

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

## Education Program



**We focus on increasing postsecondary attainment, while eliminating gaps for low-income students and students of color in the United States and South Africa.**

When it comes to creating economic mobility, getting a quality postsecondary education is the closest thing to a silver bullet. People who obtain a bachelor's degree earn on average \$1 million more over their lifetimes than a high school graduate. But while more people are entering college, and graduation rates have improved in recent years, entrenched racial, ethnic, and socio-economic equity gaps remain among who graduates. The rate of change is also not fast enough to meet future U.S. workforce needs; studies show nine out of 10 newly created jobs require some sort of postsecondary education. With millions of adults entering college but dropping out before graduating, the "some college no degree" dilemma exacerbates inequality, leaving people with lost time, high rates of debt and no credential to show for it. The economic well-being of cities, and the people who live in them, is therefore directly connected to educational attainment.

We fund organizations and networks of institutions that prioritize improving the education outcomes and experience of low-income and under-represented students. We lead with equity, working to eliminate gaps in graduation rates that persist for African Americans, Latinos, Asian-Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, veterans, and immigrant students, including those without legal documentation. We work to help increase the nation's postsecondary attainment rate, advance mobility, eliminate equity gaps and strengthen urban communities.

**We invest through these focus areas:**

### **Aligning and Strengthening Urban Higher Education Ecosystems**

Low-income students often go to college in urban areas and can be stymied by off-campus barriers to success. This focus area works to eliminate those barriers. The urban higher education ecosystem, or UHEE, consists of the many interconnected sectors and systems that together impact student outcomes. These sectors and systems include: higher education, K-12 schools, business and employment, government agencies and departments, nonprofit social service providers, housing, food, child care, transit, health care and youth development, among others.

We embrace a holistic, place-based approach to help strengthen these ecosystems by encouraging cross-sector partnerships. We believe when these educational institutions and urban systems are coordinated, maximized and working together to put students' needs first, more students persist and succeed in college.

### **Institutional Capacity Building for Student Success**

While most colleges and universities enroll some students from low-income families and those from under-represented racial and ethnic backgrounds, certain colleges do so with an explicit and scaled commitment. Community colleges, minority-serving institutions, and public institutions, as well as Title III

and V schools, make it their primary mission to support these students and address the special challenges they face. We support efforts to strengthen these institutions to expand their reach, impact, and ability to help students succeed.

### Urban Pathways to College

More students are attending college, but the pipeline from low-income communities continues to need bolstering with high-quality college access supports. By improving college access for more students, our primary goal is to increase the number of under-represented students who are better able to get to campus and eventually graduate with a post-secondary degree or certificate. We look for opportunities that help low-income students -- both those coming directly from high schools and adult students returning to college -- better navigate the college-entry process. We look to scale evidence-based college access efforts and to diversify business models of those entities that are successfully helping students reach a college campus.

### HOW WE WORK

- We invite proposals that support research, policy advocacy, evaluation, technology, partnerships and direct services that represent one or more of the following:
- Networks of institutions (not individual colleges)
- Potential for broad scalability or replicability
- Potential to lead to systemic changes
- Potential for long-term sustainability
- Opportunities to work in:
- Our Foundation-wide focus cities of Detroit, Memphis or New Orleans;
- Cities within our Education Program focus states of California, Florida, Michigan, and Texas;
- Other large cities or state-wide initiatives; and
- South Africa, the only country where Kresge makes grants outside of the United States
- Technological or practice enhancements that decrease costs for and improve effectiveness of institutions seeking to improve student success

### WE DO NOT FUND

- Scholarships
- Programs at individual college or universities
- Early Childhood or K-12 programs
- Programs that reach a small number of students
- Capital projects
- Organizations with budgets under \$1 million a year
- Projects outside the U.S. or South Africa

The Education Program does not accept unsolicited proposals. We occasionally invite applications for specific

efforts through a request-for-proposal process, sometimes directly and other times in partnership with a grantee. When available, grant opportunities are listed on the Education focus area pages at [kresge.org/programs/education](https://kresge.org/programs/education).

### OUR WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

Access to higher education has improved dramatically since the end of apartheid. Formerly, universities were bastions of segregation focused on the white minority. Today, South Africa's university demographics increasingly look more like the country as a whole, and enrollment has doubled since 1994.

But challenges remain: the legacy of transformative mergers, underprepared students, declining government support, student unrest, and perhaps most significantly, disappointing graduation rates. For the nation, these outcomes pose risks to the vitality of the economy and civil society. For individuals, many still in deep poverty, these outcomes undermine the opportunities that a university degree is meant to provide. Currently, we work in South Africa to combat these challenges through funding the Siyaphumelela Initiative on student success as well as other projects that align with our three strategic focus areas.

For more information on Kresge's work in South Africa, visit [bit.ly/KresgeSouthAfrica](https://bit.ly/KresgeSouthAfrica)

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