

Request for Proposal: Evaluating Impact - Mentorship in College Persistence

Despite their increased college enrollment rates, students from traditionally underserved backgrounds (e.g. low-income, first-generation) continue to grapple with significantly lower six-year college graduation rates than their better resourced peers. Research suggests that mentorship is one of the most effective strategies to providing historically underrepresented students with the social and cultural capital necessary for successful degree completion.

While there are publications that examine the value and benefits of student mentorship, very little research has tackled the various components that makes each program successful and considered which elements can be replicated at scale. ECMC Foundation (ECMCF) is seeking a third-party to conduct an evaluation on a subset of grantees that prioritize mentoring among their direct service supports for college students. Findings from the evaluation will be used to inform the strategic grantmaking of ECMC Foundation's College Success portfolio. In recognizing the impact of mentorship and its frequent use as a major component of direct student support providers (e.g. nonprofits, community-based organization, etc.), the College Success portfolio will be able to better determine which organizations are engaging in high impact practices as well as how to best support organizations emerging in their use of these practices.

ECMCF's College Success portfolio defines direct student supports as interventions and resources that college students access, which in turn lead to increased rates of persisting and graduating with a bachelor's degree within a timely manner (approximately six-years). ECMC Foundation believes that high-quality supports and the programs that execute on them have the following characteristics:

- Provide a mentor, who supports the student toward timely degree completion;
- Incorporate student-centered approaches;
- Provide wraparound supports;
- Build academic, socio-emotional, and employability skills;
- Employ evidence-based practices for student persistence.

As a portfolio under a national foundation, the College Success portfolio gives priority to programs and initiatives with a statewide or regional focus.

Background

ECMC Foundation is a Los Angeles-based, nationally focused foundation whose mission is to inspire and to facilitate improvements that affect educational outcomes—especially among underserved populations—through evidence-based innovation. It is one of several affiliates under the **ECMC Group** enterprise based in Minneapolis, which together work to help students succeed.

The Foundation makes investments in two focus areas.

- College Success is focused on increasing the number of college students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, including low-income and first-generation populations, who pursue and attain bachelor's degrees.

- Career Readiness is committed to connecting adults with limited or no education beyond high school to industry-informed, accredited, and transferable, postsecondary CTE programs that are part of career pathways that lead to portable certificates or degrees.

ECMCF recognizes that a postsecondary education, when attained in a timely and cost-effective manner, has the highest return on investment for students from traditionally underserved backgrounds to achieve opportunities for upward mobility and a family-sustaining wage. ECMCF's College Success portfolio invests in direct student supports and initiatives focused on institutional change at four-year and two-year colleges to increase persistence and graduation rates for bachelor degree attainment.

ECMC Foundation's College Success portfolio supports this theory by investing in programs that:

- Improve students' transition to and through college toward a bachelor's degree.
- Support on-time transfer from two-year to four-year institutions.
- Develop existing networks that cultivate institutional knowledge and reform in leadership, practitioner and cultural practice.
- Enhance students' graduation with career-ready skills toward a profession in their field of study.

Request

ECMC Foundation is looking for a partner to conduct an evaluation of preselected mentorship programs at two-year and four-year institutions and identify which program designs enable increased access to and engagement with college success mentoring services among students from undeserved backgrounds. Specifically, which engagement models and advising components of these mentoring programs are most effective for student persistence and successful college completion? Areas of interest include:

- Types of mentors (e.g. faculty member, AmeriCorps participant, near-peer volunteer);
- Frequency of contact/student engagement;
- Student perception of service accessibility;
- Mode of contact (e.g. virtual, in-person, blended) and how mentors are trained for each delivery method;
- Location of program (e.g. on-campus, off-campus).

The evaluation will be conducted with a cohort of Foundation grantees, and will have the following objectives:

- Evaluate and compare the programs' effectiveness and impact on students' engagement with the mentorship program and persistence rates;
- Evaluate and compare the programs' structures in relation to student population(s) served.
- Evaluate how the mentoring component fits within a grantee's model of support for students.

Deliverables

- Prepare a comprehensive written overview of all findings, including an executive summary

- Develop infographics, charts, and tables for major takeaways
- Present findings to ECMC Foundation staff and/or partners
- Inform a potential funder or grantee convening

Administration

- Participate in regular check-in calls with ECMCF staff
- Travel may be required

The initial audience for this work will be ECMC Foundation staff who may decide to share the findings with other interested philanthropic partners. Eventually the deliverable, or a summary of the deliverable, may be shared with a public audience.

Requirements

In order to be considered for this opportunity, interested organizations must submit a proposal to the ECMC Foundation by October 19, 2018 using the guiding questions below.

All submitted proposals will be considered for this opportunity and one organization will be selected to conduct the research, produce written and graphical deliverables, and present their findings to ECMC Foundation staff and partners. ECMC Foundation may ask applicants to submit a more detailed scope of work (including a concrete action plan and budget) before making a funding decision.

If selected, applicants must also be able to start executing on the project in the first quarter of 2019.

Eligibility + Selection Criteria

Any consultant or organization with a commitment to education and background in research is eligible to submit a proposal. A small team from the Foundation will evaluate all submitted proposals.

Process + Timeline

Proposal Deadline	October 19, 2018
Selected Organization Announced	November 30, 2018

Contact

Questions may be directed to Angela Sanchez (asanchez@ecmc.org). All proposals must be submitted into ECMC Foundation's [online portal](#) no later than 11:59 PM (PT) on October 19, 2018.

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Please prepare a brief (no more than four pages) proposal addressing the following questions to be entered into the [online portal](#).

Organization

Provide an overview of your organization's mission, commitment to postsecondary education, and if applicable, similar projects completed.

Evaluation Approach

Articulate the research questions that will frame the evaluation, key questions to be asked of staff/student participants in the grantee cohort, data that will be collected, and evaluation method(s) employed.

Timeline and Action Plan

Provide the approximate start and end dates and a summary of the activities (e.g., collecting data, analyzing themes, disseminating results) for which support is requested.

Budget / Budget Narrative

Include a detailed list of the expenses (e.g., staff time, data collection) that comprise the total amount requested.

Disclaimer

ECMC Foundation reserves the right, where it may serve the Foundation's best interests, to request additional information or clarification from candidates or to allow corrections for errors or omissions.

There is no expressed or implied obligation for ECMC Foundation to reimburse responding firms for any expenses incurred in preparing submissions in response to this request.