



Great Lakes Exploring Higher Education in Prison

New Grant to Assess Impact of Career Prep Program and Role of Advising in Minnesota System

Higher education in prison can offer students credentials that lead to jobs with livable wages after release, but challenging state budgets offer little funding for these programs. Through [research we commissioned from the RAND Corporation](#) in 2016, we learned about opportunities to invest in the field, including a promising program in the Minnesota Correctional Education Center (MCEC).

In January we made a grant of nearly \$2 million to support MCEC as they measure the impacts of expanded course offerings and advising. Funding covers the costs of instructors and equipment that will allow up to 2,100 students access to courses that lead to credentials in heavy equipment and forklift operations and OSHA 10 safety certifications. These credentials were identified as being in high demand for infrastructure projects in Minnesota. One of our long-term interests in this project is to learn more about the benefits of advising for incarcerated students. To that end, this grant also supports the addition of career navigators, who will help students make the most of their course options and prepare them for post-release employment.

To determine whether the coaching provided by career navigators makes a difference when it comes to employment outcomes, we committed an additional \$500,000 to RAND to conduct an evaluation. We hope this work will highlight institutional changes that can help justice-involved students realize their potential through education, and we plan to use that information to inform future investments in the field. [Read more.](#)



Great Lakes Co-Funds FAFSA Completion Challenge

With \$1 million grants from both Great Lakes and The Kresge Foundation, the National College Access Network (NCAN) is issuing another Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Challenge. One hundred cities across the country have been invited to raise FAFSA completion rates among their high school students.

This project builds on the success of The Kresge Foundation's initial FAFSA Completion Challenge, in which 22 cities increased FAFSA completion among the class of 2017 by an average of 10% over the previous year. The new challenge calls on each city's class of 2019 to improve on the class of 2017's rate by at least 5 percentage points.

As many as 30 participating cities will be selected to receive grants of up to \$40,000, and the top-performing city will be awarded a grand prize of \$100,000. NCAN will support participants by providing training in effective practices, marketing and communication resources and data tracking in a custom dashboard.

For more information, visit collegeaccess.org/FAFSACHallenge.



Improving the Reverse Transfer Process to Award More Degrees

Retroactively granting associate degrees to students who've transferred to four-year institutions—a process called reverse transfer—can help them gain valuable credentials they've already earned but haven't been awarded. To facilitate the process, colleges must be able to easily exchange student coursework data. But current data exchange technology is inefficient because colleges use different types of technology to track student information. That's why we've committed \$300,000 to help streamline and scale the National Student Clearinghouse's online Reverse Transfer service. We hope to make it easier for colleges to exchange student data and ultimately offer reverse transfer degrees to more eligible students. [Read more.](#)

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FINISH LINE
GRADUATION BY DESIGN

Can behavioral science improve college graduation rates?

New MDRC Infographic Illustrates The Finish Line Project in Minnesota

Three Minnesota State system colleges have partnered with MDRC researchers to delve into issues preventing students from completing the credits they start. Our \$1 million grant supports [The Finish Line: Graduation By Design](#), a project to identify barriers and develop interventions so students at risk of financial aid probation can stay on the path to graduation. A [new infographic](#) from MDRC illustrates the scope of this two-year project.