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TEACHFORAMERICA

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TEACH FOR AMERICA WELCOMES MOST DIVERSE TALENT IN 25-YEAR HISTORY

Half of 5,300 Incoming Teachers Identify as People of Color; Nearly Half Come From a Low-Income Background; One-Third Are Graduate Students or Professionals

NEW YORK CITY, August 11, 2014—Teach For America announced today that its 25th teaching corps, which numbers 5,300, is the most diverse in the nonprofit's history.

The organization has seen that effective teachers come from all backgrounds and academic interests, and bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the classroom. Teach For America also has found that maximizing diversity supports its effort to attract the top talent our country has to offer. Among the new corps members:

- 50 percent identify as people of color, compared with less than 20 percent of all teachers nationwide (according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#)).
- 47 percent received Pell Grants, a reliable indicator of low-income background.
- One-third are the first in their families to attend college.
- 22 percent identify as African American.
- 13 percent identify as Hispanic.
- 6 percent identify as Asian American or Pacific Islander.
- 1 percent identify as Native.
- 33 percent come to the corps from graduate school or with professional experience.
- 100 are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The ongoing changes Teach For America makes to its recruiting and selection efforts contributed to the increase in diverse talent. The organization is known for attracting individuals with impressive professional, academic, and leadership experience, and has long recognized the potential of teachers who share students' backgrounds to serve as critical classroom leaders and role models. Over 80 percent of students at the more than 3,000 public schools partnering with Teach For America identify as African American or Latino and more than 75 percent are eligible for the federal lunch program.

"Educational inequity is a solvable problem, but it's clear that we don't yet have all of the solutions in place to combat the effects of systemic issues like racism and poverty," said Matt Kramer, co-chief executive officer of Teach For America. "A teaching force with a diverse set of backgrounds, perspectives, and paths into the classroom is more likely to develop innovative ideas and collaborative solutions in partnership with communities. That's a big part of the Teach For America approach."

"We're proud that our incoming corps is more diverse than it's ever been," said Elisa Villanueva Beard, co-chief executive officer of Teach For America. "We know that teachers from all backgrounds can have a meaningful impact on their students' trajectories, and we're grateful that our new corps brings tremendous talent, along with a wider range of personal and professional experience than ever before."

Teach For America's applicant pool this year was its most diverse to date. Almost half of the more than 50,000 applicants identify as people of color, nearly half received Pell Grants, and more than one-third were the first in their family to attend college. Applicants included 13 percent of graduating seniors at Spelman College; 7 percent at Princeton University and Morehouse College; 6 percent at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor; 5 percent at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and 3 percent at the University of Texas at Austin.

Teach For America launched two annual recruiting campaigns this year to help build the talent and diversity of its applicant pool. In concert with its support of the DREAM Act, Teach For America partnered with schools and districts to create a path to teaching for individuals with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status. Forty individuals with DACA status joined the 2014 corps and will be teaching across 10 regions. Teach For America's inaugural "[Dream. Rise. Do](#)" campaign, launched in February, is designed to encourage more African American men to consider teaching. The campaign promotes multiple pathways into the profession, and in its first month, more than 20,000 people signed the campaign pledge.

Teach For America also invested in building the talent and diversity of its applicant pool in other ways, including reaching out to and meeting individually with many more potential applicants, increasing outreach to professionals from all sectors, and developing additional partnerships with diverse organizations.

Teach For America continuously refines its approach to selecting candidates, informed by ongoing observation of the skills and practices of its most successful educators. The selection process is focused on identifying candidate strengths, and Teach For America has seen that educators can succeed with various combinations of skills and experiences. Some of the areas of strength that Teach For America looks for include a deep belief in the potential of all kids, often informed by experience in low-income communities; leadership; past achievement; perseverance in challenging situations; long-term commitment to reaching goals; excellent organization and critical-thinking skills; strong interpersonal skills; and an ability to work with individuals from a variety of backgrounds.

Each year, Teach For America selects areas to study further to better understand its most effective teachers, and this year research was done on the impact of an applicant's experience in low-income communities and his or her effort and determination to reach goals over time. Findings in these areas led the organization to place more emphasis on gathering insight into these two elements during the admissions process, which has contributed to a more diverse corps this year.

"I value the partnership of organizations like Teach For America because they recognize the importance of dedicated teachers who reflect the diverse backgrounds of students in urban and rural communities across the country," said Dr. Nikolai Vitti, superintendent of Duval County Public Schools in Florida. "Here in Jacksonville, we're committed to drawing high-quality teachers to our highest-need schools, and we know that teachers who bring a diversity of experiences and perspectives to their work enrich our students' learning, as well as connect with our families and communities in critical ways."

Teach For America admissions remained highly selective, with an acceptance rate this year of 15 percent. The incoming corps has an average GPA of 3.4 and includes alumni of more than 850 colleges and universities across the country. Corps members include more than 30 student-body presidents, more than 30 Posse Foundation scholars, 10 Hispanic Scholarship Fund recipients or finalists, and nine Gates Millennium Scholars. Seventeen percent of incoming corps members have backgrounds in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) fields.

Teach For America, an AmeriCorps program, is seeing a significant number of corps members continuing their commitment to service. Many have participated in other professional and volunteer AmeriCorps programs, including more than 380 who volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, more than 100 who served with City Year, and 80 who volunteered in pre-K classrooms with Jumpstart.

The 5,300 new teachers will join second-year corps members for a total corps of 10,600. These teachers will work with students in high-need classrooms across 50 regions in 35 states and the District of Columbia, including communities in two new locations: Buffalo, New York; and the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina.

A growing body of rigorous independent research demonstrates that Teach For America teachers are having a positive impact in the classroom. Most recently, a [report](#) by Mathematica Policy Research found that students taught by Teach For America corps members made gains in math equivalent to an additional 2.6 months of learning annually. The 2013 Tennessee Higher Education Commission [report card](#) identified Teach For America as one of the state's most effective sources of teachers for the third year running. These findings are consistent with similar statewide studies in [North Carolina](#) and [Louisiana](#).

Teach For America corps members develop a lifelong commitment to expanding educational opportunity. A community of 37,000 Teach For America alumni work across a range of fields as advocates and allies for students in low-income communities. Nearly 90 percent of alumni work in education or with low-income communities. Some 30 percent of alumni are P-12 teachers, and one-third are working in other education roles, including principals, deans, and superintendents.

About Teach For America

Teach For America works in partnership with communities to expand educational opportunity for children facing the challenges of poverty. Founded in 1990, Teach For America recruits and develops a diverse corps of outstanding college graduates and professionals to make an initial two-year commitment to teach in high-need schools and become lifelong leaders in the movement to end educational inequity. This fall, 10,600 corps members will be teaching in 50 urban and rural regions across the country while 37,000 alumni work across sectors to ensure that all children have access to an excellent education. For more information, visit www.teachforamerica.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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