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KELLY MARIE TRAN, ALLAN HOUSTON, AND SCOTT M. MILLS HONORED AT THE OPPORTUNITY NETWORK'S 12th ANNUAL NIGHT OF OPPORTUNITY GALA
Event at Cipriani Wall Street Celebrates 16 Years of Educational and Professional Opportunity for Students

New York, NY (April 8, 2019) — On Monday, April 8th, [The Opportunity Network](http://TheOpportunityNetwork.org), a New York City nonprofit working with students from underrepresented communities to develop the skills, knowledge, and mindsets to achieve their college and career goals, hosted their 12th annual *Night of Opportunity* at Cipriani Wall Street on 55 Wall Street in New York.

This year's event honored actress **Kelly Marie Tran**, BET Networks President **Scott M. Mills**, NBA All-Star **Allan Houston**, and several of OppNet's incredible student Fellows.



From L to R: President of BET Networks Scott M. Mills, Founder and CEO of The Opportunity Network Jessica Pliska, Actress Kelly Marie Tran, NBA All-Star Allan Houston, and Chairman of OppNet's Board of Directors Daniel O'Keefe (Credit: Sylvain Gaboury/PMC)

The record-breaking crowd of 1000 guests from the finance, entertainment, philanthropy, media, and business industries gathered to raise over **\$2.6 million**, a historic first for the organization, to expand its work of connecting students to college and career opportunity, and help scale the impact of that work for as many New York City students as possible.

Founder and CEO of The Opportunity Network **Jessica Pliska** kicked off the event with an invitation to OppNet's entire community to come together and "build a future where resources and circumstances do not have power over college and career success."

Themes of community, growth, and collective impact in service of student success ran throughout the evening. Graduating OppNet Fellow, Occidental College senior, and Student

Opportunity Award Recipient Dean Lin said in his acceptance remarks that “looking back, I’m so proud that high school kid found OppNet, and found people who truly believed in his potential.” The evening featured remarks from OppNet leadership, this year’s honorees, and other OppNet students engaging in the organization’s signature Fellows program.



From L to R: President of BET Networks Scott M. Mills, OppNet Student Awardees Uma and Dean, Founder and CEO of The Opportunity Network Jessica Pliska, Actress Kelly Marie Tran, NBA All-Star Allan Houston, and Chairman of OppNet’s Board of Directors Daniel O’Keefe
(Credit: Sylvain Gaboury/PMC)

In her acceptance speech, 2019 Night of Opportunity Honoree **Kelly Marie Tran** connected her personal experience as a first-generation college student to OppNet’s mission of igniting the tenacity and passions of underrepresented students when she said, “Because if your experience is anything like mine, whether it’s at college or elsewhere, you will one day find yourself sitting in a room full of people who don’t look like you, who don’t speak like you, who don’t understand your experience. And it is in that moment – when the world tells you to feel confused, doubtful, and ashamed – that I want you to remember this truth: you are doing an impossible thing. You are breaking invisible barriers, you are overcoming unjust obstacles, and you are changing the world. And that is nothing to be confused, doubtful, or ashamed about, it is something to be celebrated.”

Founded in 2003 by Brian Weinstein and Jessica Pliska, The Opportunity Network’s track record of success over the last 16 years is marked by a steadfast commitment to guiding students from historically underrepresented communities to college and through graduation, and connecting them to robust professional opportunities along the way by facilitating paid summer internships and academic enrichment programs, training students in key mindsets and practices in professionalism, and equipping them with the skills to build powerful professional and personal networks.

92 percent of OppNet students graduate from college – compared with less than 20 percent of students from underrepresented and low-income communities nationwide – and within six months of graduation, 89 percent of OppNet students are admitted to graduate school or find meaningful employment, far exceeding national trends.

This year, The Opportunity Network is actively pursuing its ambitious growth trajectory of serving more than 1000 students in its Fellows program by 2021, and accelerating the number of organizations and schools served through its Career Fluency® Partnerships program, the organization's immersive national capacity-building program that trains teachers, guidance counselors, and practitioners to best support students in reaching their college and career goals.

Through the success of this year's *Night of Opportunity*, President and Chief Operating Officer of The Opportunity Network AiLun Ku said, "OppNet is now able to propel its work to maximize the promise of college and career opportunity. The investment made tonight has a significant multiplier effect on the work we do at OppNet and how that work can bloom and expand in the lives of students."

For more information please visit: www.opportunitynetwork.org.

About The Opportunity Network

The Opportunity Network (OppNet) connects students from historically and systematically underrepresented communities to college access and success, internships, career opportunities, and personal and professional networks. 92 percent of OppNet students graduate from college and 89 percent secure meaningful employment or graduate school admission within six months of graduation, far exceeding national trends.

OppNet accomplishes this through its two programs, our founding OppNet Fellows program, an intensive six-year experience for students beginning the summer after 10th grade that cultivates students' passions and skills to persist through college and launch the careers of their choice upon graduation, and Career Fluency® Partnerships, our immersive capacity-building program for schools and youth-serving organizations across the country looking to accelerate college and career readiness for their young people. To date, OppNet has worked with over 50 organizations and schools as they support thousands of young people across the country in achieving college and career success.

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