



2016



Annual Report



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ECMC Foundation
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Our Mission

To inspire and to facilitate improvements that affect educational outcomes—especially among underserved populations—through evidence-based innovation.



"At ECMC Foundation, we support innovation and are willing to take risks on promising projects that have the potential to be scaled."

A Message from Our President

Dear Friends,

Higher education today is at a turning point. It faces a host of challenges that requires a reexamination of its identity and purpose.

Significant state funding cutbacks since the Great Recession have forced public institutions to raise tuition prices. Colleges are grappling with shifting demographics among students, as fewer students are enrolling directly from high school. And technological advances, such as online classes, are transforming operations.

To survive the changing landscape, higher education institutions will need to be more innovative. But the field is traditionally averse to change, stuck on stale traditions, and subject to extensive regulations and policies from governing bodies, accreditors and the public agencies that fund them. Asking higher education to think differently is no easy call to action.

This scenario, unfortunately, leads us back to the status quo. If higher education needs a major face-lift to survive, but it is resistant to change, what gives?

This is where philanthropy comes in, providing the investments for transformative change with a focus on long-term improvement.

At ECMC Foundation, we support innovation and are willing to take risks on promising projects that have the potential to be scaled. Since establishing our new direction in 2014, we have funded innovative programs across the country that inspire and facilitate improvements on educational outcomes, especially for students who are traditionally underserved.

This report highlights some of the Foundation's partnerships across our three focus areas—Teacher and Leader Development, College Success, and Career Readiness. While the report showcases our funded programs, none of this would be possible without the dedication and talent of the visionaries, advocates and drivers of change in education that we have the honor to work alongside each day. We are grateful for all who have taken on the challenge to light the way in education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter J. Taylor". The signature is stylized and cursive.

*Peter J. Taylor
President and CEO, ECMC Foundation*



A Message from Our Board Chair

Impacting the lives of our country's most vulnerable students has been at the heart of ECMC Foundation's work since its beginning. For more than 10 years, the Foundation provided scholarships to promising low-income students to help further their educational goals.

During those years, we celebrated many individual success stories of students across the country; but over time there was an overwhelming sense among Board members that we wanted, should and could do more. Thus, a little over two years ago, the ECMC Group Board of Directors voted to move forward with a new, ambitious plan to invest strategically in programs, initiatives and interventions that might lead to long-term, systemic change in education. ECMC Group, our parent company, supported us by directing more than \$600,000,000 into the Foundation.

While our core mission in helping students from underserved communities improve their education outcomes and providing a pathway to economic mobility for them has not changed, our ability to fund innovative projects is now much greater.

With ECMC Foundation's outstanding President Peter Taylor and his staff, the Board is working to build our vision and this past year, approved investments of \$29 million in grants to fund programs that involve teacher and education leader development; innovative solutions that help students persist through college; improvements to the quality of career and technical vocational programs and many more. All programs were carefully chosen for their innovative nature, evidence-based approach and the potential to impact a great number of students across the country.

Because we are only two years into our grantmaking under this new direction, the exact impact of our work is still unknown. This report, therefore, focuses on telling the Foundation's story: who we are, what we do and why we do it. We also highlight a number of grantees we partnered with in 2016. Choosing a few to feature was difficult since there are so many exciting developments. These featured stories represent only a snapshot of our growing portfolio.

The Board is proud to see what has been accomplished in such a short time. It has been an incredible honor to take part in this significant effort to help students overcome barriers and further their dreams. I look forward to reporting on our results in the years to come.

Best,

*Roberta Cooper Ramo
Chair of the ECMC Foundation Board*

"All programs were carefully chosen for their innovative nature, evidence-based approach and the potential to impact a great number of students across the country."

Our Work



We support organizations and institutions that provide high-quality programs to students from underserved backgrounds and increase the number of students reaching their educational and career goals.

The United States has long put its faith in education as the "great equalizer," the best way for individuals to change their socioeconomic circumstances and pursue their dreams. However, in many ways, our education system fails to provide pathways for upward economic mobility for underserved students. Students of color, students from low-income families, and first-generation college students continue to face barriers on the way to completing academic degrees and accessing jobs with family-sustaining wages and advancement opportunities. As a result, our economy and society as a whole never realize the full potential of our labor force or benefit from the diverse and valuable contributions of all citizens.

ECMC Foundation seeks to address this challenge by investing in programs in three focus areas:

1. Teacher and Leader Development
2. College Success
3. Career Readiness

By choosing key leverage points in K-12 and higher education, we support organizations and institutions that provide high-quality programs to students from underserved backgrounds and increase the number of students reaching their educational and career goals. Creating evidence that demonstrates proven strategies for success in these areas will guide our Foundation's future investments, as well as inform other grantmakers and organizations seeking to create an education system that is indeed a beacon of opportunity for all.

Our Evolution

ECMC Foundation was created in 2000 as the charitable arm of ECMC Group, a financial services company operating under the umbrella of a 501(c)3 structure. For more than 10 years, the Foundation provided millions of dollars in educational scholarships nationwide.

A Change in Direction

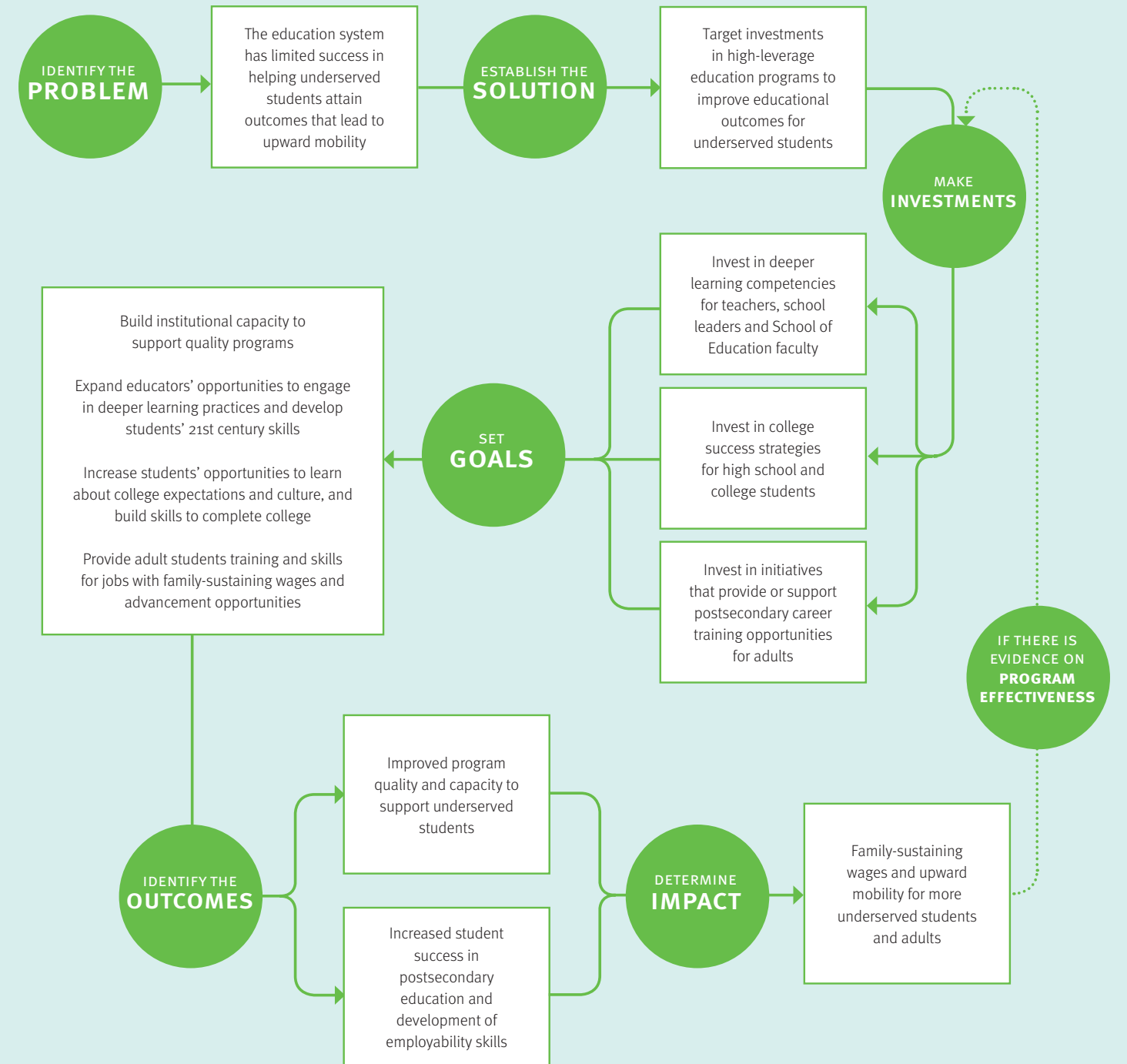
A significant change in direction took place two years ago. The ECMC Group Board of Directors decided to become more strategic in their grantmaking and hired President Peter J. Taylor to lead our organization in a new direction that focuses on long-term, systemic change in education. The change in direction resulted from the belief that such investments would have the potential to create change that is sustainable and impactful for students on a larger scale.

Developing Our Theory of Change

We continue to work on building the Foundation's identity and vision that guide our grantmaking. In 2016, ECMC Foundation collaborated with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop our theory of change and identify the underlying assumptions of our work. From this, we refined our grantmaking strategy and began making targeted investments in our focus areas. As we move into 2017, we anticipate further alignment of our grantmaking to the theory of change and look forward to launching robust evaluations of key investments.






Our Theory of Change

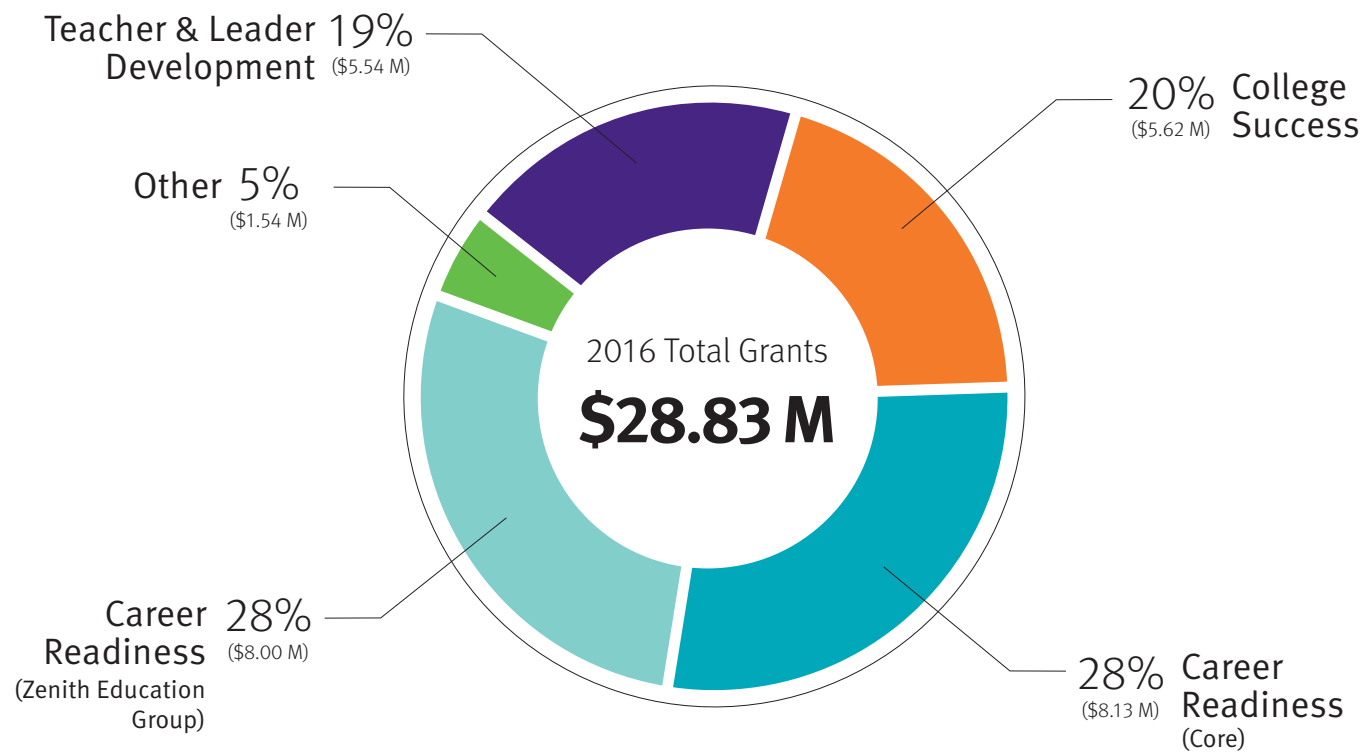
Mission: To inspire and to facilitate improvements that affect educational outcomes—especially among underserved populations—through evidence-based innovation.



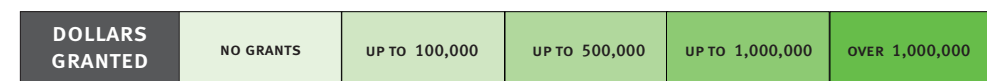
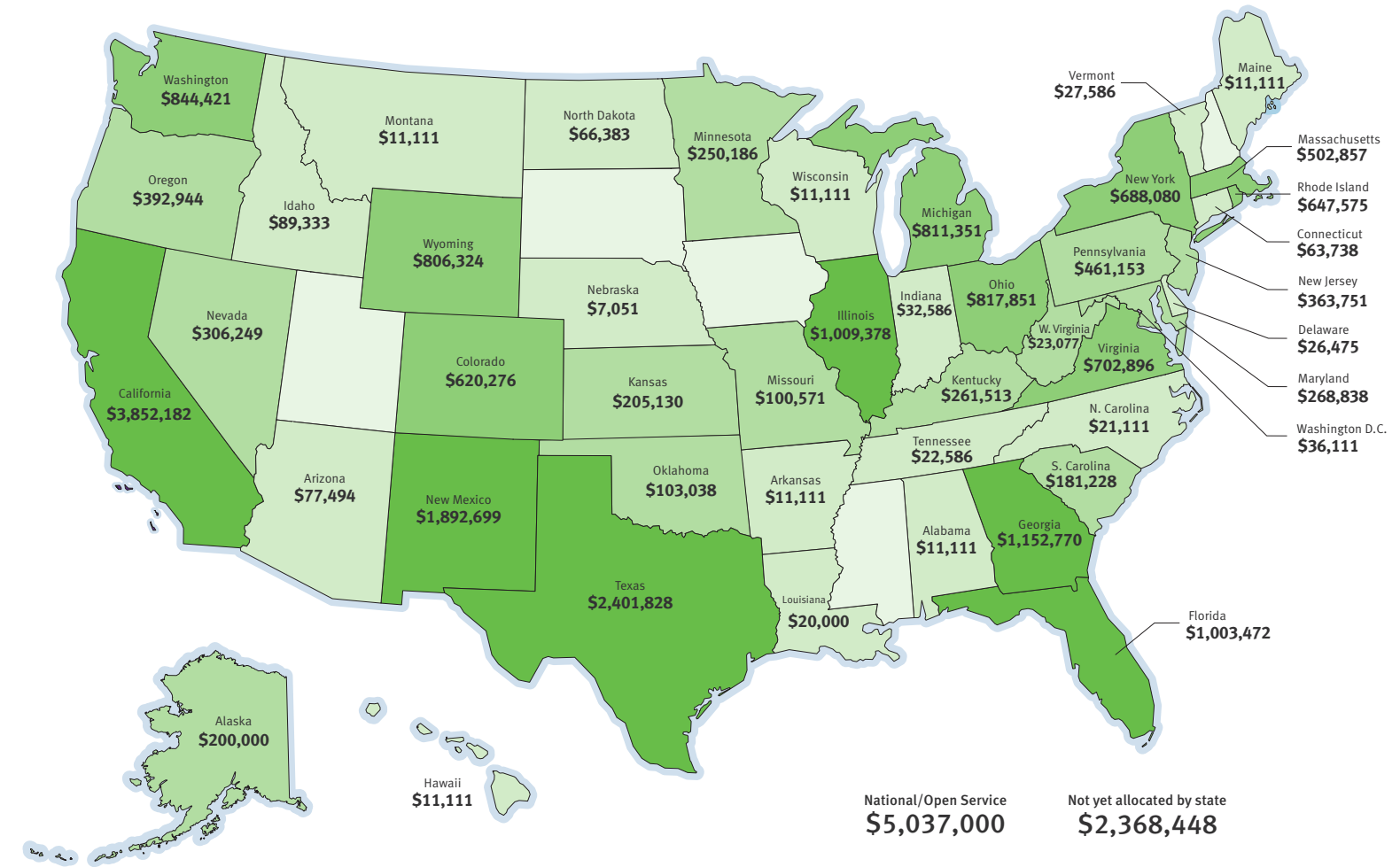
Distribution of Grants

By Focus Area

	Teacher and Leader Development	19% (\$5.54 M)
	College Success	20% (\$5.62 M)
	Career Readiness – Core	28% (\$8.13 M)
	Career Readiness – Zenith Education Group	28% (\$8.00 M)
	Other	5% (\$1.54 M)



By State



Our Focus Areas

Teacher and Leader Development

ECMC Foundation invests in programs that facilitate teacher and leader development focused on deeper learning. Deeper learning practices prepare students for college and career by integrating the mastery of academic content with the development of key competencies, such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and effective communication, in real-world contexts. In schools where deeper learning is the focus, students demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, graduate better prepared for higher education and have the full range of skills desired by today's employers. While these practices are effective for students of all backgrounds, they have been shown particularly effective in bridging the achievement gap across students of varying socioeconomic backgrounds.

Teachers are often unprepared to implement deeper learning practices in their classrooms, in part because they have not personally experienced, been professionally trained in or do not work in an environment that is supportive of deeper learning practices.

To bridge this gap, our Teacher and Leader Development focus area partners with:

- School networks that support, scale and incubate teachers in deeper learning practices.
- Training programs that spread and support deeper learning practices for teachers and school leaders.
- Schools of Education that train faculty to use deeper learning pedagogies in preparing teacher candidates.

We are proud to partner with EL Education, a K-12 education nonprofit that has been implementing the EL Model for more than 20 years. This model consists of 38 core practices—including deeper learning instructional practices—that address every aspect of a school's instructional program, culture and leadership.

Students at EL schools demonstrate improved outcomes in academic achievement and college success. On average, students who attend an EL school for three years gain an additional 10 months of learning growth in math and seven months in reading.ⁱ In schools most closely aligned to the model, 100 percent college acceptance rates are standard.ⁱⁱ

ECMC Foundation's investment supports EL Education's EL2020 Deepening Impact Initiative, a plan to bring deeper learning instructional practices to diverse schools within eight high-need regions across the country. Among those eight, ECMC Foundation's funding will support efforts in three regions: Atlanta, Detroit and a region to be determined in early 2019.

Pictured to left: High school students collaborating at Capital City Public Charter School in Washington, D.C.



College Success

By 2018, 63 percent of U.S. jobs will require some college education, with 33 percent of jobs requiring a bachelor's degree or better, and 30 percent requiring some college or an associate degree.ⁱⁱⁱ This makes college degree attainment more important than ever. However, college achievement is skewed: students from underserved backgrounds face significant barriers enrolling in, attending and graduating from college. As a result, while 70 percent of students from high-income families earn a bachelor's degree by age 25, only 10 percent of students from low-income families manage to do the same.^{iv} Overwhelmingly, most low-income students begin their postsecondary education at community colleges. Yet nationally of all students who begin at a community college, only 14 percent transfer and complete a bachelor's degree within six years.^v

At ECMC Foundation, we aim to increase the number of students from traditionally underserved backgrounds who are admitted to, persist through and graduate from an institution of higher education with a four-year degree.

Our College Success focus area invests 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.



ECMC Foundation invested in the expansion of the innovative software service and smartphone application, GradGuru. The app's interactive platform delivers timely reminders, or "nudges," to community college students' smartphones.

Personalized and targeted, GradGuru navigates students through critical academic and financial aid deadlines, sends tips on how to complete college on-time, and more. The concept behind GradGuru comes from evidence that proactive, not passive, approaches to academic advising are most effective.

GradGuru launched in 2014 as a pilot project across several community colleges and since then has spread its reach to 16 community colleges across the country. In addition to supporting expansion efforts, ECMC Foundation funded GradGuru's third-party evaluation. Our investment is critical to GradGuru measuring its impact and building its internal capacity for growth. Its deliberate and consistent expansion efforts will ensure that more students increasingly benefit from GradGuru's guidance.

Career Readiness

It is expected that there will be 30 million middle-skill jobs by 2020.^{vi} These positions pay at least \$35,000 per year and typically require education beyond a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree.^{vii} The growing number of middle-skill jobs accelerates the need for high-quality career education; but the limited availability and varied quality of accredited career and technical education (CTE) programs can make this pathway more expensive and less practical for many students.

With this in mind, our Career Readiness focus area supports short-term postsecondary opportunities for adult students by making investments that include:

- Targeted organizational improvements and capacity building for institutions or organizations providing CTE.
- Research to improve the field and promote support for career readiness programs.
- The development of scalable postsecondary program models that incorporate academic, technical, and employability skills; support services; and employer involvement.

While not exclusive to these special interest groups, this focus area places an importance on projects that improve educational outcomes for single mothers and currently and formerly incarcerated individuals. The focus area also funds Zenith Education Group (Zenith).

The long-term goal of the Career Readiness focus area is to connect traditionally underserved adult students to quality postsecondary programs, leading to careers that allow for economic mobility and a family-sustaining wage.

Zenith Education Group

A significant portion of our investments within Career Readiness are distributed to Zenith, a nonprofit provider of career and vocational training. Created in 2015, Zenith owns and operates campuses undergoing a series of transformations, including reducing tuition, teaching out ineffective programs and campuses, and investing in quality curriculum.

The ECMC Group Board of Directors gifted an additional \$250 million toward ECMC Foundation to support Zenith's efforts to expand and build high-quality programs that help students succeed by teaching skills that prepare students for success in their careers.



ECMC Foundation is supporting Zenith's adoption of Starfish Student Intervention Systems (Starfish), a user-friendly and accessible dashboard that connects students and Zenith faculty and staff in real time. A one-stop communication tool, students and individuals who support them (e.g., faculty, academic counselors, career services advisors) can send messages, notices and alerts, and follow-up on important matters, such as due dates and assignments. Staff and faculty at Zenith benefit from having access to data and information about students in one location, allowing them to be on the same page; and students benefit from the increased support and the intrusive advising approach that Starfish offers. The goal of Starfish is to improve retention and completion rates among Zenith students.



ECMC Foundation invested in the Anti-Recidivism Coalition's (ARC) pre-apprenticeship pilot program, run jointly with the Los Angeles Reentry Workforce Collaborative.

For formerly incarcerated individuals, having a job is an important factor to successfully re-enter their communities and prevent recidivism.^{viii} Yet, many in this population lack

in-demand skills that employers want and often face bias from employers because of their criminal record.

ARC's program, designed to break these barriers, is a paid 12-week professional training program that places participants into guaranteed building and construction apprenticeships hosted by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (LACFL) upon completion. During the program, participants undergo professional and soft skills training, explore careers through site visits and take courses offered at Los Angeles Trade Technical College. Participants also have access to case management and other reentry support services provided by ARC.

Other ARC partners include: the California Federation of Labor and the Los Angeles/Orange County Building and Construction Trades Council.

***Pictured below:** ARC's first cohort's 20 participants at their graduation on October 21, 2016. Photo credit: Michael Moriatis, ICG International Cinematographers Guild (IASTE Local 600).*



Grant Recipients

Focus Areas Grants



Other Grants

Outside ECMC Foundation's three core focus areas, we also conduct grantmaking through the GO! Program, Special Opportunity grants and Discretionary grants designated by the ECMC Group Board of Directors.

In 2016, we invested \$1.24 million in Special Opportunity grants and \$298,500 in Discretionary grants. Investments for the GO! Program in 2016 totaled \$1,000,000. This amount originated from our 2015 budget for the GO! Program, which totaled \$2,100,000. Because these investments did not originate from our 2016 budget, GO! Program dollars are not reflected in the Distribution of Grants on page 8.

The GO! Program is designed to involve all ECMC Group employees in the mission of ECMC Foundation and how it might best be achieved where they live and work. Employees have the opportunity to allocate ECMC Group revenues back into their local communities to fund education innovation.



Looking Ahead: Evaluating Our Investments



At ECMC Foundation, we believe that monitoring and evaluation are critical components of our investments. If the programs we fund are proven successful, they provide opportunities to scale up in order to reach a larger population of students. If not proven successful, they become lessons learned to inform future investments and offer an opportunity to adjust program components for improvement.

Currently, we are undergoing efforts to develop our evaluation framework and strategy. The consulting firm American Institutes for Research is guiding us through best practices in capturing and understanding the results of our investments. We hope to finalize our foundation-wide evaluation practices and systems in 2017.

The objectives of our evaluation include:

1. To improve our grantmaking competence and decision-making.
2. To help our grantees improve their organizational effectiveness and practice, share effective strategies and, thereby, strengthen their impact.
3. To share our work and be held accountable for our impact.
4. To help the greater education field understand what does and does not work.



Our Team

Board of Directors



John F. DePodesta



Gary M. Cook



Julia Gouw



I. King Jordan



James V. McKeon



Jack O'Connell



Roberta Cooper Ramo
(Chair)



Maurice M. Salter



James E. Murray
(Emeritus)



Robert Stein
(Emeritus)

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Peter J. Taylor
President



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Executive Assistant to the
President



Patrick Bourke
Program Analyst,
Career Readiness



Sarah Kirschenbaum
Program Director,
College Success



Kyle Miller
Senior Program Director,
Teacher Development
& Evaluation



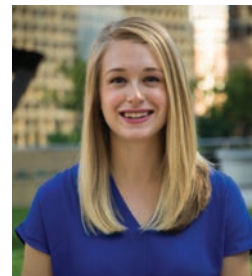
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Maggie Snyder
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Career Readiness



Mai P. Tran
Communications Analyst



Jennifer Zeisler
Program Director,
Career Readiness

Notes

- ⁱ Ira Nichols-Barrer and Joshua Haimson, *Impacts of Five Expeditionary Learning Middle Schools on Academic Achievement*, (Cambridge, MA, Mathematica Policy Research, 2013), available at: <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/impacts-of-five-expeditionary-learning-middle-schools-on-academic-achievement>.
- ⁱⁱ “By the Numbers,” EL Education, <http://eleducation.org/results/by-the-numbers>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Anthony P. Carnvale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*, (Washington, DC, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010), available at: <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/fullreport.pdf>.
- ^{iv} Andrew Soliz, “Increasing Community College Transfer Rates,” *Brown Center Chalkboard* (blog) (Washington, DC, The Brookings Institute, July 15, 2015), available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2015/07/16/increasing-community-college-student-transfer-rates/>.
- ^v Davis Jenkins and John Fink, “Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor’s Degrees,” (Community College Research Center, Columbia University, 2016), available at: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/tracking-transfer-institutional-state-effectiveness.html>.
- ^{vi} Anthony P. Carnival, Tamara Jayasundera, and Andrew R. Hanson, *Career and Technical Education: Five Ways That Pay*, (Washington, DC, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Center on Education and the Workforce, 2012), available at: <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CTE.FiveWays.FullReport.pdf>.
- ^{vii} *Ibid.*
- ^{viii} Martha Plotkin, Phoebe Potter, and Henry Rosen, *Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness*, (New York, New York, Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2013), available at: https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Final.Reentry-and-Employment.pp_.pdf.

