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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Xavier University of Louisiana's goal of educational equity furthered as recipient of Gilead Foundation grant

Xavier University of Louisiana is one of 13 recipients of the Gilead Foundation's Creating Possible Fund™, which was launched to support creative and high-impact strategies that advance health through education equity. As one of the nation's leading Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Xavier continuously seeks to expand opportunities and connections for underserved students, improve its learning environment, and enhance its support systems for students to thrive. The Creating Possible Fund will assist Xavier and other grantees as they further these goals, especially in building a pipeline for Black health leaders.

Gilead Sciences, Inc. announced that the Creating Possible Fund will provide a total of \$20 million to the 13 inaugural grantees. The Fund grants Xavier \$3,000,000 for a three-year period. Gilead has previously partnered with Xavier in solidarity with the institutions' commitments to advancing global health equity and improving health outcomes for all.

At Xavier, the grant will be applied to the project "Disrupting Obstacles to Education: The Gilead-Xavier University of Louisiana Student Promise for Louisiana." The project involves a significant expansion of Xavier's pre-collegiate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programming, including its Stress on Analytical Reasoning (SOAR-X) and Star (MATHStar I and II, CHEMStar, BOIStar, PHYStar) programs. It will also support the re-establishment of the very successful Louisiana Engineering Advancement Program (LEAP) and a pre-college, for-credit dual enrollment program for high school seniors and recent high school graduates known as XULA Achieve. XULA Achieve will be implemented across three separate terms and is a year-round program.

"Thanks to the Gilead Foundation's support for advancing educational equity, more than a thousand students in New Orleans will have access to intensive pre-college STEM programs for the first time," said **Reynold Verret, President of Xavier University of Louisiana**. "The Creating Possible Fund will help develop and support a new generation of possible Xavierites who will go on to continue our legacy of excellence as Black STEM leaders, healthcare providers and educators. At Xavier, we are blessed to educate future changemakers at all levels."

Xavier's pre-college STEM and related programming will be overseen by the University's College of Arts and Sciences Dean, Dr. Anderson Sunda-Meya, assisted by the Assistant

Provost for Student Success, Dr. Nathaniel Holmes. The program will also hire various pre-college and dual enrollment staff, including teaching assistants, group leaders, and program mentors. Dr. Cirecie West-Olatunji, director of Xavier's Center for Equity, Justice, and the Human Spirit, will coordinate additional counseling and other holistic-based programming explicitly designed to meet the needs of New Orleans youth and their families focused on student and family wellness. One facet of this approach includes post-program follow-up counseling for individual participants and their families.

The Creating Possible Fund grant will support program tuition and associated fees, supplies and software, transportation, counseling, and meal expenses for each Xavier University of Louisiana-Gilead Pre-College Scholar. Funding will also be included for many supplementary expenses typically not covered in similar summer STEM programs, such as campus identification cards, college application fees, testing costs, and more.

The National Academies of Science reports that extensive research and studies have found that disparities in education mirror disparities in health. Over the last 40 years, in all regions of the U.S., the gap in health between people with high and low education has become wider.

Xavier has long been committed to improving health outcomes through educational equity. Its pre-collegiate programs are a cornerstone to advancing its mission to promote a more just and humane society by educating its students to become leaders and changemakers. By offering students from underserved communities the opportunity to explore their talents and passions, the University and its partners are building a pathway for student success and enrollment in higher education.

"Through the work of the Gilead Foundation, 13 organizations have been selected as inaugural Creating Possible Fund grantees, who are national leaders, thinkers and changemakers in education, health and racial equity, adolescent mental health and social justice," said **Korab Zuka, Gilead Foundation President and Vice President, Public Affairs, Gilead Sciences.**

"We know that inequities in health stem from larger structural inequities that are deeply embedded in our society, laws, economy and particularly our educational systems. With the assistance from leaders in education and health, we believe we've chosen a group of innovators in health equity who will make a meaningful impact on society."

Xavier and the other 12 Creating Possible Fund grantees were selected due to their creative and scalable approaches to tackling equity gaps in education and health for youth in the United States. The 13 Creating Possible Fund inaugural grantees are:

- Xavier University of Louisiana, New Orleans, Louisiana
- Brown University (Annenberg Institute for School Reform), Providence, Rhode Island
- Kingmakers of Oakland, Oakland, California
- KQED, San Francisco, California
- Morehouse College, Center for Excellence in Education, Atlanta, Georgia
- Oakland Fund for Public Innovation, Oakland, California
- Fresh Lifelines for Youth, Milpitas, California
- Pulse of Perseverance, Chicago, Illinois
- Represent Justice, Los Angeles, California
- Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, Alabama
- St. John's Community Health/Compton Unified School District, Los Angeles, California
- The Trevor Project Inc., West Hollywood, California

- YELLOW, Virginia Beach, Virginia

Click [here](#) for more information on the Gilead Foundation.

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### **About Xavier University of Louisiana**

*Xavier University of Louisiana, America's only historically Black and Catholic University, is ranked among the top three HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier produces more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Additionally, Xavier's College of Pharmacy is also among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the country.*

*Established in 1925, by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African American and Native Americans to receive quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in art, business, education, biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy and political science. More recent additions in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience and genetics, in addition to new STEM-based master's programs, have provided Xavier students (2815 undergraduates and 787 graduates) an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty, who are experts in their fields, to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula is to provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls, thereby facilitating a more just and humane society for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at [www.xula.edu](http://www.xula.edu) or contact Regi Reyes at (504) 520-5240 or [reyes@xula.edu](mailto:reyes@xula.edu).*