

## **The Class of 1985 Scholarship: Supporting the Students Who Don't Always Get Seen**

What kind of student were you? Maybe you were the one who believed anything less than a 4.0 GPA meant you were falling behind. Maybe school never felt like your place, and you found your strengths outside the classroom, learning skills that don't show up on a transcript. Or maybe, like so many others, you were somewhere in between, wishing your value wasn't measured solely by grades, but by the full story of who you were becoming.

Students with high GPAs and test scores often receive the bulk of scholarship support. Recognizing this imbalance, Daniel Herbert and Dr. Susan Holmes-Walker set out to create something different: a scholarship designed for the kind of student who may not qualify for traditional academic awards, but who has the drive, character, and potential to thrive after high school.

"I was an a\*\*\*\*\* in high school," Daniel says, "I was more of a 'Let's skip class and go to the Roxy for breakfast' kind of student."

His high school years ended in an unexpected way, and that experience stayed with him. Wanting to make a difference for a student who might be walking a similar path, he reached out to his classmate and valued friend Dr. Susan Holmes-Walker. Together, they envisioned a scholarship that would support a graduating senior planning to pursue education after high school, whether through a traditional college, a trade program, or a technical school.

Daniel and Susan began fundraising among their classmates, sharing their vision for a scholarship that valued determination and potential over perfect grades. Their classmates responded with enthusiasm. Over time, the Class of 1985 raised more than \$25,000, enough to establish an endowed fund at the Jackson Community Foundation. The scholarship was officially launched in October 2025.

The goal was simple but powerful: to support a student who might otherwise be overlooked. For Daniel, this work is deeply personal. "If we can help just ONE young person like me improve themselves and either get out of Jackson or (better yet) stay there and make a difference, then it's worth it."

The Class of 1985 Scholarship is more than financial assistance. It's a message to students who don't see themselves reflected in honor rolls or award ceremonies. It's a reminder that potential isn't limited to those with perfect transcripts. And it's a tribute to the teachers, administrators, and classmates who shaped the Class of 1985 in ways that went far beyond academics. By investing in students who need a different kind of support, the Class of 1985 is helping open doors and honoring the belief that every student's story matters.