



Annual Report

2020

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.

OUR VISION

All learners unlock their fullest potential.

Activating a Foundation of Trust

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic swept through campuses around the country, postsecondary institutions had been inching toward addressing several looming challenges—including harnessing technology in learning, addressing unsustainable business models, and ensuring the promise of higher education extended to all students, especially those from underserved backgrounds. Almost overnight, higher education had to tackle all of these challenges at once—and quickly.

Incidents of racial injustice showed in stark terms how racism has permeated every part of our society, especially in our educational systems. On top of all this, the United States also held a presidential election that, in many ways, will determine the course of higher education's next era.

What 2020 taught us is that the most effective emergency preparedness is trust.

Although we at ECMC Foundation also experienced 2020's sudden changes to how we work, learn and connect, one thing remained constant: the relationships that we have built on a foundation of active listening, mutual learning and open dialogue with partners in the field.

In this report, you will see examples of how ECMC Foundation and our partners activated this foundation of trust to quickly mobilize resources and use innovative thinking in response to a crisis.

We will likely look back on 2020 as the end of one era and the beginning of another. In addition to capturing our work and learnings from 2020, this report also outlines the big bets we are making on the future of postsecondary education. We know, especially after this year, it is impossible to predict the future. But, more than ever, we know that the best way forward is together.



Listening for Change

A Message from Peter J. Taylor, President

“Listening” has long been a buzzword in philanthropy. I have thought a lot about what listening means this year amid a pandemic and a national reckoning on racial injustice. To me, true listening means that we will assume a responsibility to act on what we hear.

As a society, we have heard African American parents complain about poorly resourced schools, but we have not listened because doing so means we would have to take on deeply entrenched and politically powerful interests. We have heard African American young adults talk about a lack of job opportunities, but we have not listened because doing so means we would have to hold both educators and employers accountable for systemic barriers. We have heard low-income students express frustration over unfair and opaque transfer pathways from community colleges to four-year institutions, but we have yet to find workable solutions due to governance that makes everyone responsible, but no one accountable.

ECMC Foundation has worked to embed ongoing opportunities for dialogue and reflection with our grantees since its inception. Through periodic reporting, regular site visits and ongoing communication and meetings (now virtual), we work to establish an open dialogue with our grantee partners to better understand their vision for change and what they need to get there. Through our participation in convenings and conferences, conversations with leaders

and open grant submission process, we listen to experts and practitioners in the fields we work in to better understand how our investments can lead to improved outcomes for students.

In 2019, the Center for Effective Philanthropy ranked ECMC Foundation in the top 15% of funders for our understanding of the factors that affect grantees’ work and in the top 5% on the responsiveness of our staff. This investment of time and energy into partnerships over the last six years allowed us to save time in the face of crisis, moving quickly to support our grantee partners.

In this report, you will see how ECMC Foundation activated its culture of listening and fostering open communication channels with grantee partners and other postsecondary education experts into tangible change now, not just down the road. All of these investments were informed by candid, open conversations with many partners and experts, who gave us their time and invaluable insights about what is most needed to meet this moment—we are so grateful.

We also are, yes, still listening. If you have an innovative approach that you think will improve postsecondary outcomes for underserved students, visit www.ecmcfoundation.org to review our guidelines for submitting a letter of intent. If you have any ideas or suggestions, reach out to ecmcfoundation@ecmc.org.



Mobilizing Our Resources for Action

A Message from James McKeon, Board Chair

Each year, I am proud of the work ECMC Foundation staff and Board members undertake to seed and support innovative solutions that help students from underserved backgrounds fulfill their educational dreams. I am especially proud of our steadfast and committed work in the face of uncertainty and unimaginable challenges this year.

Foundations tend to pull back on grantmaking during periods of uncertainty and market volatility, but we took the opposite approach this year. As the pandemic upended the country’s economic and social structures, ECMC Foundation staff and Board moved quickly to mobilize our resources, both financial and social capital, to sustain our current commitments through the crisis and to double-down on solutions that can accelerate change for students.

The Board of Directors for ECMC Foundation committed an additional \$5 million toward

grantmaking in 2020. This has resulted in the largest expenditure in grants and investments in the history of our Foundation. With these additional resources, the Foundation was able to maintain funding for its ongoing priorities, launch new programs in direct response to the pandemic, and commit to bold ideas and initiatives that will help shape the evolution of higher education.

Our greatest assets are our team and the enduring network of partners that jumped into action soon after the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we live, work and learn. I am especially grateful to my fellow Board members for unanimously agreeing to activate more funds and giving Foundation staff more flexibility to make decisions more quickly—sometimes within hours. The incredible work of the Foundation and our partners outlined in this report simply would not have happened without you.

Grants Overview

\$44.8M

Total Grants & Investments in 2020

\$5.3M

More in Grants Than 2019

52%

Increase in Number of Grants Made, Totaling 443 Grants

182

New Organizations Added to Our Portfolio

We Could Not Sit on the Sidelines in 2020

To sustain evidence-based innovation on longstanding inequities in postsecondary education while addressing significant challenges posed by the pandemic, ECMC Foundation:

Increased Support for Long-Term Strategies

ECMC Foundation made nearly \$29 million in grants to 67 organizations in our College Success and Career Readiness grantmaking portfolios and invested more than \$2.6 million in program-related investments and grants to 12 companies with promising solutions that can improve outcomes for students from underserved backgrounds over the long-term.

Invested in Solutions That Provide Immediate Relief to Students

- \$1.75 million for emergency aid to four organizations that directly distributed the funds to nearly 3,000 students and provided resources to more than 100,000 students.
- Nearly \$5 million to City Year AmeriCorps to provide skills and work experience to at least 230 additional Corps members, nearly two in three of whom are people of color, in 10 communities around the country.

Introduced New Grantmaking Initiatives to Provide Immediate Relief to Nonprofits

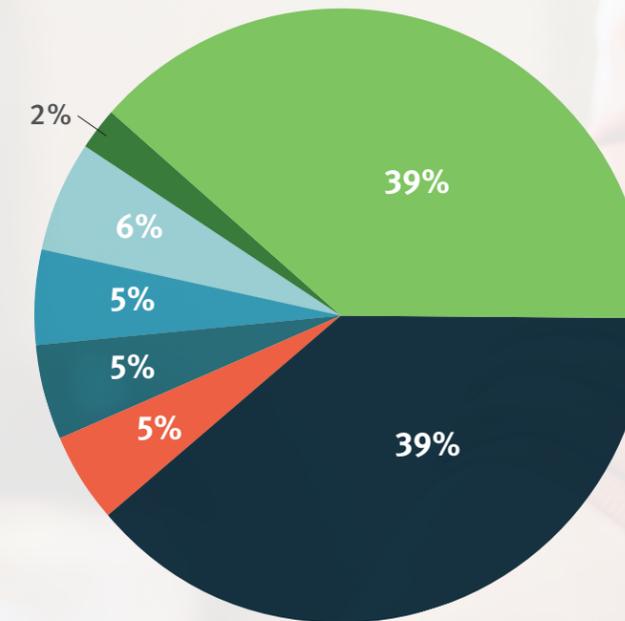
- The Rapid Response Small Grants Program distributed nearly \$600,000 across 65 organizations within weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic closing campuses around the country.
- The new GO! Program for Educational Equity distributed \$500,000 to 37 nonprofit organizations nationwide to advance racial equity in education, based on nominations from employees of the Foundation's parent company, ECMC Group.

Committed \$8.5 Million Over the Next Three Years to Bold Strategic Initiatives

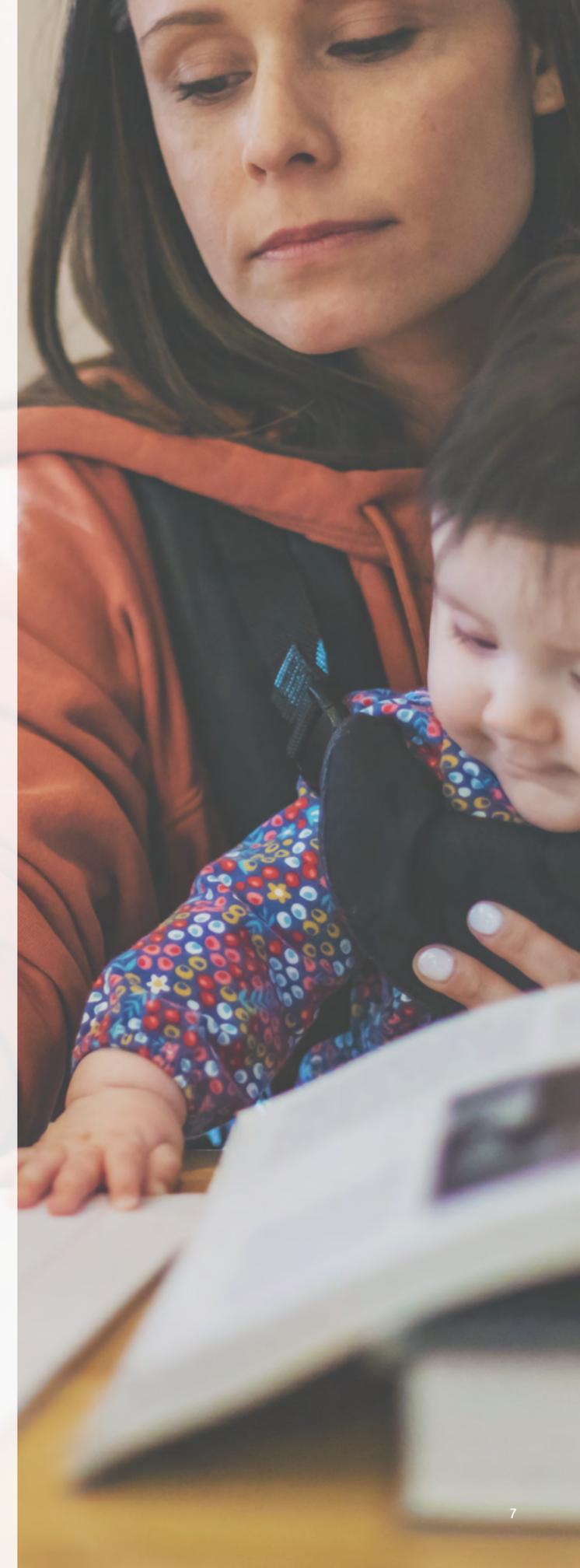
Our “big bets”—designed to transform the postsecondary field: improve online career and technical education (CTE) (p. 17), catalyze new thinking around transfer pathways (p. 23), create the Transformational Partnerships Fund (p. 31) and explore innovative financing models (p. 29).

Breakdown of Core Grants & Investments by Category

ECMC Foundation is proud to share the following highlights of grants and investments made in 2020 related to our mission.



- Evaluation
- Existing Program Refinement or Expansion
- New Program or Model Development
- Ongoing Program Support
- Organizational Capacity Building
- Policy and Advocacy
- Research



COVID-19 Response

Partnering to Get Needed Resources into the Right Hands

As the pandemic closed campuses and shifted how we all work and learn, ECMC Foundation immediately moved to enact more flexible grant monitoring for grantee partners, while staff and partners quickly mobilized.

We distributed \$1.75 million in emergency aid to students facing unplanned financial expenses and emergencies related to sudden lack of housing, food, healthcare, technological access and other essential supports.

Four grantee partners collaborated with 200 diverse two- and four-year institutions to disperse aid to students.

- Believe in Students/Edquity (\$500,000)
- Mission Asset Fund (\$500,000)
- ECMC's Project Success (for minority-serving institutions) (\$500,000)
- University Innovation Alliance (\$250,000)

With this funding as leverage, partners raised \$6.85 million and distributed emergency aid to 10,764 students.

- Average award was \$466 per student.
- Housing and food were the most frequently identified need.
- Majority of aid recipients were students of color and Pell-eligible.

\$1.75M
Distributed in
Emergency
Aid

“Ultimately, each of us, regardless of what role we play, is called to the frontlines in moments of national crisis. We asked ourselves: As funders, how can we rise to this challenge and be the best stewards of our mission?”

Peter Taylor, President, ECMC Foundation



65
Organizations
Received Rapid
Response Small
Grants

“By making this grant available, it offered an immediate solution to the challenges that were thrust upon us. Had we not had these funds, our response would have been delayed, and not as impactful as what this permitted us to achieve.”

Michael Connet, Associate Deputy Executive Director, Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)

We also established the Rapid Response Small Grants Program to distribute nearly \$600,000 across 65 organizations, making a difference for current grantees and new partners.

- 95% strongly agreed that the funds provided resources at a critical time.
- 92% strongly agreed that the funds impacted their capacity to continue services.
- Most frequently identified use of funds:
 - Providing direct assistance to students.
 - Purchasing new or upgrading technology as programs and organizations quickly pivoted to remote environments.

- Meeting expenses associated with canceled events or transitioning events into virtual experiences.
- Grants of up to \$10,000 helped with immediate needs, such as:
 - Northern New Mexico College provided 112 Chromebooks to its disproportionately rural student population.
 - Tennessee Higher Education in Prison Initiative hired a re-entry coordinator to provide more support to those exiting incarceration during the pandemic.

Advancing Racial Equity Now, Not Just Years Down the Road

In 2020, we learned the stories of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, both killed by police, and Ahmaud Arbery, murdered by two white men while out on a run. We also saw COVID-19's spread in America claiming more than 350,000 lives, with a disproportionate impact on people of color.

We are well aware that these stories are connected by a legacy of systemic racism in the United States that crosses centuries, a legacy that still resonates today.

Since its inception six years ago, ECMC Foundation has invested more than \$190 million in programs and institutions that can improve outcomes for underserved students in college and career and technical education programs, allocating the vast majority of those funds to programs and institutions focused on ensuring that equity gaps in postsecondary education are eliminated. Achieving long-term, systemic change for students of color in higher education has been part of the DNA of ECMC Foundation since the beginning and builds on our work to activate a foundation of trust.

But 2020, with its many reminders that lives depend on how fast we can achieve progress, made us reassess the balance in our grantmaking strategy between immediate impact and solutions that achieve lasting change. We asked ourselves, how can our funding make a positive difference in the lives of learners today, as well as prepare the sector of higher education to be more focused on equity in the post-COVID future?

To answer this call, we:

- Committed nearly \$5 million to City Year AmeriCorps to provide skills and work experience to at least 230 additional young people in 10 communities around the country. This opportunity will help Corps members, who have an average age of 22 and are mostly young people of color, gain crucial workforce experience during a time of historic mass unemployment.
- Developed new guidelines and data collection for 2021 and beyond to ensure that our grants and investments prioritize racial and economic equity and support leaders of color.
- Launched a new grantmaking program to engage ECMC Group employees in identifying and distributing funding to organizations working to advance racial equity in education.
- Distributed \$250,000 to relief and repair efforts in Minneapolis, the headquarters of our parent company, ECMC Group, and the site of George Floyd's murder and subsequent protests.
- Committed ourselves to learn together and bring a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) lens to our internal processes, procedures and collaboration.

This is a start. We look forward to continuing to learn from our partners and share ideas on how to achieve change now and in the future.

A yellow City Year jacket is shown in the background, featuring a 'City Year' logo on the sleeve and 'ECMC TEAM' printed on the chest. A large, dark teal circular graphic overlaps the jacket, containing a quote. The graphic is surrounded by stylized leaves in shades of blue, teal, and red.

“Developing the leadership and workforce skills of a substantial number of young adults will have a ripple effect, not only in their lives and the students they serve but throughout their careers and in the communities where they work and live.”

Jim Balfanz, Chief Executive Officer, City Year

FOCUS AREA CAREER READINESS

Committed to improving postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) outcomes for students from underserved backgrounds.

The Career Readiness focus area supports institutions and organizations implementing, intermediaries supporting, and third parties researching, evaluating and disseminating innovative approaches and promising practices to improve postsecondary CTE. Our theory of change is rooted in the belief that learners who complete credit-bearing programs and earn academic credentials will experience improved economic stability and increased social mobility.

To improve outcomes, the Career Readiness team believes postsecondary CTE programs should incorporate learner-centered approaches, offer wraparound supports, integrate industry-informed pathways, facilitate cross-sector collaboration and develop postsecondary leaders.

While not an exclusive focus, the Career Readiness portfolio also supports projects that improve postsecondary educational outcomes for:

- **Single mothers**, who, according to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (Reichlin Cruse, et al., 2019), represent 11% of all undergraduates in the United States but have lower graduation rates than other students.
- **Currently and formerly incarcerated individuals**, who have limited opportunities, resources and support needed to succeed in postsecondary education despite research showing that higher education reduces recidivism.



2020 CAREER READINESS GRANTS

28 Grants

\$14M+ Granted

2020 Career Readiness Grants	
American Indian College Fund	\$500,000
American Institutes for Research	\$53,370
Asia Society	\$890,000
Aspen Institute	\$600,000
Business-Higher Education Forum	\$341,000
Colorado Center on Law and Policy	\$75,000
Credential Engine, Inc.	\$438,883
ECMC Education	\$3,000,000
Family Resource Center	\$149,900
Foundation for California Community Colleges	\$300,000
Future Focused Education	\$400,000
Generation Hope	\$75,000
Jeremiah Program	\$400,000
Jobs for the Future	\$1,500,000
Mi Casa Resource Center	\$150,000
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) Education Foundation	\$150,000
National Skills Coalition	\$500,000
New America	\$150,000
Northland Workforce Training Center	\$402,875
Operation Restoration	\$150,000
The Vera Institute of Justice	\$50,000
Urban Institute	\$2,500,000
Women Employed	\$492,000
Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona	\$750,000
Other Grants	\$43,250

Grantee Spotlights

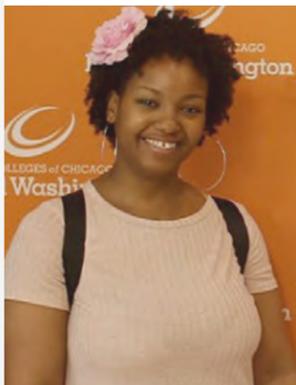
Opening Career Pathways for Young Adults

GRANTEE: SKILLS FOR CHICAGOLAND'S FUTURE

ECMC Foundation granted **\$385,000** to pilot Pivot to Success, a comprehensive career pathways program that combines employment, postsecondary education, mentorship and additional supportive services as needed for adults between the ages of 18 to 29 who are residents of Chicago.

Two years ago, 25-year-old Chicago resident Aijalon Jaddua believed that a satisfying career was out of reach. She was transitioning in and out of jobs with limited upward career trajectories. She wanted to pursue a higher education program, but the cost and time commitment posed a real challenge.

Fortunately, Aijalon discovered Skills for Chicagoland's Future (Skills) and its pilot program Pivot to Success—a two-year career pathways program designed for high school graduates between the ages of 18 and 24 who may have completed some college coursework, but aren't currently employed or enrolled in college full-time.



“I felt so much relief when I found Skills and their program with McDonald's. I was able to get my degree and start a career at the same time. I finally feel like I'm on the right track.”

Aijalon Jaddua, Skills Program Recipient

Pivot to Success, a pilot program funded through a \$385,000 investment from ECMC Foundation, combines employment, postsecondary education, mentorship and additional support services as needed. It gives young adults, particularly those from low-income or underserved backgrounds, opportunities to start stable, long-term jobs while simultaneously growing professionally by earning an academic or industry-recognized credential. To date, Skills has placed 144 participants into jobs through Pivot to Success.

The dual mentorship model of Pivot to Success is integral to the program's success. Participants partner up with one mentor at the workplace to support their transition into the job and a second mentor within the community while adjusting to the weight of job duties, coursework and personal obligations.

After joining Pivot to Success, Aijalon became part of the initial cohort for McDonald's and has recently earned her associate degree from Harold Washington College, partially funded by McDonald's, and is currently on McDonald's management career track.

144
Job Placements While Earning Postsecondary Credential



Helping Community Colleges Connect Technical Education to Employer Needs

GRANTEE: CENTER FOR OCCUPATIONAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

ECMC Foundation granted **\$959,993** to study employers' perspectives on the motivating factors behind their engagement in career-technical programs at community colleges as well as their perceived benefits and return on investment.

Owensboro, KY, currently faces a local labor shortage in automotive technology, including mechanics. Meanwhile, Salisbury, NC, is trying to meet the growing demand for information technology workers. The economic needs of each community are different, but the approach taken by the community college in each area is similar: engaging area employers to ensure each college's programs provide the skills needed for in-demand local jobs.

Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD) received support from ECMC Foundation to help community colleges connect the dots between their programs and employer needs. CORD developed a set of toolkits on employer engagement, created a Business Industry Leadership Team (BILT) and worked with 15 community colleges across Kentucky, North Carolina and California to

implement more industry-informed practices.

With CORD's support, Owensboro Community and Technical College in Kentucky engaged employers in the development of an Auto Fast-Track program based on a collaborative earn-and-learn model. The courses give students the skills they need for an entry-level position in the automotive repair field. Students earn wages three or four days a week and attend college courses two days per week.

A few states away, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College in Salisbury, NC, established a BILT for IT programming, attracting six area companies to actively participate and opened a new Advanced Technology Center cybersecurity laboratory in 2019.

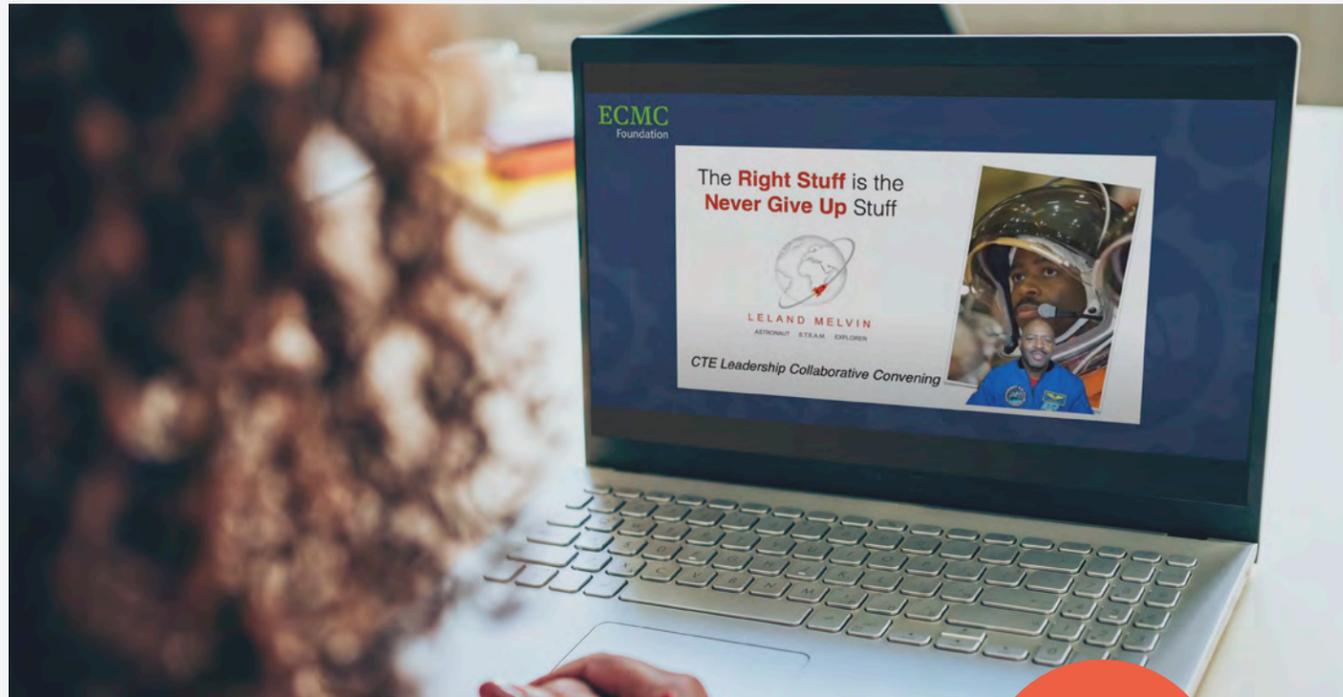
While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted teaching and learning at CORD cohort institutions, the colleges have leaned on each other to develop curated lists of discipline-specific online teaching resources and shared documentation of enhanced lab safety protocols to mitigate the challenges of delivering hands-on instruction during the pandemic. The strong relationships developed between the colleges and local employers also allowed CORD to identify and design stackable credentials that will be crucial to meeting the new workforce demands of a post-COVID economy.

15
Community Colleges Supported



Photos courtesy of CORD

Highlight on the CTE Leadership Collaborative (LC)



CTE Leadership Collaborative (LC) brings together diverse perspectives and equips CTE leaders with the tools, resources and skills needed to advance postsecondary CTE.

LC grantees provide professional development opportunities and foster collaboration among leaders—known as ECMC Foundation Fellows—from a range of disciplines.

Prior to 2020, through the LC, we have funded four programs to support Fellows at North Carolina State University (researchers), the Association for Career and Technical Education (practitioners), Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Program (journalists) and the Strategic Data Project at Harvard University (data professionals).

In 2020, ECMC Foundation announced its fifth fellowship program at Jobs for the Future (business and industry) and celebrated its 100th Fellow as part of the LC. The LC hosted its second annual CTE Leadership Collaborative Convening in December 2020, which virtually brought together more than 100 Fellows and grantee staff from across the first four programs to address some of the most pressing issues facing postsecondary CTE.

100th
Fellow
Celebrated

2nd
Leadership
Collaborative
Hosted

5th
Fellowship
Program at Jobs
for the Future

CAREER READINESS

BIG BET

\$2.5M

Improving Online CTE: Making the Future of CTE Work for Students

Community and technical colleges have mostly moved online amid the pandemic, raising concerns due to the historically low success rates for students enrolled in online-only education programs. These achievement gaps are even greater for the 69% of undergraduate students—41% of which identify as African American or Latinx—currently enrolled in CTE programs at community or technical colleges. (Inside Higher Ed, 2018; National Center for Education Statistics).

The pandemic coupled with our country's long-overdue reckoning on racial inequality has underscored the urgency for ensuring the implementation and expansion of online postsecondary CTE is done with equity in mind.

To build upon previous investments and ensure online CTE programs incorporate learner-centered approaches, offer wraparound supports and integrate industry-informed pathways, ECMC Foundation has made a significant investment of \$2.5 million to improve student outcomes

and close equity gaps in online CTE.

Through an open, competitive request for proposal process, the Career Readiness team selected the Urban Institute to lead a “CoLab” coalition, a co-learning and co-creating laboratory, that will convene and support 15 community and technical colleges as part of a College Community of Practice and develop a toolbox of evidence-informed resources to reduce equity gaps in online for-credit postsecondary CTE. Urban’s CoLab will also be led by the National Council for Workforce Education and World Education, Inc., with supporting partners at the Instructional Technology Council, the National Coalition of Advanced Technology Centers and the Office of Community College Research and Leadership.

The goal of this effort is to work toward reducing completion gaps in online postsecondary CTE programs, especially for African American and Latinx students, and seed the innovative change that CTE needs to meet this moment and thrive in the future.

“We feel a sense of urgency to focus on near-term impact, while also committing to efforts that can lead to long-term equity reforms.”

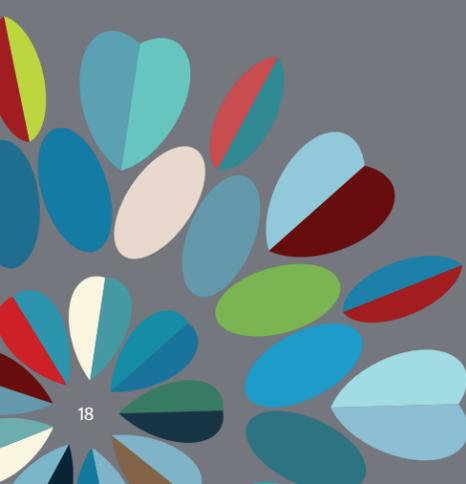
Jennifer Zeisler, Senior Program Director, Career Readiness

Aiming to increase the number of students from historically and presently underserved backgrounds who persist through and graduate from an institution of higher education with a bachelor’s degree.

A 2016 Georgetown University study (Carnevale, et al.) estimated that 99% of jobs created in the last economic recovery went to workers with some education beyond high school. But for students who have been systemically locked out of higher education—including students of color, first-generation students and low-income students—there are significant barriers to enrolling in, attending and graduating from college.

The College Success focus area invests in postsecondary programs and initiatives that:

- Improve and scale systemic reforms and supports to increase student success at postsecondary institutions.
- Increase currently enrolled students' persistence toward a degree.
- Support on-time transfer from two-year to four-year institutions.
- Enhance students' pathways to graduation with career-ready skills.
- Elevate new research findings and publications that promote student success outcomes.



2020 COLLEGE SUCCESS GRANTS

41 Grants

\$14.8M
Granted

2020 College Success Grants			
American Association of Community Colleges	\$750,000	National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)	\$115,000
APIA Scholars	\$25,000	National League of Cities Institute	\$700,000
California State University, East Bay Foundation, Inc.	\$500,000	National Student Clearinghouse Research Center	\$164,566
CCF Community Initiatives Fund	\$50,000	Nevada System of Higher Education	\$750,000
College Access Information Continuum (CAIC), a Project of Community Partners	\$300,000	Open Syllabus	\$400,000
College Possible	\$700,000	Partners for College Affordability & Public Trust	\$150,000
College Promise	\$75,000	PeerForward	\$450,000
Education Commission of the States	\$239,250	RAND Corporation	\$50,000
ECMC Group (two grants)	\$500,000	Rise Education Fund	\$95,000
iMentor	\$750,000	SAAB National Headquarters	\$100,000
Immigrants Rising	\$75,000	State Higher Education Executive Officers Association	\$1,499,960
InsideTrack, Inc.	\$250,000	The Common App, Inc.	\$500,000
Institute for Higher Education Policy	\$1,500,000	The Steve Fund	\$350,000
John Jay College Foundation	\$635,500	The University Innovation Alliance (two grants)	\$1,050,000
John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education	\$75,000	Third Sector Capital Partners, Inc.	\$500,000
MDRC	\$220,000	Thurgood Marshall College Fund	\$270,000
National Academy of Sciences	\$149,999	WestEd	\$300,000
		Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education	\$500,000
		Other Grants	\$58,415

Grantee Spotlights

Creating Roadmaps for Equity at Higher Ed Institutions Across the Country

GRANTEE: PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION (PCC)

ECMC Foundation granted **\$506,600** to initiate the implementation phase of the Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) initiative, PCC's signature program to increase completion rates across 28 committed colleges and universities.

GRANTEE: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION

ECMC Foundation granted **\$150,000** to provide 28 California Community Colleges with the technical assistance to develop and implement student equity plans that align with goals set forth by the California Community Colleges Office of the Chancellor.

Colleges are beginning to recognize and work toward closing racial and socioeconomic equity gaps, but transforming a complex institution can be an overwhelming undertaking. ECMC Foundation's investments in two statewide efforts in Illinois and California are providing institutions with the roadmaps they need to better serve students.

Partnership for College Completion's (PCC) Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) initiative is comprised of 28 institutions, with 11 four-year universities, including DePaul University and Northern Illinois University, and 17 community colleges, including all seven City Colleges of Chicago. Collectively, the cohort serves 40% of all undergraduate



Photo courtesy of PCC

enrollment in the state, including nearly 42% of all enrolled African American undergraduates and nearly 68% of all Latinx undergraduates.

Guided by direct support from PCC, institution leaders created a campus-level equity plan—a customized roadmap with targets for improved student success, particularly for low-income and first-generation college students. The plans, fine-tuned in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and released in advance of the fall 2020 semester, include steps to expand students' access to supports, such as food pantries, mental health counseling and peer coaching.

"If anything during this time, colleges and universities have realized that their equity work is more important than ever," said Lisa Castillo Richmond, managing director, PCC.

In California, infusing racial equity into higher education was the goal of the University of Southern California (USC) professor Estela Bensimon when she founded the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at USC's Rossier School of Education more than 20 years ago.

Over the last year, CUE has helped the 28 campuses of the California Community College system develop and implement their student equity plans that align with goals set forth by the system's chancellor.

Although Dr. Bensimon retired in 2020, the work is especially critical now.

"I look forward to the day when higher education leaders, faculty, staff and trustees learn to view racial inequity in educational outcomes as a warning of institutional dysfunction in urgent need of remediation," she said.

Lisa in Illinois is hopeful. "As challenging as this year will be, we do see innovation and creativity in student supports emerging in many places that would generally have taken years to develop and implement."

56
Campuses Across
Illinois & California
Committing to
Equity



Emergency Coaching Helps Students Weather Uncertainty

GRANTEE: RISE EDUCATION FUND

ECMC Foundation granted **\$95,000** to hire and train Rise student advocates to serve as case managers to students who need immediate support navigating financial aid and public benefit resources either through their campus or in their state.

GRANTEE: INSIDETRACK

ECMC Foundation granted **\$250,000** to launch InsideTrack's emergency coaching services to help students navigate challenges (job loss, housing insecurity) due to the impact of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic made existing challenges for students even more apparent, especially for students from underserved backgrounds. Research conducted by Ithaka S+R, a nonprofit research organization and ECMC Foundation grantee, found that students who expressed the greatest concerns for their basic needs were less likely to know where to go to find emergency aid resources.

Enter emergency coaching. Emergency coaching connects a student to a live case manager who will provide swift, immediate support to navigate a specific situation through texting, calling, email or messaging. Providing emergency

coaching invests people power into students whose college persistence could be easily derailed.

"Awareness of resources is not enough, students need to have a relationship with someone who is walking them through the process," said Max Lubin, founder and CEO of Rise, which launched the Navigator Network to provide one-on-one virtual case management in direct response to COVID-19.

Case managers are students around the country who help peers secure emergency financial aid, apply for public benefits and find local resources. The Navigator Network receives 1,000 new cases per month, indicating the staggering toll of the pandemic.

InsideTrack took an institution-focused approach, providing a team of emergency coaches and technical assistance to a cohort of campuses. Emergency coaches also work with students to create academic persistence plans, ensuring that students make continued progress toward degree completion even after their emergencies subside.

Kai Drekmeier, founder and chief development officer at InsideTrack, emphasizes that this approach goes beyond emergencies: "This initiative is about rapidly expanding the availability of responsive, holistic student support and building the long-term capacity of institutions to meet the evolving needs of their students."

1,000
Cases per
Month
Received



Photos courtesy of Rise and InsideTrack

Highlight on the Basic Needs Initiative



Even before the pandemic, national survey findings from the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice (Goldrick Rab, et al., 2019) reported that 45% of students said they had been food insecure within the past 30 days and 56% had been housing insecure in the previous year.

As the first national postsecondary education funder to address basic needs among college students with a designated grantee cohort, ECMC Foundation's College Success team supports a wide array of projects that aim to increase students' access to such basic needs as food, housing, childcare, mental health, financial assistance and transportation.

Basic Needs Initiative (BNI) partners, committed to serving the whole student, moved to provide these supports during the COVID-19 pandemic across 70 campus partners, including community college systems in Michigan and Arkansas. BNI partners continue to further the field's research and practice on developing new student success

metrics and basic needs assessments, and providing technical assistance to campus partners to improve state and institutional policy decisions.

Funded programs include:

- Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC)—Basic Needs for Community College Completion
- Auburn University Foundation—Campus Food Insecurity Initiative
- Ithaca S+R—Basic Needs for Community College Completion
- John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)—California Student Homelessness Project
- Michigan Community College Association (MCCA)—Financial Stability for Student Success
- The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA)—Linking Basic Needs Initiatives
- United Way of King County (UWKC)—Bridge to Finish



Catalyzing Transfer Initiative: Fixing the Broken Transfer Pipeline for Students

COLLEGE SUCCESS

BIG BET

\$4.5M

With the COVID-19 pandemic plunging the U.S. into another recession, 36% of the high school graduating class of 2020 reported that they plan to attend community college to save on costs, up from 28% before the pandemic, according to a June 2020 College Savings Foundation survey.

While 80% of the 5.3 million students enrolled in public two-year institutions aim to earn a bachelor's degree, only 29% transfer within six years and even fewer, 17%, complete a bachelor's, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (Shapiro, et al., 2017). This discrepancy between aspirations and outcomes is even wider for students of color, students from low-income backgrounds and first-generation students.

Behind these low completion rates is a broken transfer pipeline where students—and their course credits—fall through the cracks.

Many states lack clear and equitable statewide articulation agreements that offer guidance to public institutions on determining course equivalency for credit transfers between institutions. Without clear articulation agreements, admissions staff and administrators use a significant degree of discretion, creating a patchwork system where students can lose 37% of their credits in public-to-public transfers and a staggering 94% in public-to-private transfers (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2017).

Credit losses hinder students from completing their degree, contribute to greater student debt and saddle federal financial aid programs with greater inefficiency.

In response, the College Success team launched the Catalyzing Transfer Initiative (CTI), which provided \$4.5 million to the American Association of Community Colleges, Education Commission of the States, Institute for Higher Education Policy, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education to support the development and wider adoption of clear and equitable transfer agreements, ensuring less credit loss for students.

CTI aims to increase the number of Black and Latinx community college students transferring to and graduating from four-year programs by targeting states with either high numbers of minority-serving institutions or rapidly growing populations of students of color. With different transfer strategies and a diverse geographic range, CTI will allow the College Success portfolio to better understand which practices and processes are not only successful but also critical to effectively altering the transfer landscape.

Through this coordinated multi-partner approach, CTI is positioned to lead transfer reform work that will directly benefit students of color and students from other marginalized groups while also repairing the talent pipeline to aid a national economic recovery.

“With this investment, our partners will have the opportunity to reshape transfer pathways to be a tool for improving equity, not a barrier.”

Sarah Belnick, Senior Program Director, College Success

FOCUS AREA EDUCATION INNOVATION VENTURES

ECMC Foundation’s program-related investment portfolio makes below-market-rate investments into nonprofit and for-profit ventures that seek to generate both social impact and financial returns.

Complementing ECMC Foundation’s strategic grantmaking, the Education Innovation Ventures (EIV) program provides catalytic, risk capital to early-stage ventures working to increase postsecondary educational outcomes and economic mobility among underserved learners.

In making program-related investments, EIV’s capital generates impact alongside financial returns, which are recycled in perpetuity to fund further impact initiatives and drive changes in economic

mobility for learners and jobseekers. The EIV program invests in early-stage ventures based on a five-factor model that includes the following dimensions: impact alignment, risk and innovation, scalability, leveragability, and diversity.

Since launching in 2018, EIV has invested \$6.2 million across 19 ventures primarily solving for: college persistence and success, alternative postsecondary education financing, career exploration, upskilling and training, and equitable hiring.

2020 EIV PROGRAM

13
Investments & Grants

\$2.6M
Invested & Granted

2020 EIV Investees & Grantees	
Cell-Ed	\$500,000
Edquity	\$201,885
EdSights	\$150,000
EYP Ventures, Inc.	\$100,000
Gladeo, Inc.	\$250,000
LearnLaunch	\$400,000
Mentorworks	\$150,000
Provider Pool	\$100,000
Rivet School (formerly Concourse Education)	\$100,000
Skillist	\$75,000
Upswing	\$500,000
WhereWeGo	\$75,000
OTHER FUNDS (not included in total)	
Golden Path Solutions	\$67,000
TeachersConnect	\$10,000
Venn Foundation	\$25,000
WhereWeGo	\$36,000

Investee Spotlights

Making the “Future of Work” Work for Nurses

INVESTEE: PROVIDER POOL

ECMC Foundation invested **\$100,000** in an equitable healthcare staffing platform that connects nursing professionals with opportunities to obtain meaningful employment and higher wages.

Janna Westbrook began her path to tech entrepreneurship in scrubs.

“I love all things nursing,” she said of her 10-year career as a nurse in St. Louis, MO.

As much as she loved her job, her last few years as a director of nursing across multiple facilities brought long hours and a creeping sense of burnout. She needed more nurses to fill shifts, but staffing firms can be expensive. Not only did she feel stretched thin, so did her nurses.

That’s when Janna developed the idea behind Provider Pool, an online marketplace where healthcare organizations can manage staffing needs and nursing professionals can easily navigate employment opportunities. The platform provides a modern, lower-cost tool for agencies to staff shifts, share reviews, verify credentials and manage

paychecks while creating opportunities for nurses to obtain meaningful employment and higher wages.

“Our platform accommodates the future of work,” Janna said. “The way we find work [and] the way professionals engage with the companies that they work for.”

Provider Pool may be cost-effective for healthcare organizations, but that doesn’t mean its nurses—who are mostly women, particularly Black women—get shortchanged. Most nurses on Provider Pool are paid between \$35-\$37 per hour, significantly higher than Missouri’s state average of \$22 per hour for licensed practical nurses (Salary.com, 2020).

Provider Pool secured an investment from ECMC Foundation at the #InvestInWomen event with Chloe Capital in February 2020, just as COVID-19 began ratcheting up the pressure on an already overworked workforce. At the time, Janna was recruiting nurses to join the platform.

“COVID brought the demand when I had been recruiting supply all along,” she said.

Now, Provider Pool aims to extend its vision of the future of work in nursing to more nurses, helping nurses upskill and obtain greater economic mobility.

Cost-Effective Staffing Without Shortchanging Nurses



“We will be the most trusted, collaborative digital marketplace of healthcare professionals in the country.”

Janna Westbrook, Founder of Provider Pool



Building Solutions Relevant to the Current Learning & Work Environment

Partnering to Grow Great Ed Tech Companies at a Critical Time

INVESTEE: LEARNLAUNCH ACCELERATOR

ECMC Foundation invested **\$400,000** in a leading education technology and workforce startup accelerator focused on developing and seeding impactful ed tech ventures.

“We’ve been talking about ‘the future of education’ for too long and now the future is here,” said Jean Hammond, general partner at LearnLaunch Accelerator, a leading education technology and workforce startup accelerator.

In early 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated a massive shift toward online and digital tools for learning, working and connecting, ECMC Foundation made a \$400,000 investment in LearnLaunch Accelerator Fund. By April, LearnLaunch Accelerator announced the five new ed tech companies participating in its next program: JobSpeaker, Riff Analytics, Immersed Games, Peerceptiv and Solfeg.io. These startups are building solutions particularly relevant to the current learning and work environment: remote team training, peer assessments, digital music education, gamified learning and tools to bridge education, employment and lifelong learning.

LearnLaunch Accelerator runs two residential programs in Boston—Boost, for early-stage ed tech entrepreneurs, and Breakthrough, for companies with a bit more traction who need more access to strategic partners and financing to grow—where select startups receive funding and are invited to join a community of mentors, coaches and advisors committed to helping support their growth.

Each cohort ends with a demo day or investor summit, where LearnLaunch Accelerator startups showcase their products and pitch to a room filled with potential funders and key stakeholders. Two in three (67%) of LearnLaunch Accelerator’s portfolio companies were either founded by a woman or person of color.

In addition to its almost unparalleled access to emerging ed tech companies, LearnLaunch was among the first to discover InScribe, TeachersConnect and Authess, which all eventually became ECMC Foundation portfolio companies. Coming at a critical time for education and ed tech, ECMC Foundation’s investment in the LearnLaunch Accelerator Fund will allow both organizations to work even more closely to grow great ed tech companies to meet the challenges of the future.



Photos courtesy of LearnLaunch Accelerator

Highlight on #InvestinWomen Tour



\$1.25M
Directed to
Women-Led
Ventures



Top Photo: Finalists of the ECMC Foundation and Chloe Capital Pitch Event connect with peer investors through speed-networking sessions in New Orleans, LA.

Middle and Bottom Photos: Finalists participate in virtual #InvestinWomen Tour in May 2020.

Above Photo: Syrita Steib, founder and executive director of Operation Restoration, an ECMC Foundation grantee based in New Orleans, speaks on the importance of supporting women and girls impacted by incarceration to recognize their full potential.

In 2020, Education Innovation Ventures (EIV) and its partner Chloe Capital culminated its national #InvestinWomen tour, which included pop-up accelerator and pitch competition events in New Orleans (February 2020) and virtually (May 2020). In total, ECMC Foundation and Chloe Capital's partnership directed \$1.25 million to women-led ventures in postsecondary education innovation and the future of work.

Innovative Financing Models: Investing in Short-Term Training & Education Programs for America's Unemployed Workforce

Even though there is acknowledgment that reskilling and retraining will be imperative to prepare Americans for the jobs of the future and reinvigorate the American economy following the COVID-19 pandemic, less than half (44%) of Americans say they have access to the education and training programs they need (Strada Education Network Consumer Insights survey, June 2020).

That's why EIV will invest up to \$2.5 million over the next year into short-term training and education programs that use alternative financing models to accelerate the upskilling and retraining needed for America's unemployed workforce to find gainful employment and attain family-sustaining wages.

Programs offering alternative financing structures, such as income share agreements (ISAs) and alternative credit products, remove the onus from the learner to pay upfront for their training, thereby improving access for individuals pursuing

much-needed education. With ISAs, for example, students agree to pay a portion of their future earnings to their training or education provider once they make above an established income threshold and generally continue their payments until they either reach a specified period of time or a specific amount.

Programs that ECMC Foundation will invest in align the interests of educators, learners and employers by working with education and training providers to offer important wraparound supports that help ensure students complete their program and often share in the risk and reward when students are placed in well-paying jobs. Programs supported by EIV will offer an array of student protections, such as early payment, hardship and deferment options, fair pricing, and important student supports, such as career coaching, tutoring, laptops, childcare stipends and more.

"COVID-19 accelerated what had become increasingly clear: we need to rethink postsecondary education financial models. Our goal is to invest in innovative approaches that can guide us into a new era."

Jessica Haselton, Director, Program-Related Investments

Commitment to Evidenced-Based Innovation

Five Lessons for Using Ed Tech to Promote College Success

In addition to reviewing the impact of our short-term grantmaking programs on emergency aid and rapid response small grants launched to address the COVID-19 crisis (p. 8-9), we also took a closer look at our investments in longer-term solutions that explore how digital technology can best engage students.

While this evaluation was completed before COVID-19 swept across campuses around the country, the findings provide useful insight as the postsecondary community leans even more on technological tools to deliver instruction and student services.

Since its inception, ECMC Foundation has provided grants and investments to ed tech programs that use educational technologies to support students toward completing their

postsecondary degrees. We conducted an evaluation of six grants that implemented student-facing ed tech and together served more than 175,000 students. Grantees included nonprofits, a foundation and four-year universities. The projects, which spanned from two to three years, sought to:

- Develop new features of their app for students in community colleges and evaluate the effectiveness of their services.
- Organize a consortium of funders and technology experts to develop and pilot a college advising chatbot.
- Support college access and persistence through nudges delivered via text messages.
- Implement an academic planning tool that integrates with their automated degree audit tool.
- Assess the effectiveness of a time management app paired with and without coaching.
- Provide an interactive digital platform to increase knowledge of and access to on-campus resources with the goal of increase first-year persistence rates.

Here's What We Learned



Human Touch
Technology needs to be paired with human engagement and intervention.

Challenges to Scaling
Institution or region-specific postsecondary information created some challenges for some programs.

Demand for Customization
Students are looking for technological tools that are integrated and personalized to meet their needs.

Data Incomplete
Some programs lacked complete information about who they were serving and their impacts.

Leaps of Faith
There is a willingness to adapt even when outcomes are not clear.

“2020 provided multiple opportunities for us to flex our muscles as a learning organization, offering both planned and emergent opportunities to engage in cycles of listening, reflecting, acting and assessing.”

Lorraine Park, Manager, Learning and Impact



Transforming the Next Era of Higher Ed Through Partnerships

A Message from Lynn Alvarez, Vice President, Programs & Strategy

Higher education institutions face a complex set of demographic, social, financial, technological and political challenges that have intensified over the last decade, which have been magnified and accelerated by COVID-19 and the recession. The standard approach of focusing on revenue generation fails to get to the fundamental need for institutions to transform their education and business models, allowing them to sustainably drive student success and social mobility. One way for institutions to reach greater organizational effectiveness, impact and efficiency without losing sight of student needs is to enter into transformational partnerships with other institutions.

That's why ECMC Foundation is putting more resources behind large-scale collaboration by launching a new **Transformational Partnerships Fund**. The Fund will support public and nonprofit

colleges and universities interested in exploring partnerships and collaborations that fundamentally transform the way they are structured. The range of partnerships that could be funded may include mergers on the one end to administrative shared services and consolidated programs on the other end. Beyond grant dollars, the Fund will be a confidential, neutral place to connect institutions and provide technical assistance.

This Fund will be the first of its kind. While individual mergers and other partnerships have been supported by philanthropy in the past, there has never been a fund dedicated exclusively to promoting best practices and financially supporting higher education institutions as they explore transformational partnerships.

In a difficult year, we saw many examples of how trusted relationships can be activated to meet great challenges, some of which you read about in this report. The Transformational Partnerships Fund builds on this work.

The road forward may not be easy, but, together, we can reach a better destination.

ECMC Foundation Financial Highlights

As of and for the Year Ended December 31 (in Thousands)	2020	2019
Assets	\$823,595	\$718,793
Cash and cash equivalents	\$11,342	\$23,709
Investments	\$806,893	\$691,876
Program-related investments and direct investments	\$5,152	\$2,850
Other	\$208	\$358
Liabilities and Net Assets	\$823,595	\$718,793
Current liabilities	\$673	\$1,066
Grants payable within 12 months	\$19,439	\$18,887
Grants payable beyond 12 months	\$6,126	\$6,566
Non-current liabilities	\$59	—
Net assets without donor restrictions	\$797,298	\$692,274
Revenues	\$152,313	\$36,962
Gain from investment pool earnings, net	\$152,826	\$36,745
Other	(\$513)	\$217
Expenses	\$47,289	\$41,367
Grants	\$42,254	\$37,053
Administrative	\$3,973	\$3,060
DCAs and professional services	\$902	\$1,180
Other	\$160	\$74
Change in Net Assets	\$105,024	(\$4,405)

Unaudited and internally prepared financial statements.

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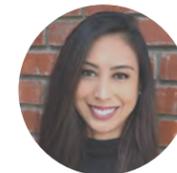
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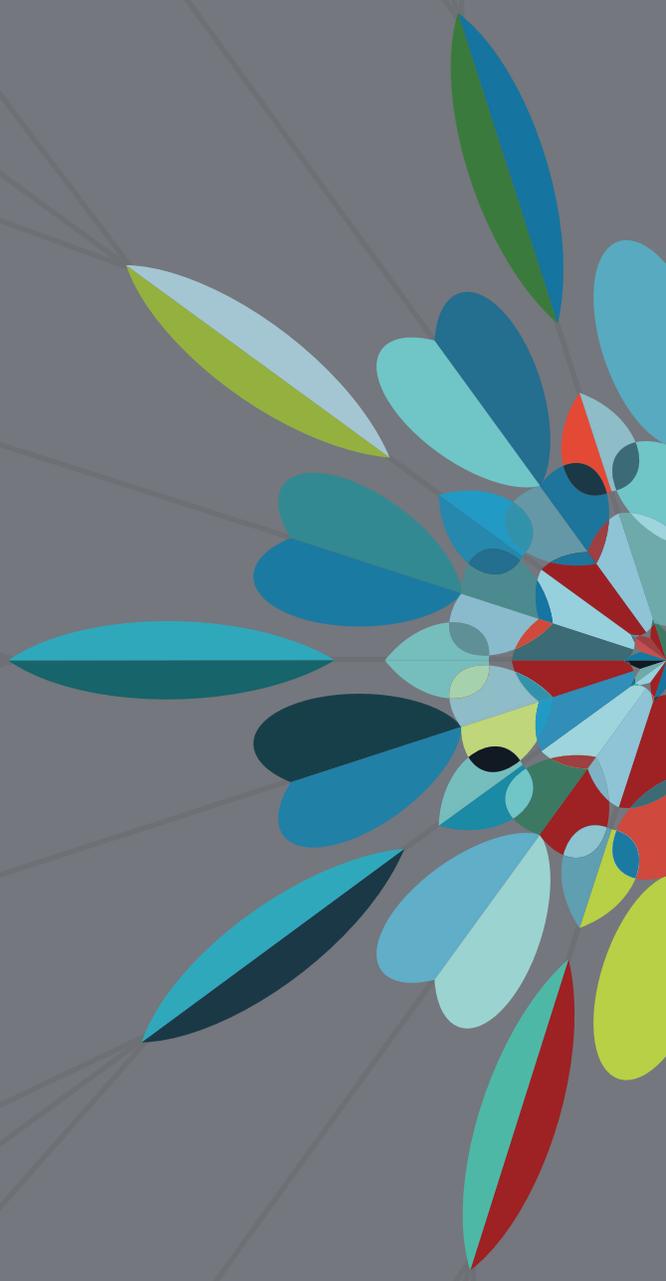
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