

Meet Dr. Brian McGowan, AAD Class of 2001, and A Night to Dream 2021 Keynote Speaker

Intro:

Brian McGowan, PhD, and member of the first An Achievable Dream graduating class of 2001, will deliver the keynote address during the virtual A Night to Dream gala on Friday, March 5, 2021. This event benefits An Achievable Dream Virginia Beach. Read on to learn more about Dr. McGowan's educational journey and his hope for the future.

Dr. Brian McGowan was taught at an early age that education is the ticket to a fulfilling life. That mindset has fueled his career passion of higher education. Dr. McGowan's time at An Achievable Dream also helped shape his future endeavors as an educator. "An Achievable Dream definitely shaped my desire to be a lifelong educator. I was a driven kid who loved to learn new things. I really enjoyed my time in the academic classroom and truly appreciated the co-curricular opportunities offered to me by AAD. The *Dream* fostered a positive and supportive community where students like myself were encouraged to excel," McGowan says.

It is that passion for education that pushed Dr. McGowan to go on to complete his bachelor's degree at Old Dominion University, his master's degree at The Ohio State University, and his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in higher education administration at Indiana University Bloomington. Along the way, he has worked at numerous colleges and universities helping students engage in and understand the value of participating in meaningful and educationally purposeful co-curricular activities that complement their formal academic classroom experiences. Dr. McGowan is currently an associate professor of education and associate director of the Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning at American University. His research illuminates and centers the experiences of minoritized populations and students who are often neglected or overlooked in higher education. He carries many of the things that he learned at An Achievable Dream with him in his career today.

"This may sound cliché, but I would say the ability to dream is what I appreciate the most. AAD exposed me to so many opportunities that I never would have imagined. The college tours, tennis lessons at Huntington Park, etiquette dinners, spending time at the YMCA, shadowing a bank teller at Harbor Bank, and the after school professional development opportunities. The list goes on. AAD exposed us to a variety of opportunities that made dreaming beyond our immediate circumstances possible."

The positive and supportive community that An Achievable Dream provides to all students is one that Dr. McGowan intends to continue to pass on to others along the way as well. "If I could pass one piece of advice to a current *Dreamer*, it would be to trust the process and stay the course. AAD has a proven track record of graduating students and preparing them to be change agents in our society. I think about lyrics from the original An Achievable Dream song that stated, 'Every challenge we face makes us all true winners, as we march on to our goal.' Despite challenges you may face at home and/or in school, trust the process and stick with An Achievable Dream."

"I truly appreciate the ask and opportunity to serve as the 2021 A Night to Dream keynote speaker and hope that my story inspires others to dream. It brings me joy to be back home in front of a community of peers who have a heart for youth and student success. Your support serves as the heartbeat of the AAD work and I look forward to being in community with you very soon.