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Contacts:	Margaret M. Cronan <a href="mailto:mcronan@dilworthlaw.com">mcronan@dilworthlaw.com</a> (o) 215-575-7218 (c) 215-873-9517	Angelica C. Anas <a href="mailto:aanas@dilworthlaw.com">aanas@dilworthlaw.com</a> (o) 215-575-7306 (c) 856-366-7916
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## **THE GERMINATION PROJECT'S FIRST STUDENT FELLOW CLASS TO BE UNVEILED IN GRAND FASHION**

### ***Gala at Union League Modeled after Professional Sports Draft***

June 11, 2015 (Philadelphia, PA) – A 50-year investment in Philadelphia's future is set to launch in Center City this evening, and 15 high school students are poised to take the spotlight. The Germination Project, an organization focused on creating a self-sustaining and perpetuating ecosystem for Philadelphia's next generation of leaders, will introduce its inaugural Student Fellow Class of 2015 at 7:00 PM at the Union League. With the keynote address from Philadelphia 76ers Head Coach Brett Brown and special guests taking the stage to announce the "picks," the Gala Benefit will have all the action and excitement of a professional sports draft.

The 15 rising juniors represent 10 Philadelphia-area high schools. Hundreds of students were considered, and those chosen went through a rigorous process before being selected by a committee made up of CEOs, entrepreneurs, doctors, and other business executives. Tonight, the Fellows will hear their names called by numerous dignitaries, including U.S. Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. and Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health President and CEO Dr. Stephen Klasko. Both are Gala Chairs, along with U.S. Senator Patrick Toomey and Gabriel Investments Managing Partner Richard Vague.

Starting with this first class of Student Fellows, the Germination Project seeks to catalyze ambitious young men and women, brought together by their talent, drive, and commitment, to put their gifts into service for the benefit of our city. A key component of the program's success: current leaders in our region who will not simply provide insight and advice, but hands-on experience – these leaders will work alongside the Fellows in developing and delivering initiatives that will improve the quality of life and economic outlook for the entire Philadelphia region.

First stop for the Fellows: the Summer Leadership Boot Camp, a two-week program designed by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Social Impact Initiative. The Boot Camp will use a two-fold

approach of leadership development and social entrepreneurial skills development. Under the guidance and direction of experienced professors and guest lecturers, each Fellow will undertake a range of experiential learning opportunities designed to develop the skills necessary to thrive as leaders in our region.

Katherine Klein, Vice Dean, Wharton Social Impact Initiative comments, “Our goal for the Boot Camp is to inform and inspire the Student Fellows, so that they begin their Germination Project experience with both an understanding of how they can create positive change in Philadelphia and a set of practical tools and approaches that they can apply.”

After completing Boot Camp, the Fellows will set out to deliver on a key part of The Germination Project’s mission: exchanging the lifetime’s worth of opportunities the program ultimately will bestow upon them for a promise to pay those opportunities forward.

By their side will be another leading partner of the program, Jefferson Health. Fellows will work with volunteer doctors, nurses, and other Jefferson medical professionals, as well as with community liaisons, and will engage directly with the Jefferson team on a community outreach program that will focus on eliminating health disparities.

“Jefferson Health will be honored to have these 15 young leaders and future Germination Project Fellows in the trenches with us as our team immerses itself into communities that are off the grid in regards to health care,” says Jefferson’s Steve Klasko. “Our goal is to extract important data from these communities and then create ongoing and lasting programs that improve the physical health of our region. 50 years from now, we want to see neighborhoods literally transformed by our efforts and a regional population with a much higher percentage of residents who are healthcare literate.”

Dilworth Paxson LLP Executive Chairman and CEO Ajay Raju, who established the Germination Project through an endowment from his philanthropic foundation, envisions the program’s role as restoring Philadelphia to regional, national, and global prominence. “This city has the potential to once again shine as brightly and thrive as mightily as it did when it became the birthplace of the American idea,” says Raju. “Realizing that potential depends on creating indelible connections between our leaders of today and those who will take up the charge tomorrow and into the years ahead. In that spirit, the Germination Project’s objective is to bring together those leaders from across generations to serve, to inspire, and to lead Philadelphia back to greatness.”

**The 2015 Student Fellow Class of The Germination Project:**

Alexa Bartels, The Baldwin School  
Leith Mohammad, Bodine High School  
Aquil Dantzler, Boys’ Latin Charter School  
Trang Lam, Central High School  
Thomas Van Dean, Central High School  
Monica Volodarsky, Central High School  
Jermaine Rhoden, The Episcopal Academy  
Caleb Clothier, The Haverford School  
Dean Manko, The Haverford School  
Cal Williams, The Haverford School  
Sabine Ostinvil, Julia R. Masterman School  
Gary Williams, Julia R. Masterman School

Keisha Loko, SS. Neumann & Goretti Catholic High School  
Marshae Batchelor, Parkway Center City  
Natalie Fred, Swenson Arts & Technology High School

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