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Scholarship Foundation CEO Melinda Cabrera Stepping Down to Head up United Boys & Girls Clubs of Santa Barbara County

Santa Barbara, CA — Melinda Cabrera, who has spearheaded a series of programmatic and operational enhancements over the course of her 30-month tenure as president and CEO of the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara, will depart the venerable college access nonprofit to become CEO of United Boys & Girls Clubs of Santa Barbara County. Her final day at the Scholarship Foundation will be March 11.

“It has been a tremendous honor to lead the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara and contribute to its rich legacy of serving local families and creating opportunity in our community for more than 60 years,” said Ms. Cabrera. “I am grateful to the Foundation’s Board of Directors and staff for their dedication, hard work, and collegiality. I could not ask for more supportive or capable colleagues. This is a bittersweet moment, but I am excited to start my new role at United Boys & Girls Clubs of Santa Barbara County.”

A native of Apple Valley, California, Ms. Cabrera earned a bachelor’s degree in communications at Loyola Marymount University before being named assistant director of guest services at the Santa Barbara Zoo. She joined the United Way of Santa Barbara County in 2013, serving first as a community impact officer and later as director of strategic partnerships from 2016 to 2020. As the organization’s vice president, Ms. Cabrera led United Way’s programming in the areas of financial empowerment, education, and crisis response and recovery. These efforts included a nationally recognized program that addressed summer learning loss by providing academic and other support to students in grades 3-12. She also established a successful, literacy-focused tutoring center to improve students’ reading confidence. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Cabrera led emergency response

programs that provided more than \$54 million in housing assistance and academic support to families in critical need.

Upon becoming president and CEO of the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara in August 2023, Ms. Cabrera worked to raise the organization's profile by augmenting staff and pursuing new community partnerships. Under her leadership, the Scholarship Foundation was one of only six organizations nationwide selected by the U.S. Department of Education to conduct initial testing of the latest Free Application for Federal Student Aid in 2024. Other initiatives included an innovative partnership with a local law firm to provide area law school students and graduates with career development opportunities, the adoption of a new strategic plan, and the expansion of a partnership with researchers at UCSB to gain insight into the experiences of students. In April 2025, the Scholarship Foundation officially marked the opening of a new Santa Maria office featuring improved facilities and expanded space for community engagement. The Foundation received more than \$14 million in public support last year, the largest annual funding total in the organization's history.

“We very much appreciate Melinda’s diligence and energetic focus as president and CEO of the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara,” said Board Chair Pamela Gann. “She has positioned the organization for still greater impact throughout Santa Barbara County. We wish her much success in her new position.”

Blair Search Partners will conduct a nationwide search for Ms. Cabrera’s successor.

The Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara is the nation’s largest community-based provider of college scholarships, having cumulatively awarded in excess of \$167 million to some 64,000 county students since its founding in 1962. A nonprofit organization, the Scholarship Foundation also provides free financial aid advising services. For additional information, visit www.sbscholarship.org.

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