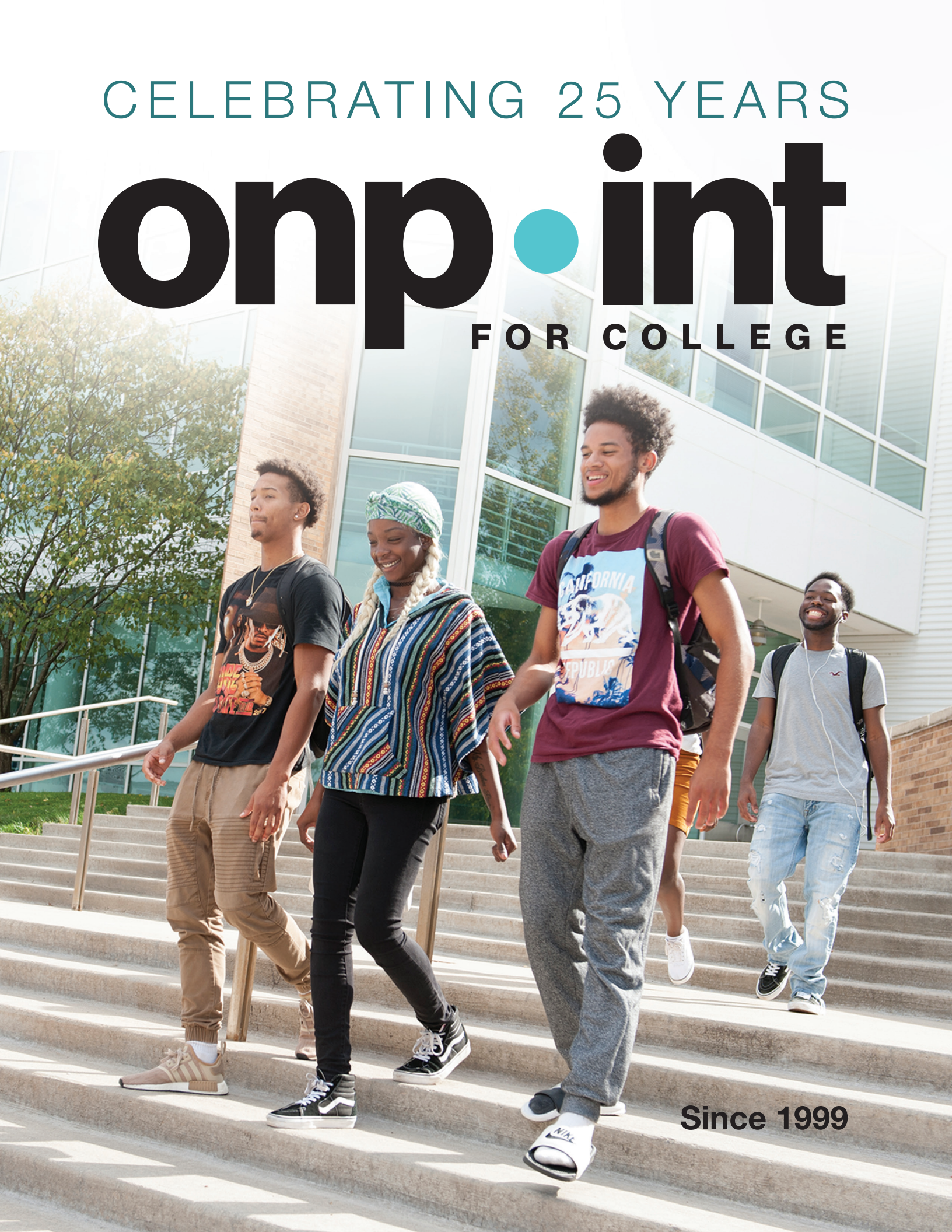


CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

**onp•int**  
FOR COLLEGE



Since 1999

MESSAGE FROM  
**Samuel Rowser**  
*Executive Director*  
*On Point For College*



# Serving a Critical Need in Our Community

## OUR MISSION:

We break down barriers that prevent young, underserved individuals from achieving education and career success.

## OUR VISION:

To transform communities by making college, training, and career success a reality for those who face great obstacles.

On Point for College is poised to support Central New York's growth and development, helping it to become the most prosperous community we can imagine. Our history demonstrates On Point's ability to impact thousands of lives. Our alumni are emerging leaders in all disciplines across our community—from skilled trades to law enforcement, nonprofits to first response, small businesses to corporations, education to government, Common Councils to school boards. On Point has supported the success of thousands of students who, in turn, have improved our local community and economy.

On Point's impact is exponential, especially as we've expanded services to six counties across Central New York. From urban to rural, On Point is transforming lives and communities. We currently have offices within three school districts, and we're working on contracts to serve five more. Our services support students' abilities to complete their programs and eventually gain meaningful employment. Through On Point's three-pillar approach—Access, Success, and Career Services—we support first-generation students going to college and transitioning to the workforce. None of this work happens without the generous support of our community. The saying is it takes a village. We say Keep it On Point.

*Thank you to volunteers who assisted our staff in creating this 25th Anniversary magazine: Cristina Hatem, Gloria Heffernan, Tom Sandak, and Marianne Schreyer.*

# In the Beginning

by Ginny Donohue, Founder of On Point for College

On Point for College began from the trunk of a car.

In 1991, my daughter told me she had promised a friend that her mom would get him into college. I had no experience, but I did help him get into college and the word spread. Other students began to stop me in the grocery store to ask for my help. The students were in a program for chronically homeless youth. For eight years, I went on college visits, helped with applications, and got them bedding, backpacks, clothes, and bus tickets. When one of the students asked me, "What is your dream—your passion?" I quit my corporate job and started On Point for College. My dream was to help 1,000 students who never dreamed college was possible enroll in college.

A year and a half later, I met Sam Rowser, who had more college admission experience than me. We were a team of two. We met at Burger King every morning to plan the day. Our trunks were loaded with college applications and brochures. We visited Catholic Charities Centers, the Southwest Community Center, and Boys and Girls Clubs. Catholic Charities liked our mission and gave us an office for free for six years, smack in the middle of senior services.

A community that cared stepped up: mentors, drivers, campus angels, donors, board members, lay Ignatian volunteers. They provided rides, bedding, vans, tutoring, textbooks, housing deposits, winter coats, dentistry, help in the community centers, summer housing, job fairs, and college supplies.

We counted among our volunteers high school teachers, college professors, businesspeople, doctors, dentists, retirees, and even a former mayor of Syracuse, Tom Young. One volunteer, retired-veterinarian Paul Goetchius, has driven over 65,000 miles for On Point. That's the equivalent of driving around the globe about two and a half times.

I had no clue what courage, determination, and resiliency were until I met our students. Talent is evenly distributed across the world, but opportunity is not. Our students and graduates have overcome unbelievable obstacles to follow their dreams. They are leaders in healthcare, education, business, and governance. When I retired and passed the torch to Sam, we had enrolled 8,700 students in college, and that number is even larger today.



MY FAVORITE QUOTE:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has."

—Margaret Mead

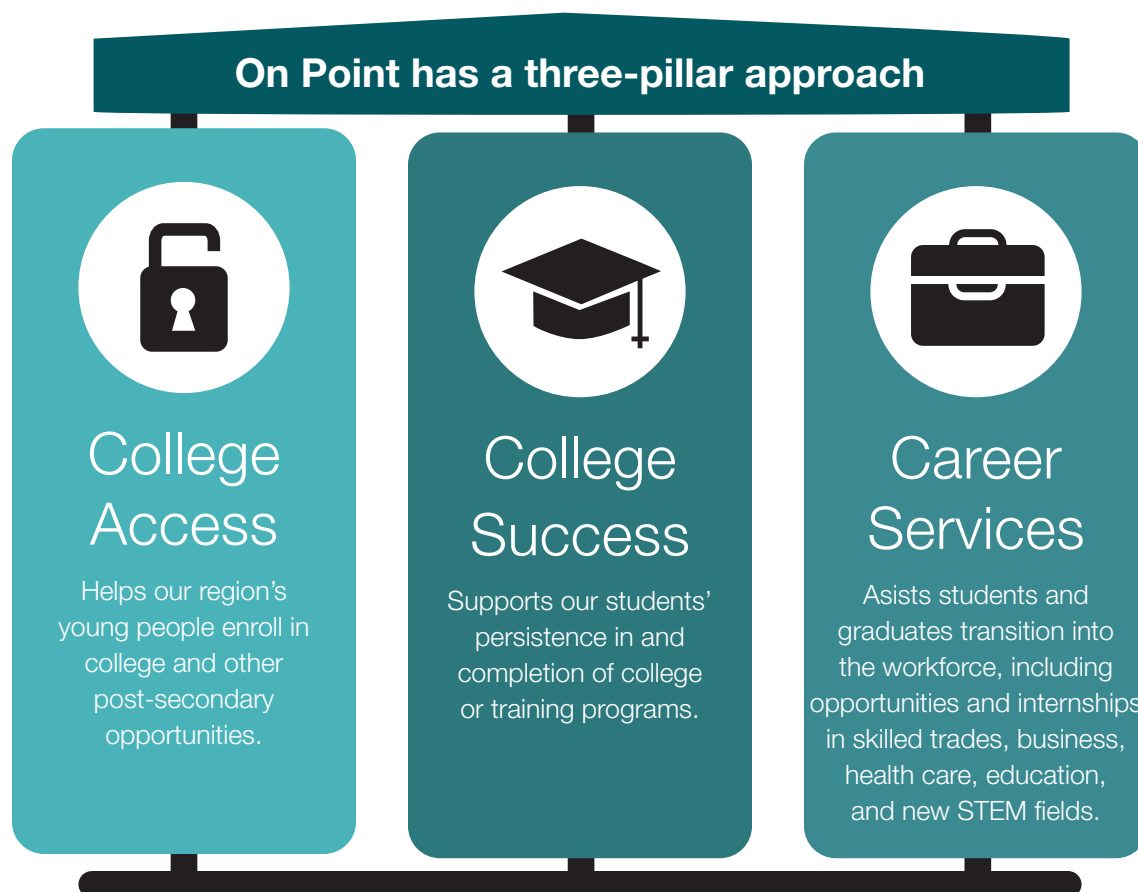


Top: SUNY Oswego graduation 2013. Ginny and husband John Donohue with South Sudanese Lost Boy and graduate James Kiki, who now works at On Point.

Bottom: Ginny with On Point student Muslima Ali at her SUNY Plattsburgh graduation. Muslima was the first woman from the Somali Bantu community in Utica to go to college. She got her bachelor's degree in 3½ years with a 3.87 GPA.

# Making an Impact and Meeting Student Needs

On Point's advising staff connects with underserved students to provide them with the information and resources they need to achieve their educational and career goals through college and other post-secondary training programs, fostering workforce development in our region.



**SERVING  
6 Counties**

Cayuga, Herkimer, Madison Oneida, Onondaga, and Oswego, plus partnerships with two agencies in New York City.

**6,258  
Degrees Earned**

Since 1999, over 4,500 On Point students have earned more than 6,000 degrees, resulting in over \$3 billion in increased lifetime earnings. Our staff currently supports over 2,500 students.

# On Point **By the Numbers**

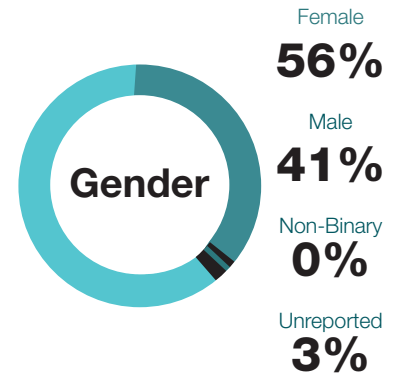
Demographic data from April 1999-August 2024

## Age at Sign-up

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Youth (13-18)       | 61% |
| Young Adult (19-22) | 21% |
| Adult (23-54)       | 17% |
| Senior (55+)        | 0%  |
| Unreported          | 0%  |

## Race

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 0%  |
| Asian                         | 9%  |
| Black or African-American     | 56% |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  | 0%  |
| White                         | 11% |
| Other                         | 7%  |
| Unreported                    | 15% |



## Access & Success

**4546**

Total Graduates

**1194**

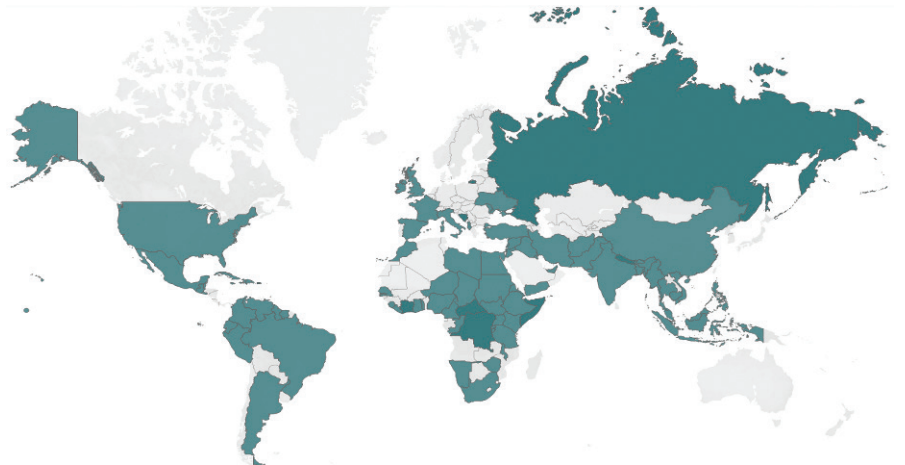
Recent New Sign-ups

September 2023 – August 2024

**72.8%**

Persistence Rate

Students who remain in college after  
first semester from Fall 2022 – 2023



**86 Countries of Origin**

Countries shown in color represent students' native countries since 1999



### TOP 10 SCHOOLS

by number of  
On Point graduates  
since 1999

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Onondaga Community College      | 550 |
| Mohawk Valley Community College | 410 |
| Syracuse University             | 171 |
| Le Moyne College                | 127 |
| SUNY Polytechnic Institute      | 92  |
| SUNY College at Oswego          | 82  |
| Utica University                | 64  |
| SUNY at Buffalo (UB)            | 63  |
| SUNY Empire State College       | 55  |
| Cayuga County Community College | 45  |

## Career Services

September 2023 – August 2024

**1100**

Active Students

**245**

Recent Obtained  
Opportunities



Marcus Webb



Shadayvia Wallace



Thaismary Morales



Bikash & Kumari Regmi

# Alumni Perspectives

## Marcus Webb

### Assistant Director

Ichor Life Sciences • Syracuse, NY

Marcus Webb would not be where he is today without On Point for College. “I owe my professional and academic success to On Point,” says Marcus. “Supporters should know that their contributions are truly making a revolutionary difference, fostering future leaders, and positively altering the trajectories of the program's participants.”

Marcus is an Assistant Director at Ichor Life Sciences, a biotech company in Syracuse, NY. He assists with portfolio management and supports the company's marketing initiatives and planning for facilities. He earned an associate degree from Onondaga Community College, graduating Cum Laude in 2017. He continued his education at Syracuse University, earning a bachelor's degree in business administration 2019, and a Master of Business Administration focusing on entrepreneurship and marketing in 2022.

## Shadayvia Wallace

### Associate Director of the BIPOC Community, Program Director for the Martin Luther King Scholarship and First-Generation Center

Ithaca College • Ithaca, NY

Shadayvia Wallace pursued a career in higher education because of her involvement with On Point for College and her experiences at Keuka College. She understands first-hand what it means to be a first-generation student and person of color. She recognizes that those students need support to access resources and have an equitable opportunity to be successful.

Born and raised in Syracuse, Shadayvia graduated from Syracuse Academy of Science in 2011 and earned a bachelor's degree in political science and history, with a minor in communication studies, from Keuka College in 2015. In 2017, she completed her master's degree in post-secondary higher education from Syracuse University.

## Thaismary Morales

### Health and Safety Officer

University of Central Florida • Orlando, FL

Thaismary Morales didn't anticipate when she graduated from Fowler High School in 2002 that she would be working in higher education more than twenty years later. But it was Thaismary's journey that inspired On Point to expand its career services program. “I went to Sam [Rowser] and said, ‘I'm having trouble finding a job in my field.’ That conversation led to an opportunity at the engineering firm, O'Brien and Gere. And it was the catalyst for On Point to begin offering a comprehensive program to assist graduates with job placement, resume services, interviewing skills, internships, and more.

Thaismary completed her bachelor's degree in sciences with a concentration in Environmental Health and Safety from Stony Brook University in 2007.

## Bikash & Kumari Regmi

### Nurse Practitioners

Caring Family Health • North Syracuse, NY

Bikash and Kumari Regmi came to the United States as refugees from Bhutan. They met while volunteering at Catholic Charities in Syracuse after spending seventeen years in separate refugee camps in Nepal. Fleeing persecution in their homeland, they arrived in the United States with virtually no possessions. Still, they carried with them a profound drive for education and a desire to help those in need in their new homeland. They attended nursing school at St. Elizabeth's College of Nursing in Utica and, from there, entered the BS/MS Accelerated Program at SUNY Polytechnic Institute, where they both received Graduate Diversity Fellowships. They are grateful to Kevin Marken and the staff at On Point for College Utica for providing the guidance and persistence that led to those scholarships.

In 2023, they opened their own clinic, Caring Family Health Nurse Practitioner PLLC, a family practice in North Syracuse that now serves over 1,100 patients with a staff of 40.

# On Point's Turning Points in History



On Point for College is founded and begins operating from the trunk of Ginny Donohue's car.

On Point moves into its first office, a single room at Catholic Charities. The first On Point graduate, Christopher Scott, earns his associate degree in computer information services from Onondaga Community College.



Andrea Lawson and Terrence Byrd-El become the first students to complete the entire college process—from application through graduation—with On Point's help when they graduate from the College at Brockport and the University at Albany, respectively.

The 100th On Point for College graduate earns their degree.

On Point opens an office in Utica, NY and partners with agencies in New York City.

1999

2000

2001

2003

2004

2006

2007

2008

2012

On Point holds its first staff meeting at Burger King and the inaugural class of 26 students enrolls in college.



Marcus Smith becomes On Point's first Ivy League and master's degree graduate in health administration from Cornell University. In 2009, Marcus would become the first graduate hired as an On Point advisor.

Starsky Robinson earns On Point's first bachelor's degree in rhetoric and communication from the University at Albany.



On Point begins offering career counseling services. On Point graduate and South Sudanese "Lost Boy" Lopez Lomong carries the flag for the United States at the Summer Olympics in Beijing, China.





On Point Syracuse moves to a new office at Onondaga Commons and expands its services to cover 6 counties across Central New York. Shanté White becomes On Point's first medical doctor when she graduates from the University at Buffalo. Utica student and Hamilton College graduate Marquis Palmer becomes the first On Point student to be named recipient of both a Fulbright Award and a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship.



On Point celebrates 15 years of changing lives degree by degree. The 1,000th On Point for College graduate earns their degree. Dimitrie Vaughn earns On Point's first Ph.D. in chemistry from Penn State University.

On Point pivots to online services during the COVID-19 pandemic, successfully adapting traditionally in-person services to web-based outreach. Hamilton College graduate Marquis Palmer does it again, this time winning the coveted Marshall Scholarship to study at SOAS, University of London.

On Point turns 25 and surpasses 4,500 college graduates and nearly 6,000 college degrees.

2013

2014

2017

2018

2019

2020

2023

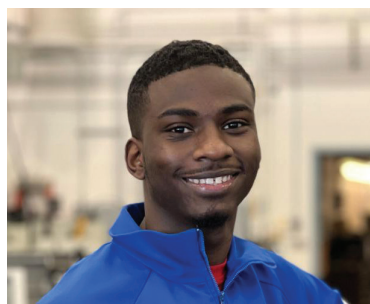
2024

On Point surpasses 2,000 college graduates.

In recognition of their work towards advancing higher education in Central New York, On Point leadership is invited to meet then-President Barack Obama. Danny Essadiq earns On Point's first juris doctorate when he graduates from Syracuse University College of Law.



On Point celebrates 20 years of transforming lives and communities as it approaches 2,500 college graduates.



Despite a decline in new student enrollment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, On Point's graduation rate remains strong. Micron Technology's arrival in Central New York leads to a new workforce development partnership for On Point for College.

# Staff Insights

## What does it mean to you to be On Point?



Cielle Tovey

*Advisor, Oswego Student Services*

“On Point means many things to me... I am always On Point.”

“Oswego County has many homeless families and many students who have moved out of their parent's houses for different reasons. I believe many of these students would either not attempt to attend college or drop out soon after entering without On Point's support.... Hearing from the first group of students I worked with that they had completed and, in some cases, excelled in their first year of college was tremendous.

I had a high school senior from a rural part of Oswego County that I worked with in 2023 who had a tumultuous relationship with his parents. He is an awesome person, but his parents just had no interest in him and his plans for college. I helped him with every step, from FAFSA to the first day of classes (and beyond). As he moved into his off-campus apartment, his parents told him not to return. I try to make sure that he has everything he needs to succeed.”



Leigh Petryssyn

*Director of College Success*

“It's being open to making mistakes and learning and growing from them. It's understanding that success is non-linear, and every little interaction is a form of success.”

“A big part of success is providing transportation, books, and the opportunity to take summer and winter classes. Without these services, students would have difficulty going back and forth to school during breaks. They wouldn't have the materials they need to be successful or the funding to keep moving towards their degree. Financial aid often doesn't cover mid-semester classes, but these students may need to take them for remediation or to remain on track. I'm motivated because I have a job where I know I'm making a difference.”



## Nadia Ingram

*Advisor, Syracuse Student Services*

“To me, it means knowing what you’re doing, why you’re doing it, and how you can help/guide others in your own unique way!”

“I’ve had students come into my office just wanting a second chance to get things right, and I have worked to make that happen. I’m glad to be a part of that because resilience is always more beneficial than giving up.”



## Rose Lynch

*Office Assistant, Syracuse*

“It’s about making an impact and paying it forward.”

“My job is making sure the office environment is always peaceful and that everyone is helped. Allowing students to be seen and heard is how I make a difference in their lives.”



## Dexter Green

*Career Services Advisor, Syracuse Student Services*

“It serves as a constant reminder to strive to be the best version of yourself and to bring that authentic self to your team every day.”

“I’ve found that meaningful conversations make a significant difference. Many students appreciate coming into my office and using various resources to facilitate these conversations. For instance, I often use a small set of reflection cards that allow us to pause, reflect, and then engage in meaningful discussions even before diving into specific career services. This approach helps students explore their interests and goals more deeply and builds trust and understanding, enhancing our work together.

The work we do at On Point requires passion and dedication. Without it, students miss vital connections and the confidence to seek assistance, creating barriers and discouraging them from accessing the support they need to succeed. Our work helps break down these barriers and fosters an environment where students feel empowered to confidently pursue their educational and career goals.”

# Employer Perspective

## Vicki Brackens

**President, Brackens Financial Solutions Network, LLC**

I keep coming back to On Point because I know the product. It's homegrown talent, and we should support it. So, I would say to every business, if you are trying to stretch what you are doing or research what you need to do, you should get an intern from On Point to help you make that dream come true. Every intern we've worked with has been a joy, so it made it very easy for us to continue to support the organization.

## Rob Simpson

**President and CEO, CenterState CEO**

While we build the Central New York economy, we understand that for us to be successful and sustainable, all boats need to rise. We want to create a place where business thrives, and all people prosper. On Point is the glue that holds so many of our community organizations together, connecting students who often come from disadvantaged backgrounds with employers who need talent. That opportunity to make these connections creates so much value for Central New York, not only helping these students get a leg up but also helping our businesses stay competitive in an environment where talent is everything. The skills that students get by working with On Point for College through internships with local businesses are so important to their long-term future. It gives them the confidence to go out and find a job, to keep a job, and to be able to earn a living that helps support their family but also contributes to the Central New York economy long into the future. As an employer ourselves, we've had multiple students who have come from On Point for College do internships at CenterState CEO, some of whom have ended up taking full-time jobs with us. On Point is such a phenomenal partner; we hope and encourage all of you to join them and partner with them as well.

## Dr. Linda LeMura

**President, Le Moyne College**

We love On Point! Not only because it was founded by a Le Moyne alumna, Ginny Donohue, but also because the relationship between On Point for College and Le Moyne is profound. We are so proud to be affiliated with On Point because it provides a beacon of hope, not only for the students it serves but also for all of us who care very much about improving the lives of young people.

**“The skills that students get by working with On Point for College through internships with local businesses are so important to their long-term future.”**

## Ben Walsh

**Mayor, City of Syracuse**

I am grateful that we have On Point for College to support young people in our community. One of my goals as mayor was to build summer youth employment programs, and in On Point for College, we found a great partner to help us do that. It gives me so much hope and excitement about the future of our community. These young people came up in our city, came through our city schools, and are now in a position, thanks to On Point, to give back to the city that they grew up in. It's what makes me so optimistic and so hopeful about the future of our community.



## Chris Caver

**Global Recruiting and Onboarding Process Owner  
at National Grid, On Point for College Alumnus,  
Member On Point for College Board of Directors**

As a first-generation college student, On Point for College provided the support, guidance, and resources to help me navigate the challenges of higher education. I graduated from the University at Albany in 2006 and earned an MBA from the Dowling College Townsend School of Business in 2012. As the Global Recruiting and Onboarding Process Owner at National Grid in Syracuse, I work with HR professionals across the United States and United Kingdom on continuous improvement of human resource administration processes.

On Point for College provided me with networking opportunities, mentorship, and professional development resources and has helped me build valuable skills and community connections. I'm confident that when we hire other On Point for College alumni, they're bringing the same skills and support with them.



2023



2024

## On Point Sends the First CNY Students to Micron's Manassas, VA Facility

In August of 2023 and 2024, On Point for College, with community partner Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection, sent the first busloads of students to the Micron chip fabrication facility in Manassas, Virginia. Through a variety of activities and initiatives, On Point seeks to provide pathways to careers in the semiconductor industry. During the August 2023 trip, then-Clarkson student Fatime Abakar Khatir Adam became the first On Point for College student to be offered an internship with Micron.

# Donor Impact



## Dr. Shanté White

Dr. Shanté White is On Point for College's first MD. She is a pediatric anesthesiologist at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY, and an On Point alumni donor. Dr. White makes

an automatic monthly, recurring gift to On Point allowing the organization to better plan its student support. Monthly, recurring gifts can be set up on the On Point for College website, [onpointforcollege.org](http://onpointforcollege.org).

Shanté started giving to On Point when she completed her bachelor's degree because On Point had been so supportive in getting her into school, helping her stay focused, and providing the assistance she needed to graduate and move on to the next phase of her educational experience.

"Giving a recurring monthly gift is easy because it makes me feel like I'm paying it forward," said Shanté. "As my financial situation has changed, I have increased the amount I've given over time. I feel good knowing that through my donations, On Point can help create opportunities for others who might have had a similar experience as me."



## Darlene Graff

Darlene Graff is a learner by nature, and as a first-generation college student, she knows personally how life-changing an education can be. Growing up in Akron, NY, Darlene was one of

seven children of parents who started their family while still in their teens.

She first learned about On Point for College at her church and while working as the Assistant Director of Enrollment Management at Onondaga Community College. When she attended On Point's Celebration dinner, Darlene saw the organization's impact on students.

Giving to On Point is important to Darlene because she knows how critical good advising is to a young person. "If it weren't for my high school advisor, I never would have thought I could get into computer science at SUNY Potsdam in the late 1960s, have a wonderful career, and raise my children with the expectation that they would also go to college," said Darlene.

Darlene heard about making a Qualified Charitable Distribution through a presentation at her church, and her financial advisor confirmed it is a good strategy. Through her gift, Darlene will help ensure that other first-generation students like herself will find educational and career opportunities.



## Steve and Elaine Jacobs

One of the goals of Elaine and Steve Jacobs' legacy plan at the Central New York Community Foundation is to help young

people seeking to realize a better life through education. Their plan highlights On Point for College as the type of mission-driven organization they want to support, with excellent leadership and stewardship of financial assets. Elaine and Steve have contributed to On Point directly and through their Donor Advised Fund at the Foundation. Steve says, "Elaine and I believe the best use of a charitable dollar is to provide someone seeking a better life with the necessary resources and support to achieve success. Youth education is a priority for our philanthropic giving, so we are happy to support On Point's work. Our financial success came from this community. So, we feel it's important to give back by supporting organizations here."



### Scan to Donate

Visit [onpointforcollege.org/donate](http://onpointforcollege.org/donate), or call Lynne Pascale at 315-399-3129.

MESSAGE FROM

## Michael Humphrey

*Chair of the Board of Directors  
CEO of Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists*



# Where Do We Go From Here?

**The 25th anniversary is an opportunity to recognize what On Point has accomplished. It is also a springboard for future achievements.**

As we look to the future of On Point for College, the Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that a strong, engaged group of community leaders stands ready to guide the organization to the next level. We invite corporate leaders, high impact individuals, and community stakeholders from our expanded service area of Cayuga, Herkimer, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties to join the On Point family and pursue our mission. Whether you know someone who can benefit from On Point's services, you want to volunteer to support On Point students, or you're able to donate to help On Point pursue its mission, we welcome you. We're excited to collaborate with community, government, and civic leaders to prepare our students for the anticipated growth of our region. It's an exciting time for On Point to expand programs to serve thousands more emerging adults poised to be valuable members of our communities. We need engagement from YOU to continue to make an impact on thousands of students in our communities.

### **On Point needs YOUR help to:**

- Grow new partnership agreements with public and charter high schools throughout our service area to increase the pool of student recipients.
- Increase the number of students from underserved communities who pursue post-secondary education, with more campus outreach, advocacy around issues, and facilitation of textbook, gap, and last-dollar funding.
- Expand On Point's full suite of services into rural areas of Central New York with additional staff to support our work, resulting in more pathways for students to college access, success, direct-to-work, and career services.
- Partner with employers to build a diverse pipeline of future workers for the region's growing and emerging industries, including general science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields and microchip fabrication.
- Increase the number of diverse workers in the local economy through On Point Career Services, offering more technology-focused internships and student education on STEM and advanced manufacturing opportunities.
- Reduce poverty levels for many individuals and families in our community through On Point's services, increasing family and household income for our graduates.



For more information or to get involved,  
please contact us at:

**SYRACUSE OFFICE:**

488 W. Onondaga St.  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
315-362-5003

**UTICA OFFICE:**

2608 Genesee St., Suite 1  
Utica, NY 13502  
315-790-5588

[onpointforcollege.org](https://onpointforcollege.org)



## On Point hosted its 25th Anniversary Celebration at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown on June 20th, 2024

Two hundred seventy-five guests attended, including current and former board members, students, alumni, staff, political and community leaders, and volunteers. The Celebration event has been a critical fund- and friend-raiser for On Point since 2003. The Utica office also hosts a separate Celebration in November and has done so since 2016. The Celebration event is an opportunity to tell student stories, recognize outstanding student efforts, and acknowledge those in the community who have helped the On Point staff further its mission. Check out videos of student stories online on the On Point for College YouTube channel, [youtube.com/OnPointForCollege](https://youtube.com/OnPointForCollege).



**Scan for On Point student stories**

Visit [youtube.com/OnPointForCollege](https://youtube.com/OnPointForCollege)

