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## **The Executive Leadership Council and Foundation Announce Winners Of National Essay Competition**

*Students Will Participate in 2010 Leadership Events in New York City in October*

**WASHINGTON, DC – July 9, 2010** – The Executive Leadership Council and The Executive Leadership Foundation are pleased to announce the winners of the “2010 Award for Excellence in Business Commentary National Essay Competition.” The ten African-American undergraduate students from across the nation competed for scholarship awards that include cash distributed among the winners, an internship at a Fortune 500 corporation, and participation in an all expense-paid, week-long Honors Symposium in New York City.

Students were asked to examine and discuss how corporations should work with schools to help develop minority leaders. It was based on a 2009 McKinsey & Co. report estimating that the achievement gap affecting minorities in public schools leads to a loss in Gross Domestic Product of between 310 - 525 billion dollars each year. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that “by 2023, minorities will comprise more than half of all school-age children.”

The essay contest, now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year, is generously supported and underwritten by The Coca-Cola Foundation. Ingrid Saunders Jones, president of The Coca-Cola Foundation and Senior Vice President Global Community Connections, will honor these gifted students at The Executive Leadership Council and Foundation’s 2010 Annual Recognition Gala at the Hilton New York on Thursday, October 14, 2010, in New York City. “The Coca-Cola Company is proud to once again showcase the brilliance of a select group of talented college students. Coca-Cola has supported this essay competition for the past 16 years so that the next generation can have access to the best educational opportunities available to lead and serve our nation.” said Jones. The Coca-Cola Company also is lead sponsor of the gala.

The 10 student winners of the 2010 National Essay Competition are:

- **1st Place**      **David Alexander**, Howard University
  - **2nd Place**      **Aeisha D. Reese**, Wayne State University
  - **3rd Place**      **Folake Dosu**, Stanford University
  - **4th Place**      **Shannon Evans**, Emporia State University
  - **5th Place**      **Tristan Francis**, University of Pennsylvania
  - **6th Place**      **Kurt C. Griggs-Swanson**, Wayne State University
- Ayesha Massaquoi**, Iowa State University  
**Ashli McLean**, Hampton University  
**Kenneth Ware, Jr.**, Texas Southern University  
**Stefen White**, Rust College



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“These exceptional students have taken on a challenge that has vexed business and community leaders for decades, and have offered practical and achievable recommendations,” said Lawrence M. Drake II, interim president and CEO of The Executive Leadership Council. “If our nation is to prevail as the most successful economic engine in the world, we must have the full participation of all of our citizens. Business and civic leaders should take heed of the suggestions made by these essay winners to help narrow the achievement gap among black and brown students.”

First Place Winner David Alexander from Gainesville, Florida, a sophomore at Howard University majoring in Business Administration, is confident in the future strength of American business and believes corporations have a stake in the success of minority students. He points to the benefits of corporate social responsibility, in partnering with schools, to provide students with roadmaps, mentors and practical experience to demonstrate how education can translate into productive, lucrative careers.

Aeisha Reese, a Theater major at Wayne State University from Flint, Michigan, could see the pitfalls and benefits of corporate partnerships with schools. While playing up the value of business associations with schools in her essay, she pointed out past experiences when a few businesses narrowed the focus of curriculum to suit their needs, exchanging financial support for exclusive rights to market their products to students. She also cited many examples of productive partnerships between corporations and schools.

All of the National Essay Contest Winners will participate in several days of leadership activities in October with The Executive Leadership Council. As in years past, the 2010 Annual Recognition Gala on October 14<sup>th</sup> in New York City will be preceded by a summit of members of The Executive Leadership Council and their Fortune 500 CEOs. The following day, aspiring African-American executives and managers will participate in the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Mid-Level Managers’ Symposium where they have an opportunity to develop professional, personal and intellectual skills with the help of experienced executives and facilitators. For more information about these events and the essay contest winners, please visit [www.elcinfo.com](http://www.elcinfo.com).

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### **About The Executive Leadership Council**

The Executive Leadership Council is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(6) corporation founded in 1986, providing African-American executives of major U.S. companies with a professional network and forum to offer perspective and direction on national and international business and public policy issues. Our programs develop future business leaders, filling the pipeline from the classroom to the boardroom. It is the preeminent organization that recognizes the strengths, success, contributions, and impact of African-American corporate business leaders. Council members – nearly 400 executives, more than one-third of them women – represent more than 280 Fortune 500 corporations. For more information, please visit [www.elcinfo.com](http://www.elcinfo.com).