reported or cooperated in an investigation sexual or other harassment or discrimination, whether that concern relates to harassment of or discrimination against the individual raising the concern or against another individual. Complaints of retaliation should be submitted in accordance with the same procedures outlined above.

**Discipline/Sanctions**

Disciplinary action will be taken against any Respondent found to have engaged in sexual or other harassment or discrimination of any other employee Scholar, Fellow, intern, etc. or otherwise found to have violated the policies stated herein. The extent of the discipline/sanctions imposed generally depends on the nature of the offense and may include suspension, transfer, termination or Exit in appropriate circumstances. If the offending party is a non-employee of Golden Apple, other sanctions up to and including cessation of its business relationship with such person may be imposed. In any event, the discipline/sanction imposed shall be calculated to end the harassment or discrimination and/or eliminate any hostile environment.

If an investigation results in finding that the Complainant falsely accused another of harassment or discrimination knowingly or maliciously, the Complainant may be subject to appropriate discipline/sanctions as well.

Finally, individuals who breach the confidentiality provisions of this policy will be subject to appropriate discipline, up to and including termination. Having said that, however, this policy of confidentiality will not be construed to interfere with your right to communicate with outside agencies about alleged harassment.

**Outside Enforcement of Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Laws**

Discrimination and harassment on the basis of the foregoing factors is also prohibited by a variety of federal, state and local laws, including but not limited to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Illinois Human Rights Act and many other state, county and local laws and ordinances.

In addition, federal and state governments, counties, cities, and towns often have their own agencies responsible for enforcing those laws and investigating complaints. For example, at the federal level the U.S. EEOC is responsible for investigating outside charges of harassment. In Illinois, we have the Illinois Human Rights Department, The Cook County Commission on Human Rights and the Chicago Committee on Human Relations, each of which are responsible for enforcing separate laws. If you would like more information on these governmental agencies, please consult the postings in your particular locations.
Scholar Status

While in the Scholars Program, Scholars are assigned a “status” as an indicator of the state of compliance of that Scholar with all requirements of the Golden Apple Scholars Program. All Scholars start as Undergraduates “On-Track” – which means that the Scholar is comporting with all requirements to complete the program successfully. A Scholar's status may change throughout the Undergraduate and Post-Baccalaureate experience based on circumstances, including the ones described below.

On-Track:

- An Undergraduate Scholar stays On-Track as long as the Undergraduate Scholar:
  - Is making sufficient progress towards graduation and teaching, earning a term and cumulative GPA of 2.8 or above (please note that Golden Apple does not round GPAs);
  - Submits all requisite documents requested by the program by the deadlines specified;
  - At all times, adheres to the professional standards set by the Scholars Program;
  - Participates effectively in all requisite Scholar Institutes; and,
  - Graduates with an undergraduate degree within education within 6 years.

- A Teaching Scholar stays On-Track as long as the Teaching Scholar:
  - Is progressing towards fulfilling their contractual obligation to Golden Apple by teaching full-time in an Illinois school-of-need (as defined by Golden Apple);
  - Submits employment verifications for each of the first five years of teaching by the fall deadline;
  - Submits a copy of their formal teacher performance evaluation for each of the first five years of teaching; and,
  - At all times, adheres to the professional standards set by the Scholars Program.

On Watch:

- A Scholar is placed On Watch for academic concerns if the Scholar has a term or cumulative GPA between 2.5 and 2.79.
- The Scholar may be contacted by the Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports to discuss targeted supports and possible next steps to ensure academic success.
- Once the Scholar’s GPA rises above 2.79, the Scholar will be removed from academic “On Watch”.
- A Scholar placed “On Watch” for behavior concerns may be contacted by the Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports to discuss targeted supports and establish a plan for improvement and future success.
- A Scholar will be placed On Watch the subsequent academic term they were placed on Probation regardless if a 2.8 GPA or higher was reached. This status will not impact tuition assistance.

Out of Compliance:

- If a “Teaching Scholar,” a Scholar who has graduated with an educator license who has not yet completed the five-year teaching requirement, is not currently pursuing the mission of Golden Apple by teaching full-time in a school-of-need as defined by Golden Apple, their status will be changed to “Out of Compliance.” When a Scholar has a status of “Out of Compliance,” the Scholar will not be able to:
  - Receive mentoring services from the Foundation
  - Seek full-time employment at The Golden Apple Foundation or any independent contractor roles with or for The Golden Apple Foundation


● The Scholar will be contacted by the Director of Placement and Alumni Relations if their status is changed to "Out of Compliance." The Director of Placement and Alumni Relations will offer targeted supports and possible next steps to gain employment at a school-of-need.

● Once a Scholar obtains full-time employment in a school-of-need and submits a completed employment verification to Golden Apple, their status will be changed to "On Track."

Golden Apple reserves the right to change a Scholar’s status to one or more of the above statuses, in its sole discretion.

Undergraduate Leave of Absence, Post-Baccalaureate Leave, and Graduate School

● Scholars may secure a leave of absence from the program. Undergraduate Scholars have six years to complete their degree and obtain their license. Teaching Scholars have seven years to complete their five years of teaching in a school-of-need. Only approved extensions (a request made in addition to a leave request) will provide a Scholar with additional time to complete their obligations. Requests for leaves or extensions must be made in advance with appropriate documentation and will be monitored by the appropriate Director throughout the leave.
  o Undergraduate Scholars must contact the Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports for an Undergraduate Leave Form and approval.
  o Teaching Scholars must contact the Director of Placement and Alumni Relations in the event a leave must be requested or the Scholar is planning to take one of the allowed “two” gap years in completing their 5-year teaching requirement.

Probation:

● A Scholar may be placed on a provisional, performance-based Probation status due to one or more of the following:
  o Received one term GPA less than a 2.5 OR a cumulative GPA lower than 2.5;
  o Is placed on probation by the university;
  o Demonstrates unacceptable, but remediable performance during Scholar Institute; or,
  o Demonstrates attitudes or behavior deemed harmful to the public reputation of the Golden Apple Foundation or the teaching profession.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Probation Expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Terms</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Apple administration will specify the terms that a Scholar must fulfill within a designated time period to continue in the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Compliance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Full adherence by the Scholar of the prescribed terms is required.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
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<td>If academic performance has prompted concern by Golden Apple staff, that Scholar’s performance during the next marking period in college will be monitored by the Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports. The university liaisons will be informed to assist in supporting the Scholar’s progress. An academic plan will be created with the Scholar to ensure success.</td>
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</table>
If behavior warrants concern by the Scholar staff, that Scholar’s performance during the subsequent marking period in college will be monitored by the Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports. A behavioral plan will be created with the Scholar to ensure success. The university liaisons will be informed to assist in supporting the Scholar’s progress. With support from the Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports, Scholar will submit evidence of growth.

Scholars on probation status are not eligible to receive tuition assistance for the term following that which they entered Probation status. A Scholar is not eligible for tuition assistance again until the specifics of the probation contract have been reached. Once a Scholar resolves the probation status, the Scholar becomes eligible to receive tuition assistance the subsequent marking period.

NOTE: Any Scholar who transfers to another partner university or takes a leave while on Probation, will remain on Probation at the new university or at their return from leave.

Exit:

- While an undergraduate, any Scholar with two consecutive, or three total terms (i.e., term or cumulative) with a GPA lower than 2.5, will be exited from the program.
- If a Scholar does not meet program expectations or fails to fulfill the required terms of probationary status, that Scholar will be exited from the program.
- Scholars excused from further participation in the program or who fail to complete the teaching commitment will be expected to repay with interest Golden Apple and/or the Illinois Student Assistance Commission depending on the year the Scholar entered the program for funds forwarded for tuition assistance in that Scholar’s name.
Social Media Policy

Scholars are deemed role models, as they are working with students. To the families of your students, you are the face of the school. To your administrators, you are the professional face of the school, the embodiment of the educational atmosphere they are trying to foster.

Scholars are therefore expected to respectfully utilize Golden Apple laptops, cell phones, and digital media for effective teaching and learning purposes only, and not for personal purposes. Furthermore, your social media communications, like any of your behavior, can reflect adversely on the Foundation and its associated programs. Accordingly, the Golden Apple Foundation reserves the right to monitor your social media communications on behalf of or relating to, directly or indirectly, it, its programs or its personnel, as well as the students or their families, teachers, and/or administrators at any school where you will work.

For purposes of this policy, “Social media communication” shall mean all methods of communicating or posting information or images on the Internet, including your own or someone else’s blog, journal, or diary, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board or chat room.

The Golden Apple Foundation has established certain guidelines re: Scholars’ social media communications. Specifically:

- Scholars may not use Foundation equipment or devices for social media communications;
- Scholars may not engage in social media communications while Golden Apple programs are in progress, unless otherwise directed or encouraged to do so by a Golden Apple Instructor or Staff member, Scholars may not post confidential or proprietary information about the Golden Apple Foundation or its employees, mentors, or other personnel;
- Scholars may not, without expressed permission, utilize Golden Apple intellectual property (e.g. logos) while engaging in social media communications;
- Scholars should, generally, not identify their participation in or reference the Golden Apple Foundation when posting regarding personal, social, political or other matters not related to the Golden Apple Foundation;
- Scholars who in social media communications have identified themselves as affiliated with the Golden Apple Foundation may not post obscenities, slurs, personal attacks, discriminatory or harassing comments or materials or any other content that can damage the reputation of the Golden Apple Foundation or its employees, mentors, or other personnel.

A Scholar can be Exited from the program because of violations of this policy if deemed harmful to the reputation of the Golden Apple Foundation.
Scholar Institute Policies

Attendance

Participation in all eligible Scholar Institute (SI) activities is a mandatory condition of your continued participation in the Scholar Program. Scholar Institute may be hosted virtually, in-person, or in a hybrid format. Scholars, even those on probation, are required to attend all Scholar Institutes annually. Scholars on probation for the first time will be invited to attend SI. Scholars on probation for a total of two terms will not be eligible to attend Scholar Institute. An appeal process can be requested by the Scholar. Other outside activities should be postponed or canceled during the weeks of Scholar Institutes. Any potential conflicts must be relayed to the Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports in a timely manner.

Compensation

Again, Scholars attending Scholar Institutes are not employees of the Golden Apple Foundation. However, for all Scholar Institutes except “Intro”, Scholars receive a stipend for active, professional, and positive participation in scheduled Scholar Institute activities. Stipends may be considered income by the state and federal government and must be declared on federal tax returns. The Golden Apple Foundation does not withhold taxes for Scholars who earn the Scholar Institute stipend.

Assignments & Performance Tasks

Although Scholars do not receive grades or college credit for their performance during SI, their work and attention to instruction during SI serves as a measure for continuation in the program by assessing attitude, work quality, and acquisition of skills. Insufficient work ethic, negative attitude, or inability to demonstrate the necessary skills for highly effective instruction observed during SI can be cause for dismissal from the program or change in Scholar status. Therefore, it is important that Scholars manage their time to complete all assignments, performance tasks and attend all experiences fully and responsibly during SI. Prior arrangements can be made with SI Leadership if circumstances arise which interfere with completion of assignments in a timely manner.

Scholar Institutes

University Life at Scholar Institutes while In-Person

When Scholar Institute is hosted in-person, Scholars attending Intro to Scholar Institute through Scholar Institute 3 must reside on campus during SI and abide by all established residential policies of local, state, and federal laws, the host university, and the Golden Apple Foundation. Scholars attending Scholar Institute 4 may opt out of residential housing, but are still required to follow university policies while on campus. Any abridgment places a Scholar’s standing in jeopardy, especially in the cases of alcohol or drug use or violations detailed in the Code of Conduct section of this Handbook. Scholars are financially liable for any damage to the rooms they are assigned, and restitution as prescribed by the host university.

Scholars attending Scholar Institutes In-person:

- Should engage positively and productively in all activities of the Scholar Institute;
- Must honor curfew established by the Golden Apple Foundation at the host university during Scholar Institute;
- Are prohibited from using automobiles for any Scholar Institute or Golden Apple sponsored activity;
- Must allow Golden Apple leadership to contact medical authorities if an illness or injury requires it; and,
- Must follow all rules and guidelines established and published for Scholar Institute.

Scholars attending Scholar Institutes virtually:

...
● Should engage positively and productively in all activities of the Scholar Institute;
● Must follow all rules and guidelines established and published for Scholar Institute.

COVID-19

● Golden Apple reserves the right to modify Scholar Institute expectations and requirements as necessary to address precautions and requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
● Scholars are required to be vaccinated for COVID-19 to attend an in-person Scholar Institute.
● Scholars are not required to be vaccinated for COVID-19 to attend a summer teaching experience, however; Scholars must comply with their assigned school district protocol which may include vaccination requirements.

Summer Teaching Experience Expectations

While at Scholar Institute, Scholars may be supporting classrooms in-person, virtually, or in a hybrid format for a minimum of 50 hours. While working with a classroom teacher and students, Scholars need to maintain professional expectations and exhibit a demeanor that is conducive to the Scholar Code of Conduct. Scholars will self-assess and be assessed by their Reflective Seminar Instructor using the Scholar Growth Tool.

Scholar Status

Golden Apple reserves the right to change a Scholar’s status to “On Watch” or “Probation” status if a Scholar is found to be in violation of the Code of Conduct or displays behavior deemed by the Foundation in its sole but reasonable discretion to be negative or harmful to others or the Foundation during Scholar Institute. A Scholar who is NOT on-track to successfully complete the program may be found ineligible to receive tuition assistance and/or Exit ed from the program dependent upon the severity of the indiscretion.

Scholar Institute (SI”) Leave

A Scholar may request a leave for a maximum of one Scholar Institute at a time, as long as that Scholar can earn a bachelor's degree and licensure within six years, and complete the required five years of teaching in a school-of-need in Illinois within seven years of graduation. Scholars are required to attend a minimum of three Scholar Institutes.

Scholars may also be placed on Scholar Institute leave if their graduation date is delayed. Scholars will attend a set amount of Scholar Institutes based on their induction into Golden Apple and their college coursework. If a Scholar is placed on leave by the organization due to delayed graduation, the Scholar will have the same number of SI experiences provided to them at the time of their induction spread over a longer period of time. A decision to place a Scholar on leave by the organization does not take an experience away.

Examples of approved leave requests include summer coursework essential for licensure, travel abroad experience for university credit, unique educational experience designed to increase your teaching capacity, or a significant life-changing event.

Scholars who are unable to attend Scholar Institute experiences may be required to provide evidence of skill mastery outside of Scholar Institute. A work plan will be created by the Scholar in collaboration with the Director of Scholar Institutes.
Scholars may submit a SI Leave Request to the Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports and the Director of Scholar Institute.
**Academic and Social-Emotional Support and Resources**

Golden Apple strives to provide meaningful and differentiated support to Scholars so they can successfully obtain an undergraduate degree and launch their careers as teachers in schools-of-need.

The Golden Apple Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports shares resources and connects Scholars to university, cohort, and peer mentor supports throughout college. Targeted supports are available. Scholars are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and seek out support rather than waiting until Golden Apple staff observes a need.
**Scholar Obligation to Golden Apple Through Teaching**

Scholars have seven years after earning a bachelor’s degree and teaching licensure to fulfill their five-year obligation to be a classroom teacher in a school-of-need in the State of Illinois. For each year a Scholar teaches in a school-of-need in Illinois (as defined by Golden Apple), 20% of all money forwarded on a Scholar’s behalf by Golden Apple to a Scholar’s university (not including Scholar Institute stipends), is forgiven by the Foundation.

If the Scholar does not completely fulfill this teaching obligation within the time allotted, the Scholar will be responsible for repaying any funds left unforgiven. Only a position that requires a teaching license satisfies a Scholar’s commitment. Other positions within a school, including, but not limited to, building administrator, counselor, social worker, dean, district position, or teacher’s aide, do not count as part of the five-year obligation, nor does teaching within a school that does not fit the definition of a school-of-need as established by Golden Apple.
Partner District and Partner Schools Incentive

Golden Apple partners with school districts, charter operators, and other schools who value diversity and highly effective teaching - understanding that the combination of the two allows their students to learn, grow, and reach their full potential. Our model is a long-term solution to recruiting talented teachers who stay.

Placement Incentive: To support these partnerships, as our Scholars search for “best-fit” positions in which to begin their teaching career, the Golden Apple Foundation is offering a one-time stipend of $1,000 to Golden Apple Scholars who accept a teaching position in schools-of-need with one of our K-12 District Partners.

Beginning with the December 2020 Scholar Graduates, there is also an incentive being offered to Scholars who accept, effectively teach, and return to the Partner District / School / Charter Operator for a second year of teaching. That incentive is currently $1,000 payable when performance and retention criteria are met.

Upon the successful completion of a full year of teaching, Scholars who meet the following criteria are eligible for this incentive:

- Scholar has provided all required documentation has been submitted in accordance with this Handbook (Employment Verification forms, Teaching Evaluation, etc.);
- Scholar has completed the school year with a minimal rating of Satisfactory;
- Scholar has signed a contract or has agreed to return to teach at a school-of-need within one of our partner Districts for a 2nd school year on or before the 20th day of school. If there are budgetary constraints that prevent an available position for the Scholar, this requirement will be waived providing that the Scholar is actively seeking a new position at a school-of-need with one of our partner districts; and,
- Scholar has demonstrated professionalism in compliance with the stated requirements and expectations of the Golden Apple Mentoring Program and is in good standing with the Golden Apple Foundation.

This incentive is not retroactive to Scholars graduating prior to December 2020. This incentive is contingent upon available funds within the Golden Apple Foundation’s overall budget.

For questions about this incentive, Golden Apple’s K-12 partners, or Golden Apple’s Placement Program, please contact Dr. Talyia Eve Riemer at triemer@goldenapple.org.
Mentoring

The Golden Apple Foundation is committed to the continual growth of our Scholars. To that end, Scholars are assigned a Golden Apple Mentor who will observe the Scholars’ teaching practices multiple times throughout the school year, offering recommendations for continued practice and ways to enhance practice. Mentoring has been identified by national research to be a significant, contributing factor to new teachers’ success. As a result, participation in Golden Apple’s Mentoring Program is mandatory during the first two years of teaching. At the discretion of the mentoring team, mentoring services may be provided to Scholars teaching beyond the first two years.
Requisite Documentation While Completing Teaching

Employment Verification: To ensure that Scholars are progressing successfully towards the completion of their commitment to teach in an Illinois school-of-need for five years within seven years of graduation, we require that Scholars submit Employment Verifications. It is important that these verifications are signed by authorized agents of the school or district (i.e., which typically include principals, assistant principals, and/or talent / human resource professionals) and submitted by the requested deadline each fall (or within the first 30 days of employment if employment changes in the spring). Included in this Employment Verification is a request for a current, non-lapsed IEIN number, and any updates to personal email addresses or phone numbers to enable The Golden Apple Foundation to maintain contact with Teaching Scholars. Employment Verifications should be submitted within the first 30 days of employment each summer / fall to employmentverifications@goldenapple.org.

As a Teaching Scholar, if you leave employment in a particular school or district mid-semester or mid-year, you are required to inform the Director of Mentoring and Teacher Development, Rozy Patel, at patel@goldenapple.org in addition to sending an email to employmentverifications@goldenapple.org.

Evaluations: In order to enhance Scholar programming, set goals and objectives, inform the curriculum for Scholar Institutes, and better support the professional growth of our Scholars, Golden Apple will analyze aggregated data from teacher performance evaluations. As a result, Teaching Scholars are required to submit copies of their teacher performance evaluations to Golden Apple at teachingevaluations@goldenapple.org every year while completing their five-year teaching commitment in a school-of-need. Golden Apple will send the requirements for submitting evaluations to Scholars annually. In addition, at the beginning of each academic year, a Teaching Scholar shall provide a signed consent in the form deemed necessary by Golden Apple for Golden Apple to receive evaluation(s) from the applicable School District.

Golden Apple will not share individual evaluations with other stakeholders. Evaluations will be kept on Golden Apple’s secure database. Please see the Teaching Evaluation Request FAQ document for additional information.
Golden Apple Staff Biographies

Alicia Winckler, Chief Executive Officer, began consulting with senior leadership and the Board of The Golden Apple Foundation in late 2014; was selected as its first President and Chief Operating Officer in January of 2017; and was selected as its President and Chief Executive Officer in October of 2017. In 2018, she welcomed Alan Mather to join her in co-leading the Foundation - with Alicia as CEO and Alan becoming President. Her professional experience reflects a unique combination of private, public and nonprofit sector expertise at both the executive and board level, as well as a demonstrated passion for serving others. She is incredibly well versed in the education system in Illinois and her strong relationships at all levels of the Illinois school system which helps Golden Apple as we expand our reach and influence. Alicia led several substantial strategic initiatives at the Cabinet level of the nation’s third largest K-12 District - in Chicago Public Schools - and has been working in depth in education for almost a decade. She earned her B.S. in Psychology and Alcohol and Drug Abuse Studies from the University of South Dakota and earned her M.A. in Industrial / Organizational Psychology from the University of Colorado at Denver.

Alan Mather, President, joined Golden Apple in the winter of 2018, leading the education work of the organization. A native of rural Indiana, he came to Chicago in 1986 to teach high school English in the Chicago Public Schools. After more than twelve years of teaching in neighborhood high schools, Alan joined the district’s first Principal Preparation program and became the first Assistant Principal at Northside College Prep High School. After six years, Alan was named the founding principal of Lindblom Math & Science Academy, where he grew a school of 110 students to more than 1200. In his ten years at the school, Lindblom became the top performing majority African-American school in Illinois. In 2014, Alan was awarded the inaugural Stanley C. Golder Award from Golden Apple for School Leadership. He then went to serve on the CEO’s Leadership Team at CPS as the Chief of the Office of College and Career Success.

Kesa Thurman-Stovall, Chief Program Officer, joined The Golden Apple Foundation as a 1992 Golden Apple Scholar and in 2017 as full-time staff serving as Director of Mentoring with advancement to Vice President of Mentoring and Teacher Development and currently as the Chief Program Officer. She is a Crystal Apple Recipient, and has served as an educational consultant for Golden Apple as a Scholar Institute Director and Mentor to Teaching Scholars. She brings 15 years of teaching experience to Golden Apple, with roles as a K-8 instructor in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Lead Teacher and Lead Plus Teacher. In addition to her teaching experience, Kesa also served as a New Leaders Resident Principal and a highly successful Principal. Kesa is an Illinois State Board of Education Certified Evaluator and has her Professional Educators License along with her Illinois Type 75 Administrator Certification. She graduated with her M.A. in Educational Leadership from Governors State University and has her B.A. in Elementary Education from National Louis University.

Abayomi Ibrahim, Vice President of Finance, started at Golden Apple Foundation as a consultant on Accounting and Financial reporting matters reporting to the President and Chief Operating Officer in April of 2017. He later joined the Foundation as an employee on August 1, 2018 as the Vice President of Finance. Abayomi has over 25 years’ experience in not-for-profit accounting and reporting. He led the Accounting Department at Catholic Charities – Division C which included the WIC program. He later joined the Heartland Alliance for Human Rights and Human Needs as the Controller of one of its subsidiaries – Heartland Alliance for Human Needs. He was later promoted to Assistant Chief Financial Officer, a position he held for over 3 years until August 2009. Abayomi joined the Chicago School of Professional Psychology as Vice President of Finance and Controller in August 2009. He held this position until May 2011 when he left to start his own Accounting Practice. He earned his B.S. from the University of Illinois at Chicago and his M.B.A. from Northern Illinois University.

Pam Witmer, Chief of Staff, joined the organization in 2019. Pam supports the CEO and President with strategic management of the Foundation. Pam is a licensed attorney and brings an extensive history of work experience with her to Golden Apple, including roles as Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Postsecondary Education Policy at the Mayor’s Office in Chicago. As Deputy Chief of Staff, she managed the administration’s K-12 and postsecondary
education portfolio and served as mayoral liaison for Chicago’s higher education community. Prior to her work at the Mayor’s Office, Pam was a Senior Policy Manager at the Illinois Network of Charter Schools, a Legislative Analyst at StudentsFirst, and an elementary school teacher. Pam holds a Juris Doctor from Loyola University Chicago School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Rozy Patel, Director of Mentoring and Teacher Development, joined the Golden Apple community as a 2014 Fellow, and came on board as staff in 2019. Rozy is from the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), where she served as a teacher in various STEAM roles for 12 years. The majority of her tenure was spent as a 7th and 8th grade science teacher. Simultaneously while teaching, she also served as a professional development facilitator for novice science teachers through Loyola University. As a product of CPS herself, Rozy is passionate about supporting the next generation of excellent teachers. She has contributed to several global and national education initiatives, and brings a deep knowledge of instructional best practices to this role. Prior to her career in Education, Rozy held positions in the healthcare and IT fields. She holds a variety of degrees, including a Masters in Educational Leadership. Rozy currently supports Golden Apple in providing an effective mentoring program to assure the professional growth of Mentors and their Mentees, Golden Apple Scholars and Accelerators, in their initial years of teaching. Rozy considers being a teacher to be the greatest joy, and the most significant service to children.

Ann-Morgan Rowell, Manager of Program Operations, joined the Foundation in July of 2006. Ann has worked with victims of domestic violence and African American same gender loving women. She came to Golden Apple from Maria Shelter, a homeless shelter for single women and women with children. Ann’s primary role is to support the Scholars Program. She is responsible for the documentation collection from undergraduate as well as teaching Scholars. She works directly with the mentoring program ensuring that the needs of teaching Scholars and mentors are addressed appropriately.

Cynthia Watson, Manager of Mentoring, a 2007 Golden Apple Scholar, former Lincoln Park High School Assistant Principal, and current Golden Apple Mentor, joined Golden Apple as a full-time staff in April.

Caroline DiLeonardi, Director of Development & Special Events, started as a summer intern in 2018 and joined the Foundation full-time in June of 2019. Caroline graduated magna cum laude at High Point University in North Carolina and holds a Bachelors in Nonprofit Leadership and Management. Caroline supports the overall success of development efforts as well as event management of Golden Apple programs.

Bianca Aguilar, Office Manager, joined the Foundation in April of 2002. Bianca began her work with the Foundation through a pilot program that started in 2002. After the pilot program ended, she joined the Awards program as the Administrative Assistant. She is now the Office Manager and also supports other departments of the Golden Apple Foundation as needed.

Nellie Quintana, Assistant Director: Selection Golden Apple Awards & Academy, is responsible for all components of the selection process for the annual Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching and Leadership. She supports the Fellows of the Golden Apple Academy of Educators and is the communication liaison between the Academy and Golden Apple. Nellie earned her Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Sciences in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2005, she joined an alternative certification program and received her teaching licensure in elementary education.

Neal Grimes, Director of Scholar Institutes and Curriculum, joined the Golden Apple in 2018. He was first introduced to the organization in 2005 when he became a Golden Apple Scholar. Neal manages the curriculum and logistics at Scholar Institutes across Illinois. Prior to joining Golden Apple full-time, Neal participated in Scholar Institutes as a Liaison, Reflective Seminar Leader, and instructor. Neal is a Completed Scholar who has worked as a special education teacher and instructional coach. Neal has a Masters in Multi-categorical Special Education and a Masters in Educational Leadership.
Priscilla Marrero, Manager of Scholar Institutes, a 2013 Scholar and former teacher at Bronzeville Classical Elementary School in Chicago, joined Golden Apple as full-time staff in April 2022.

Cristen Lain, Director of Research, Analytics, and Accountability, focuses on making data-informed, mission-driven recommendations to the Golden Apple team. Prior to joining the Foundation, she was a National Director designing programming for an education organization. Before moving to the nonprofit sector, she served as the Academic Center Director at one of the nation's largest public, selective enrollment high schools. Cristen began her education career as a math teacher after earning her B.S. in Mathematics and Minors in Statistics and Actuarial Science from Loyola University, a M.Ed. in Teaching and Learning from DePaul University, and a Middle Grades Endorsement in Mathematics. Cristen is an Illinois State Board of Education Certified Evaluator.

Amy Jin, Manager of Research, Analytics, and Accountability, is responsible for driving data-informed analyses and decisions to propel Golden Apple's important mission. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in Economics at Boston College, where she also conducted research in the Lynch School of Education. In addition to her professional experience as a data analyst and nonprofit consultant, she consistently volunteers with several nonprofits, especially within the financial literacy and professional development space. She is currently pursuing a Master's in Public Policy and Administration at Northwestern University.

Ziggy Blackwell, Director of Recruitment, is responsible for the effort to recruit applicants to the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois Program. He develops and maintains relationships with K-12 and university partners to recruit highly-qualified and diverse candidates for the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois Program and other Golden Apple programs. Ziggy has over 10 years of college admission counseling experience. Most recently, he served as the Assistant Director of Chicago Area Recruitment at Illinois College in Jacksonville, IL. He’s also held positions at Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville and Illinois Wesleyan University. He brings a successful history of recruiting, supervising, and advising underserved and underrepresented students. He was recently recognized by the Illinois Association of College Admission Counseling (IACAC) with the Molly K. Arnold President’s Service Award and the Inclusion, Access, and Success Service Award. Ziggy is also a co-founder of Leadership, Equity, Accountability and Diversity Program (L.E.A.D) within IACAC. Ziggy holds a Masters of Education in Counseling with a concentration in College Student Development from DePaul University, and a Bachelor of Arts in English Creative Writing from Illinois College.

Rocio Manriquez, Assistant Director of Recruitment and Selection for the Scholars Program, joined the Foundation in October 1996. Rocio is responsible for supporting the recruitment process for Scholars and engaging our Master Scholar Alumni and Fellows of the Academy in the selection process of Golden Apple Scholars. She also oversees the loan repayment process for Scholars.

Colin McLaughlin, Director of Accelerators Program, joined Golden Apple in late 2019. Colin manages multiple aspects of the Accelerators Program, including recruitment, support, and placement. Before coming to Golden Apple Colin served as the Director of Undergraduate Enrollment at Greenville University, and has been part of the enrollment team of several other Illinois institutions of higher education. In addition to his time in higher education, Colin has had the pleasure of serving students for four years in the position of teacher and academic advisor at Metro-East Lutheran High School in Edwardsville, IL. Colin holds a B.S in history and an MA in Teaching, both from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Keona Roberts, Manager of Accelerators Program, serves as the Manager of the Accelerators Program for the Golden Apple Foundation. Within her role, Keona recruits aspiring career changers and college seniors who are interested in becoming teachers in southern, central and western Illinois. Keona is a graduate of Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois and has over a decade of experience as a teacher, mentor and instructional coach. She is committed to educational equity for under-represented communities and social justice.
Norma De La Rosa, Manager of Recruitment, has held roles in secondary education and higher education ranging from bilingual teacher’s assistant in special education, admissions and recruitment counselor, and academic advisor in community college and university settings. Norma earned her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a Minor in Latin American Studies from Illinois State University and her Master of Arts in Education Leadership in Higher Education from Northeastern Illinois University. In addition to the recruitment of prospective Scholars across Illinois, Norma assists in coordinating the processes for Scholar selection and supports the transition of newly inducted Scholars into the program.

Cheryl Flores, Director of Academic and Social Emotional Supports, joined the Golden Apple Foundation in 2019. Cheryl oversees the support provided to all undergraduate Scholars. Prior to joining the team at Golden Apple, Cheryl worked with schools-of-need on the southwest side of Chicago where she oversaw quality programming. She earned her Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Sciences in Psychology and Gender Women's Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago and her Master of Public Administration from DePaul University. Cheryl was also a 2019 Surge Fellow with the Surge Institute.

Jordan Lanfair, Manager of Academic and Social Emotional Supports, joined the Golden Apple Foundation in 2019. He supports the academic and social development of Scholars through partnerships with university and external partners. Jordan is a 2019 Crystal Apple Recipient, 2007 Scholar, and recipient of multiple other educational awards. He holds an Education Specialist Degree in Administration and Supervision from National Louis University, M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from Concordia University, and a B.A. in Elementary Education and Language, Pedagogy, and Culture from Knox College.

Corey Richardson, Director of Strategic Partnerships, oversees the expansion of Golden Apple’s K-12 partnerships and other external partnerships to create opportunities for Scholars to secure employment in schools-of-need in Illinois and elevate Golden Apple’s presence around the state of Illinois. Additionally, he manages the Golden Apple Associate Board & volunteer engagement opportunity to increase the awareness for Golden Apple. Before joining the Foundation in 2014, he served as the regional admission counselor for Western Illinois University & Northwestern Business College. He received his B.S. in Psychology from the University of Saint Francis and holds a M.A. in Leadership Studies in Higher Education Administration from North Central College.

Talyia Eve Riemer, Director of Placement and Alumni Relations, facilitates best fit job placements for graduating Scholars as well as re-engages completed Scholars in the ongoing work of the Foundation. After earning a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Western Illinois University, Talyia earned a Master's Degree from Olivet Nazarene University, and then in 2004 Doctorate Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Loyola University Chicago. For over 20 years, she served as a sixth grade teacher and Curriculum Specialist at Daniel Boone Elementary School. In 2013, she joined the Chicago Public Schools Department of Teaching and Learning, as a Framework Specialist, a role through which she designed and delivered professional development and training to fellow CPS teachers. In 2014, Talyia began teaching courses at DePaul University Chicago and Dominican University to young men and women aspiring to become teachers. In 2016 she transitioned into the role of the International Baccalaureate Programme coordinator and assistant principal of Helen C Peirce School of International Studies.

Jasmine Jones, Manager of Placement and Alumni Relations, supports the management of K-12 partnerships to ensure Golden Apple Scholars and their schools-of-need have the best provisions to maximize student success. She also actively engages the larger Golden Apple community to ensure Scholars attain sufficient school placements and to increase and sustain alumni engagement in the work of the foundation. After receiving her Bachelor of Arts in Clinical Psychology and minor in Sociology from St. Xavier University ('11), she served with AmeriCorps’ City Year Chicago then went on to work for nonprofits dedicated to promoting holistic learning experiences, family engagement programs, and parent leadership training.