



Maintain Momentum Initiative Supports AAC&U, NCAN, Yes We Must

Ascendium has made its second round of grants in the \$10 million Maintain Momentum for Student Success Initiative, with a goal to sustain reform work and prevent equity gaps from widening amid the historic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The [Association of American Colleges & Universities](#), [National College Attainment Network](#) and the [Yes We Must Coalition](#) will share nearly \$1.5 million in funding, adding to the first round of \$3.1 million in funding.

The Maintain Momentum for Student Success Initiative allows networks and membership organizations leading the student success movement to offer discounted dues to their member organizations. It also allows them to adapt their services and offerings to remote and online delivery, even as they continue championing such reforms as data-informed decision-making, guided pathways reform and leadership development. [Read the full news release here.](#)



Education Writers Association, Ed Trust Launch Fellowship Programs

We're pleased to share the following new opportunities with our network, and we hope you'll share with yours. The Education Writers Association (EWA) is looking for its next class of Reporting Fellows. The fellowships provide financial awards to journalists to fuel enterprising news coverage of education. This will be the 11th class of EWA Reporting Fellows and in this round, supported in part by grants from Ascendium and other funders, EWA is inviting proposals on a variety of timely and important topics focused on education after high school. [Find more information and apply here.](#)

The second of two new Fellows opportunities comes from national nonprofit [Ed Trust](#), which works through research, policy analysis and advocacy to close opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students of color and learners from low-income backgrounds. With support from Ascendium, Ed Trust launched a fellowship program and is inviting six formerly incarcerated or justice-impacted individuals to serve as Justice Fellows for its inaugural cohort. Justice Fellows will be writing op-eds, presenting at Ed Trust convenings, reviewing and co-authoring publications, providing interviews, providing technical assistance, and attending monthly professional development meetings ([find detailed information here](#)).



How-to Guide will Benefit Community College Leaders and Stakeholders

Even before COVID-19, community colleges were in the spotlight, with continued, and now even increased, pressure to become engines of local workforce development. However, developing partnerships between community colleges and workforce entities, especially in rural areas, can be challenging, with leaders unsure on how to engage and sustain those partnerships over time. A recently released "how-to" guide has been developed for rural community college leaders to aid in building and refining those workforce partnerships.

Social Finance, a nonprofit dedicated to mobilizing social capital to drive social projects, has released a report titled "[Improving Workforce Outcomes for Rural Community College Students: A How-To-Guide for Rural Community College Workforce Partnerships](#)." Profiling the successes of eight diverse rural community colleges, the report provides best practices rooted in success, considerations for factors facing rural communities and a call to action for increased focus on collaboration. We believe that rural community college leaders will find the key steps and considerations listed in the report helpful in improving existing partnerships or engaging new partners.

This project, funded by a \$180,000 Ascendium grant, aligns with investment priorities in our [Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training](#) focus area to not only better understand rural postsecondary providers and build their capacity to support rural learners, but to also encourage partnerships and collaboration that increase high-quality postsecondary opportunities and pathways to employment for rural learners.

Recent Grants

Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison

Increasing Access to Educational Materials in Prisons: Facilitating the Approvals Process

Exploration

Ithaca Harbors Inc. | \$800,000 | 10/2020 - 09/2023

This grant supports Ithaca Harbors Inc., in developing and making accessible a robust digital educational resource for incarcerated learners, as well as undertaking a major research initiative that will inform institutional change across the postsecondary education in prison field. The goal of the project is to leverage technology to increase learner success, while improving instruction and curricula.

Field Support and Development

Accelerating Recovery through Credentials

Scaling

Education Strategy Group | \$375,000 | 09/2020 - 05/2021

This grant supports Education Strategy Group in developing and deploying a targeted, action-oriented framework for postsecondary institutional leaders and state policymakers to position higher education as a hub for reskilling adults in response to the current economic upheaval. The Accelerating Reskilling through Credentials tools will include rapid response resources and a comprehensive playbook leveraged through a networked approach to dissemination.

Ascendium-Sponsored Practitioner Fellowships

Scaling

Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness | \$24,000 | 07/2020 - 09/2021

This grant supports Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness in connecting educational researchers with philanthropic organizations to advance high-quality education research.

Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training

Rural Perspective and Opinions on Work, Education and Place

Validation

Education Commission of the States | \$371,875 | 09/2020 - 09/2021

This grant supports Education Commission of the States in better understanding rural residents' perceptions of the value of education, barriers to entry or completion, connections to work and general satisfaction with prior education and training experiences, leveraging insights for state policy audiences.

Rural Community College COVID Response and Guided Pathways Planning Grant

Exploration

National Center for Inquiry and Improvement | \$432,500 | 09/2020 - 08/2021

This grant supports the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement in creating a Rural Community College Leader Learning Community to help leaders address the effects of COVID-19. This project will generate a set of "What Comes Next" briefs highlighting how rural institutions can overcome challenges and remain student-centered in the aftermath of COVID-19, and set the foundation for a subsequent creation of a guided pathways cohort model for rural institutions.

On the Go: Find Ascendium Staff in the Field

Ascendium Education Group has cancelled all staff travel plans until further notice due to COVID-19 concerns, but we are supporting and attending virtual events. We hope everyone stays safe and we look forward to participating in live events in the coming months. We will continue to share past virtual event recordings, resource links and future opportunities to connect with Ascendium staff.

🔗 In case you missed it! Three recent virtual forums with our partners at The Chronicle of Higher Education are still available:

- "What it Takes to be a Student-Centered Institution Now" September 10 ([recorded webinar](#))

- "Transfer Students as a Key to Institutional Resilience" September 29 ([recorded webinar](#))

- "Resilient Rural Colleges" October 14 ([recorded webinar](#))

CCA: With Equity & Justice for All Virtual Event

October 26-30, 2020

CAEL: Virtual Conference

November 4-6, 2020

C-BEN: CBExchange Virtual Edition

November 10-13, 2020

🔗 **National Forum to Advance Rural Education**

November 12-13, 2020

🔗 **College Promise Careers Institute**

November 16-18, 2020

Maryann Rainey, moderator: "In-Demand: Insights into the Skills Most Desired by Employers" (November 17)

🔗 = Ascendium is a proud sponsor