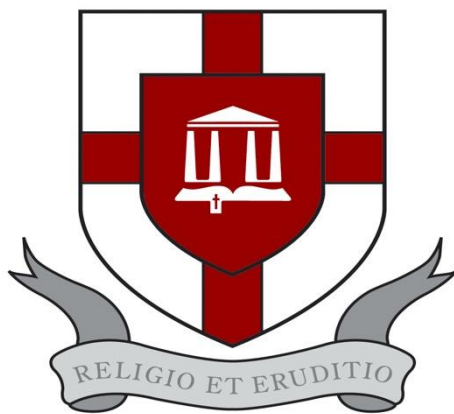


EXCEL

Leadership & Scholarship Program

An Initiative of Memphis Leadership Foundation



UNION
UNIVERSITY



MEMPHIS
LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION

 Bethel University

APPLICATION FOR FALL 2026

Excel Overview

Excel is a Christian urban leadership development and scholarship program with a four-part strategy:

- (1) Locally recruits and selects a diverse, multicultural cadre of Memphis' most promising urban student leaders.
- (2) Trains these groups of students in the year prior to college, equipping them to support each other, grow as leaders, succeed academically, and grow as service-minded leaders and agents of transformation.
- (3) Helps facilitate the Excel scholarship and send the teams to Union University in Jackson TN or Bethel University in McKenzie TN for four years of faith-based education at a diverse liberal art college.
- (4) Provides campus support and ongoing leadership development to nurture these young people as they find their vocation and grow into the next generation of community leaders.

Who Should Apply

The Excel program each year seeks a diverse, multicultural cadre of promising Memphis' urban student leaders: young people who are passionate about learning, eager to foster intercultural communication and relationships, willing to step out of their comfort zones, committed to serving those around them, and ready to make a difference on their university campus and in their communities at home. The selection process also places high value on students' teamwork, critical thinking, communication skills and academic potential. Financial need and under-represented groups are also a consideration.

Selected scholars will enroll as freshmen in fall 2026. Applicants must be Memphis Tennessee high school seniors planning to graduate in 2026 or must have previously graduated from a Memphis Tennessee high school in 2025 but have never attended a post-secondary school. While ethnicity and family income are considered as factors in selecting an intentionally diverse group of scholars, students from all backgrounds are encouraged to apply. An applicant must be a Tennessee resident and have a minimum ACT score of or near 18 and a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Applicants for Excel must also apply and be accepted to the partner schools of their choice. Those partner schools are Union University or Bethel University.

Selection Process

PHASE I: Applicants complete an initial written application that includes a basic college admissions application as well as additional essay questions, letters of recommendation, and family financial information. After an initial screening, top applicants are invited to participate as candidates in Phase II.

PHASE II: Semifinalists spend time on their selected campuses usually in February/March for an event that will allow students to experience and learn more about Union or Bethel and participate in an evaluation process that includes a personal interview. Housing and meals for the visit are provided by the program.

DECISION: A selection committee will name finalists shortly after the campus visits. Once named, finalists are expected to make a formal commitment to the Excel program upon receiving their financial aid packages. By committing to the program, students agree to attend Union University or Bethel and to

participate fully in the leadership training and preparation program throughout the remainder of the academic year. Applicants may withdraw from the process at any time prior to this commitment.

Selection Timeline

December 31, 2025, All applicants should have completed the FAFSA if eligible.

February 18, 2026, Phase I applications must be postmarked by this date.

February 25, 2026, Phase II candidate semi-finalists selections announced.

March TBA Semi-finalists visit Union or Bethel for Phase II or virtually have selection event and interviews. Details will be included in the semifinalist packet.

March/April Finalists notified.

March-May 2026 Excel scholars announced.

Mailing Address and Contact Information

Questions about Excel or the application process can be directed to Tracy Anthony at 901-338-4185 or tracy@mlfonline.org.

All Excel application materials must be postmarked by **February 18, 2026**, and mailed to the address below or you may do an email version. Please contact Tracy Anthony for those details and email to Tracy@mlfonline.org or Excel@Mytownmiracles.org

My Town Miracles

Attn. EXCEL SCHOLARSHIP

449 US 79 STE 129

Collierville, TN 38017

Deadline: February 18, 2026,

It is your responsibility to review this entire packet thoroughly and carefully follow all instructions. The included Excel application consists of six required parts for all applicants. Read the instructions for each part below carefully and initial the corresponding box when it is complete. **Do not include any covers, binders, staples or paper clips.**

All completed materials should be assembled in order and mailed **in a single envelope** to the address below, postmarked no later than **February 18, 2026**. Materials should **not** be mailed to the schools. Again if an email version is desired please reach out to Tracy@mlfonline.org for those specifics.

MTM Attn Excel Scholarship 449 US 72 STE 129 Collierville, TN 38017

Application Checklist and Cover Sheet

Legal name _____

Last

First

Middle

Initial here

Application Checklist. This page should be included as the cover sheet in your packet.

Initial here
when
complete

Part 1: Basic Application for College Admission. You should complete the four-page form providing basic biographical, educational and extracurricular information. Be sure to answer all questions that pertain to you.

Initial here
when
complete

Part 2: Personal Essays. There are two required essays. They should be carefully and thoughtfully prepared and typewritten on separate sheets of paper. Each essay should not exceed one page in length and should have the question number and your name printed at the top.

Initial here
when
complete

Part 3: FAFSA Financial Information. You and your parent(s) must complete the online FAFSA this will require a PIN. There will be a confirmation page and a summary with your SAI information. Please include a print out of these pages. Also fill out the financial section of application. * Warning: TSAC free money for college runs out quickly. Please complete FAFSA by the end of December.

Initial here
when
complete

Part 4: School Report, Official Transcript, and Exam Scores. You should give the form to a school counselor who can obtain an official transcript and who has access to exam results as well as school and class GPA information. All materials should be returned **to you** in a sealed envelope. Verify that the report, test scores and official transcript are included.

Initial here
when
complete

Part 5: Academic Recommendation. You should give the form to a teacher who has taught you an academic subject. The form should be returned **to you** in a sealed envelope. You may only include one academic recommendation.

Initial here
when
complete

Part 6: Community or Pastoral Recommendation. You should give the form to a mentor, employer, pastor or other person familiar with your leadership potential and involvement outside of school. The form should be returned **to you** in a sealed envelope. You may only include one community recommendation.

Father's full name		Is he living?	
Last	First	☐ Yes	☐ No
Home address			
Number and Street			
City		State	ZIP Code
Occupation / Title		Phone	Area Code/Number
		Employer	
Name of college, if any		Degree	Year
Mother's full name		Is she living?	
Last	First	☐ Yes	☐ No
Home address			
Number and Street			
City		State	ZIP Code
Occupation / Title		Phone	Area Code/Number
		Employer	
Name of college, if any		Degree	Year

Mother's e-mail

Please list all of your brothers and sisters below. List oldest sibling first. *Use additional sheet if needed.*

TS2.10142009

Extracurricular and Personal Activities

Please list your principal extracurricular, community, church, work and family activities. Include specific events and/or major accomplishments such as musical instruments played, varsity sports participated in and honors earned. Please indicate "x" in the left-hand column if you wish to pursue the activity in college. *Use an additional sheet if needed or submit a resume.*

(x)	Activity	Grade level of participation				Approximate # of hours spent per week	Positions held or honors won
		9	10	11	12		
☐		☐	☐	☐	☐		
☐		☐	☐	☐	☐		
☐		☐	☐	☐	☐		
☐		☐	☐	☐	☐		
☐		☐	☐	☐	☐		

Which of these activities have been most important to you? Briefly explain why. _____

Educational Information

List all of the high schools, including summer school programs that you have attended from grades 9-12.

List the high school you currently attend first.

Name of school _____ Location (City, State) _____ Dates attended _____

Date of graduation _____ Date of GED _____ Type ☐ public ☐ private ☐ parochial ☐ home school

Please list all colleges at which you have taken courses for credit. An official transcript should be sent from each.

Name of college _____ Location (City, State) _____ Degree _____ Dates attended _____

Test Information

Scores from the SAT I or ACT are required for admission to Union, and Bethel University. Scores you have already received should be reported by your school in Part 4. If your school has not received results by the February 18 deadline, you may still apply for Excel but a copy of the exam score report must be received by the Excel office no later than February 28.

Is your school reporting an SAT I or ACT score for you in the Part 4 School Report? Yes ☐ No ☐

If not, what date will you take a test? _____ By what date will you send Excel your score report? _____

Prior Conduct

Have you been convicted of a felony or gross misdemeanor, or do you have a court case pending against you at this time? *If yes, please attach written explanation with your application.*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at an education institution you have attended from 9th grade forward, whether related to academic or behavioral misconduct that resulted in your probation, suspension, removal or expulsion from the institution? *If yes, please attach written explanation with your application.*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Applicant and Parent/Guardian Certification

By our signatures on this form, we certify that:

- To the best of our knowledge, all statements made in this application are complete and true. We understand that if at any time information in this application is found to be false or inaccurate, it is sufficient cause for rejection or dismissal from Excel.
- The essays accompanying this application are the applicant's own work, although they may have been reviewed by parents, teachers, or other advocates.

By our signatures on this form, we understand and agree that:

- The information submitted on this form will be reviewed by staff at Memphis Leadership Foundation, Union University or Bethel University and local community-based selection committee members, and outside consultants for the purposes of selection.
- Excel is committed to increasing knowledge regarding higher education opportunity through research. I may be contacted by Excel staff or outside consultants in the future and asked to participate in research surveys whether or not I am selected for the program.

By our signatures on this form, we consent to:

- Allow any and all information from this application and from other program-related documents that we may complete to be used with Excel research activities. We understand that findings from research activities may be made available to the public in an aggregated form, though never in a form that would allow the applicant to be identified.
- Grant the Memphis Leadership Foundation and all Excel partner colleges and universities permission to use photographs and video taken of the applicant during participation in Excel activities for editorial and promotional purposes in any print or electronic media.
- Release Excel, the Memphis Leadership Foundation, Union University or Bethel University and their respective directors, officers, agents, and employees (collectively "the Releasees") from liability for any loss, damage, injury, or illness resulting from the applicant's participation in events sponsored by Excel (including, but not limited to, all program activities and all provided transportation). We promise that we will not institute, prosecute, or in any way aid in the prosecution of any claim, demand, action, or cause of action against any or all the Releasees.

Student name (please print)

Parent/guardian name (please print)

Student signature

Date

Parent/guardian signature

Date

Deadline: February 18, 2026,

Please respond to one of the following prompts on a separate sheet of paper, as well as the Christian experience essay. Both essays are required. Responses should be no longer than one page, type written and double spaced in a standard 12-point font. Make sure that the question number and your name are printed on the top of each page you submit.

Required- Choose one of the 3 options

1. Excel seeks to identify service-minded leaders who will become agents of positive transformation on the college campus and in their communities at home. In an opening paragraph, describe something that you appreciate and something you would like to change about your current community. In the next paragraph, describe what leadership skills you will need to improve during college to serve your community and bring about the transformation you hope for.
2. Describe a concrete way that your ethnic or cultural background has shaped your life.
3. Describe any personal hardships or unusual circumstances you have had to overcome. How have these experiences shaped you as a person and how can they help you in the future?

REQUIRED ESSAY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

In addition to the required essay above, the following essay is required of all students wishing to be considered for admission to the Memphis Leadership Foundation – Excel Program. Specifically address each of the following prompts in a single essay:

- How would you describe your view of Christianity?
- Does Jesus Christ impact your personal behavior and morality?
- Using specific examples, describe your spiritual growth during the last three years.
- Describe your present and past involvement in church and ministry activities.

As with your other essay, make sure that your name is printed on the top of each page you submit.

FAFSA Financial Information

Deadline: February 18, 2026,

Part 3

Because of the nature of the Excel scholarship commitment and the desire of the program to select an economically diverse cadre, it is important that we have accurate information regarding each applicant's financial situation. In order to provide an accurate estimate of the actual Excel award at the time of selection, it is critical that Excel, Union University, Bethel and each applicant's family have an accurate estimate of the applicant's Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

A student's EFC is ultimately determined by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA requires a PIN and should be requested before you begin the application process.

The following steps are required to complete this part of the application:

- (1) Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- (2) Complete the FAFSA with your 2024 year taxes. Then you will indicate "have filed" your taxes and not be required to go back and update your FAFSA.
- (3) When you reach the end of the process, you need to print two important screens:
 - **SUMMARY SCREEN:**
 - **CONFIRMATION SCREEN:** This screen shows your estimated SAI and tells you how much federal student aid you might be eligible to receive.

- (4) Use the information provided on the printed summary and confirmation screens to fill in the four questions in the Summary Figures section on the next page, and then submit copies of the two printouts behind the two pages from this part of the Excel application.

FAFSA Summary Figures

Referring to the figures that are reported on the FAFSA summary and confirmation printouts you are attaching, please copy the following information:

From Top of Confirmation Page:	Student Aid Index (SAI)	_____
From Summary Parents' Info Section:	Parents' Number of Family Members	_____
	Parents' Number in College (Parents Excluded)	_____
	Parents' Adjusted Gross Income	_____

2026 Forecast and Unusual Circumstances

Does your family anticipate that your 2025 financial figures will change significantly from the 2024 figures provided to the FAFSA?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, or if there is anything significant about your family's financial circumstances that is not reflected in the information you provided on the FAFSA (e.g., high uninsured medical expenses, expected changes in employment), please provide specific details below, including estimated dollar amounts. Attach a separate page if needed.

Other Scholarships and Grants

List any other scholarships or grants that you have already been awarded.

Annual amount

Number of years

Financial Certification

We certify that, to the best of our knowledge, all information and statements provided in this section are current, complete, and accurate. We understand that all figures are subject to verification, and we agree to provide, if requested, official copies of federal tax statements and other documents.

Student name (please print)

Parent/guardian name (please print)

Student signature

Date

Parent/guardian signature

Date



School Report

Part 4

Deadline: February 18, 2026,

This form should be completed by a school counselor and **submitted with an official high school transcript and copies of all SAT I or ACT score reports available for the applicant.** The student should provide the information in the "Applicant" section and give the form to the school counselor completing the form. The counselor should return the form to the student, along with an official transcript and copies of exam score reports, in a sealed envelope.

Applicant

Applicant name _____
Last First Middle

Permanent home address _____
Number and Street

City State ZIP Code

Permanent home phone _____ / _____ Date of birth _____
Area Code/Number Month/Day/Year

School Counselor

Counselor name _____
Title First Last

Position _____ School _____

School address _____

Counselor email _____

Counselor phone _____ / _____ School CEEB/ACT code _____

May we contact you with information about Excel in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No

In comparison to other college preparatory students *at your school*, the applicant's course selection is:

☐ Most demanding. ☐ Demanding. ☐ Average. ☐ Less than demanding.

The student ranks _____ in a class of _____ and has a cumulative grade point average of _____.

This class ranking covers the period from _____ to _____. Anticipated graduation date _____

If precise rank is not available, please indicate rank to the nearest tenth from the top _____

Senior class average GPA _____ Percentage of the class planning to attend a four-year college _____%

List scores from any SAT I or ACT exams that the applicant has taken. Please attach copies of score reports if available.

SAT I CR	_____	M	_____	W	_____	Date taken	_____
SAT I CR	_____	M	_____	W	_____	Date taken	_____
SAT I CR	_____	M	_____	W	_____	Date taken	_____
ACT Composite	_____					Date taken	_____
ACT Composite	_____					Date taken	_____

ACT Composite _____

Date taken _____

Courses currently in progress:

Has the applicant ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at your school from 9th grade forward, whether related to academic or behavioral misconduct that resulted in probation, suspension, removal or expulsion from your institution?

☐ Yes ☐ No

To your knowledge, has the applicant ever been convicted of a misdemeanor, felony, or other crime, or have a court case pending against him or her at this time?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered yes to either or both questions, please give the approximate date of each incident and explain the circumstances in the space below.

Counselor signature _____

Date _____



Academic Recommendation

Part 5

Deadline: February 18, 2026,

Applicant

This recommendation must come from a teacher who has taught you an academic subject (for example, English, foreign language, math, science, or social studies). Print your name below and give the form to the recommender. Inform your recommender you are applying for admission to Union University and/or Bethel. That person should return the form to you in a sealed envelope for you to submit with your completed application.

Applicant name _____
Last First Middle

☐ I WAIVE my right to access this form in the future and I understand I will never be able to see its contents.

☐ I DO NOT WAIVE my right to access this form in the future and I may someday choose to see it once I enroll in college.

Applicant signature _____ Date _____

Academic Recommender

The student named above is applying for the Excel Leadership and Scholarship Program and admission to Union University or Bethel. Excel is a Christian urban leadership development and scholarship initiative with a four-part strategy: (1) Locally recruits and selects a diverse, multicultural cadre of Memphis' most promising urban student leaders; (2) Trains this group of students in the months prior to college, equipping them to support each other, grow in leadership, succeed academically, and grow as service-minded leaders and agents of transformation; (3) Helps facilitate the Excel scholarship and send the teams to Union University in Jackson or Bethel University in McKenzie, for four years of faith based education at a highly diverse liberal arts college; and (4) Provides strong campus support and ongoing leadership development experiences to nurture these young people as they find their vocation and grow into the next generation of community leaders.

We are seeking young people who are passionate about learning, eager to foster intercultural communication and relationships, willing to step out of their comfort zones, committed to serving those around them, and ready to make a difference on the college campus and in their communities at home. The selection process also places high value on students' teamwork, critical thinking, and communication skills, as well as on their academic potential. In seeking to identify qualified students for this extraordinary opportunity, we value your candid evaluation of the applicant.

How long have you known the applicant and in what context?

List the academic courses that you have taught this student, noting for each (the applicant's year in school (10th, 11th, 12th, etc.) and the level of course difficulty (AP, honors, IB, elective, etc.). **If you have not taught the student an academic subject, do not complete this form** (the student could still ask you to complete the community recommendation instead.)

What are the first words that come to your mind to describe the applicant?

Compared to other college bound students you have worked with, how would you rate this student in terms of:

No basis		Below average	Average	Good (above average)	Very good (well above average)	Excellent (top 10%)	Outstanding (top 5%)	One of the top few encountered in my career
☐	Leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Academic achievement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Intellectual promise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Quality of writing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Creative, original thought	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Productive class discussion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Respect accorded by faculty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Disciplined work habits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Maturity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Motivation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Integrity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Reaction to setbacks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Concern for others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Self-confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Initiative, independence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	OVERALL	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please return both pages of this form **to the applicant in a sealed envelope** so that s/he can mail it by the **February 18, 2026**, application deadline. If you choose, you may include a recommendation letter as well.

Teacher name _____
Title First Last

Position _____ School _____

Phone _____ / _____
Daytime Evening

Email _____

May we contact you with information about Excel in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Teacher signature _____ Date _____

Deadline: February 18, 2026

Applicant

This recommendation must come from a mentor, employer, pastor or other adult (possibly someone at school) familiar with your leadership potential and involvement outside of school. Print your name below and give the form to the recommender. Inform your recommender to which college(s) you are applying. That person should return the form to you in a sealed envelope for you to submit with your completed application.

Applicant name _____
Last First Middle

- ☐ I WAIVE my right to access this form in the future and I understand I will never be able to see its contents.
- ☐ I DO NOT WAIVE my right to access this form in the future and I may someday choose to see it once I enroll in college.

Applicant signature _____ Date _____

Community Recommender

The student named above is applying for the Excel Leadership and Scholarship Program and admission to Union University or Bethel. Excel is a Christian urban leadership development and scholarship initiative with a four-part strategy: (1) Locally recruits and selects a diverse, multicultural cadre of Memphis' most promising urban student leaders; (2) Intensively trains this group of students in the months prior to college, equipping them to support each other, grow in leadership, succeed academically, and grow as service-minded leaders and agents of transformation; (3) Helps facilitate the Excel scholarship and send the teams to Union University in Jackson TN or Bethel University in McKenzie TN for four years of faith based education at a highly diverse liberal arts college; and (4) Provides strong campus support and ongoing leadership development experiences to nurture these young people as they find their vocation and grow into the next generation of community leaders.

We are seeking young people who are passionate about learning, eager to foster intercultural communication and relationships, willing to step out of their comfort zones, committed to serving those around them, and ready to make a difference on the college campus and in their communities at home. The selection process also places high value on students' teamwork, critical thinking, and communication skills, as well as on their academic potential. In seeking to identify qualified students for this extraordinary opportunity, we value your candid evaluation of the applicant.

How long have you known the applicant and in what context?

What are the first words that come to your mind to describe the applicant?

Please describe the applicant's character and any information that would be helpful to better know them.

If you have any reservations or concerns about the applicant, please share those here.

Compared to other college bound students you have worked with; how would you rate this student in terms of:

No basis		Below average	Average	Good (above average)	Very good (well above average)	Excellent (top 10%)	Outstanding (top 5%)	One of the top few encountered in my career
☐	Leadership potential	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Respect accorded by peers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Ability to work with a team	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Commitment to service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Concern for others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Desire to give back	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Vision and goals for life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	"Teachability"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Disciplined work habits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Intercultural competence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Ability to make friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Awareness of social inequity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Reaction to setbacks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Self-confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Initiative and motivation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Honesty and integrity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Dependability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Maturity and judgment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Emotional stability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	OVERALL	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you would like to include a letter of recommendation as well, you may do so.

Please return this form to the applicant in a sealed envelope so that s/he can mail it by the **February 18, 2026** application deadline.

Recommender name _____
Title First Last

Position _____ Employer _____

Phone _____ / _____
Daytime Evening

Email _____

May we contact you with information about Excel in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Recommender signature _____ Date _____

Memphis Leadership Foundation Supplement

Deadline: February 18, 2026

Memphis Leadership Foundation

The mission of the Memphis Leadership Foundation – Excel program is to provide, in a distinctly faith-based environment, a quality education to prepare students for service and leadership. Memphis Leadership Foundation therefore desires to admit students who will profit the most from studies in this kind of environment.

Affirmation of MLF Purposes and Standards

Begin by carefully reviewing the mission of the Memphis Leadership Foundation – Excel Program, then sign to affirm the following statement:

In applying for admission to the Memphis Leadership Foundation – Excel Program at Union University or Bethel, I have reviewed its mission as stated above. I affirm that if admitted to Union University or Bethel through the Memphis Leadership Foundation – Excel Program, I will abide by these purposes and standards.

Student name (please print)

Student signature

Date

College Choice

Please indicate first and second choice below: Union University or Bethel University.

1st Choice _____

2nd Choice _____