

Leadership Institute of Acadiana Leadership Awards 2025

Ruben D. Henderson, III – Distinguished Alumnus Leadership Award



This year's Distinguished Alumnus Leadership Awardee is an exceptional leader whose commitment to service, innovation, and community impact makes him a deserving recipient of this prestigious recognition.

He has dedicated his career to uplifting others, demonstrating a deep commitment to servant leadership. He has played a pivotal role in community initiatives that promote education, equity, and empowerment, ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds have access to opportunities for growth and success. His work has had a lasting impact on both his professional field and the communities he serves.

As an innovative and determined leader, he has consistently sought out creative solutions to address challenges, inspiring those around him to strive for excellence. His ambition is matched by his ability to bring people together, fostering collaboration that leads to meaningful change. Whether mentoring students and young professionals, leading initiatives that enhance community engagement, or advocating for underrepresented populations, he approaches every endeavor with integrity and passion.

Beyond his professional achievements, he embodies the essence of servant leadership by selflessly dedicating his time and talents to causes greater than himself. His leadership is not defined by titles but by his strong commitment to service and the positive influence he has on those around him.

His record of service and dedication to the community demonstrates the highest standards of leadership and impact. His commitment to uplifting others is evident in his extensive work with organizations that serve and empower individuals from all backgrounds.

His involvement on various boards, including CASA of SoLA, Miles Perret Cancer Services, and the Hilliard Art Museum, showcases his dedication to advocacy, support, and community engagement. Through CASA of SoLA, he has played a critical role in ensuring that children in the foster care system receive the care and guidance they need to thrive. His work

with Miles Perret demonstrates his compassion for families facing cancer, providing essential resources and support. At the Hilliard Art Museum, he has supported the arts, ensuring that cultural enrichment remains accessible to the community.

In addition to his community service, he serves as a campus facilitator for the UL Lafayette Reginald F. Lewis Scholars Program, where he mentors and guides young Black male scholars in leadership, academic success, and personal development. His dedication to shaping future leaders reflects his passion for education and equity. **Ruben Henderson** consistently uses his time, expertise, and influence to create lasting change. His ability to inspire, advocate, and lead with integrity makes him the ideal candidate for the Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Dr. Brandi Clay – Ignite Leadership Award



This year's awardee exemplifies the mission of LIA by convening, building, and activating leaders through her extensive work and achievements in education. As a published author and presenter at educational conferences across the U.S. and Mexico, she has focused on advancing the social and emotional development of students. Her dedication to inspiring students in Lafayette to pursue their educational dreams aligns with LIA's goal of empowering future leaders.

She began her teaching career as a chemistry teacher in Texas, where she recognized the challenges faced by students of color in science. Her passion for teaching and connecting with students has driven her to remain in education for over a decade. Now, as the Assistant

Principal at Grolee Elementary in Opelousas, LA, she continues to support instructional programs, student attendance, and discipline, ensuring a positive and effective learning environment.

Through her non-profit organization, The Educational Dreamer, she addresses academic, social, and emotional gaps, providing resources and creating solutions to close these gaps. Her work with The Ed.D. Series further supports the professional development of educators, enhancing the culture and climate of classrooms and schools.

Her commitment to improving the educational experiences of minority students and her leadership in community outreach initiatives demonstrate her alignment with LIA's mission. Her role as Spark Chair in the Junior League of Lafayette and her involvement in various

community projects highlight her dedication to building and activating leaders within her community.

She has demonstrated an exceptional record of service and commitment to her community through various impactful roles and initiatives. As the Assistant Principal at Grolee Elementary in Opelousas, LA, she plays a crucial role in supporting instructional programs, student attendance, and discipline, ensuring a positive and effective learning environment for all students.

Her dedication extends beyond her school duties. She founded The Educational Dreamer, a non-profit organization focused on addressing academic, social, and emotional gaps in education. Through this organization, she provides resources and creates solutions to help students succeed, including PPE supplies during the pandemic and educational books through her Lafayette Leaders Reading Events, demonstrating her commitment to improving the educational experiences of minority students.

Additionally, she runs The Ed.D. Series, which supports the professional development of educators. This initiative helps teachers enhance the culture and climate of their classrooms and schools, further contributing to the overall improvement of the education system.

Her involvement in the Junior League of Lafayette as Spark Chair highlights her leadership and dedication to community service. She actively participates in various community projects, aiming to build and activate leaders within her community.

Dr. Brandi Clay's work as an educator in Title 1 schools since 2012, her efforts in curriculum writing, teacher development, and community outreach initiatives, and her passion for improving the quality of education for all students underscore her unwavering commitment to serving her community and making a positive impact.