Reflecting on Six Years of Grantmaking to Support Community Colleges

As of spring 2021, community colleges enrolled more than 4.5 million students, many of whom are students of color and from underserved backgrounds. For too many of these students and their families, economic mobility has been out of reach. Given that community colleges serve larger proportions of low-income and historically minoritized students, these institutions have been a focus for ECMC Foundation. An internal evaluation conducted in early 2021 explored the Foundation’s community college grant making. The following overview contains several highlights from the evaluation.

ECMC Foundation has made 152 grants focused on community colleges totaling $63,555,733. This represents over half (57%) of our core grants awarded between May 2015 and January 2021 from our College Success and Career Readiness focus areas.

**Trends Over Time**

The percentage of grants that support community colleges has grown over time. In 2015, 23% of core grantmaking dollars went to community colleges. This has grown steadily to 65% in 2020.

**Fueling Innovation**

Fifty-seven percent of grant funding that supported community colleges went towards piloting new programs.

**Nationwide Reach**

Over $20 million supported national projects. The rest of the funding went to projects in 46 states and the District of Columbia.
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Critical Focus Areas
The funded projects have addressed a variety of issues in post-secondary education.

- Affordability
- Apprenticeships
- Basic Needs
- Competency-Based Education
- Co-requisite Education
- Cross Sector Collaboration
- Dual Enrollment
- Mentoring and Coaching
- Transfer

Impact
Data from 52 community college grants found that millions of students have been served by institutions supported by the grants.

Grantees leveraged our funding to build partnerships with other funders, resulting in a 1.6 fold increase in funding.

$24,588,556 ➔ $64,950,448

52 closed grants involved partnering with 172 Community Colleges and 9 Systems

During the 2018-19 academic year, these institutions enrolled 3,147,811 students

63% are students of color

56% are women
Snapsots

Given the large number and diversity of grants included in the evaluation, this section provides a closer look at some of the grants focused on co-requisite education, transfer and cross-sector collaboration.

CO-REQUISITE EDUCATION
10 GRANTS TOTALING $4,125,000

Students placed in developmental courses are less likely to graduate. These grants supported reform efforts re-examining how students are assessed and placed into developmental courses as well as replacing traditional developmental courses with co-requisites where underprepared students are placed directly into college-level courses with additional supports. The three grants described below focused on co-requisite education.

Jobs for the Future, Accelerating CTE
72% of participating students earned one credential, a 3% increase from the baseline period, and 14% of students in accelerated CTE earned two or more credentials, a 12% increase from the baseline.

Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), Co-requisite Education Study
PPIC found that students in co-requisites are about 30% more likely to complete a gateway course in one term than students who start in remedial education are to complete the course in one year.

West Ed, Carnegie Math Pathways
The program has served over 60,000 students with an average success rate of 71%, more than tripling the success rate of students in half the time.

TRANSFER
20 GRANTS TOTALING $9,610,776

80% of entering community college students aim to earn a bachelor’s degree, but only 14% do so within six years.

These grants support students who transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions.

The College Crusade of Rhode Island (CCRI), Postsecondary Success Initiative
The program served 921 students, increasing the percentage of first-year students who are on track to transfer to a four-year college. The vast majority of CCRI participants are Hispanic/Latinx (64%) or Black (18%).

The Campaign for College Opportunity, Student Pathways and Fellowship Program
ECMC Foundation made two grants for the organization to support the implementation of transfer reform efforts in California. In 2019, 23,295 students enrolled at a California State University campus with an associate degree for transfer (ADT) in hand. The ADT is a degree conferred after taking 60 semester/90 quarter units of general education courses and courses in an academic major that guarantees junior standing at a CSU campus. The ADT was developed as a result of the 2010 Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act.

Aspen Institute, Tackling Transfer
This program is a three-year initiative that aims to improve outcomes for baccalaureate-seeking community college students in Minnesota, Texas and Virginia. The work has included support for system and state policy improvements as well as improved institutional partnerships. The team is also elevating the national conversation about transfer.
Moving Forward

There is a big gap between community college students’ educational aspirations and their achievements. To address this gap, ECMC Foundation has directed an increasing portion of our core grants towards community colleges to promote policies and practices that support our mission. As a learning organization, the Foundation continues to measure the impact of our grant making and assess promising innovation in the field to inform our strategy moving forward.

CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATIONS
14 GRANTS TOTALING $5,544,849

These grants include collaborations between employers, postsecondary institutions and community-based organizations aimed at developing education and employment pathways.

Skills for Chicagoland’s Future, Pivot to Success
The program placed 147 young adults into jobs with career pathways during the grant period. Virtually all participants are people of color (81% Black and 15% Latinx) and most are female (69%). During the grant period, Pivot to Success exceeded its initial goal of 4 – 6 employer partners by formalizing agreements with seven employers.

Career Pathways Projects
Three community-based organizations and two community colleges served 718 students with a combination of education and work experiences during their grant period. These grants also supported program and infrastructure development that will continue to serve students beyond the grant term.

- Future Focused Education, X3 GRADS
- Ilisagvik College, Building Maintenance and Weatherization Education
- Mi Casa Resource Center, Financial Services Pathway
- Northern New Mexico College Foundation, Plumbers and Pipefitters Center of Excellence
- Northland Workforce Training Center, Earn While You Learn, Apprenticeship to Degree Program in Mechanical Engineering Technology

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