



## Grantee and Applicant Survey Provides Blueprint for Continued Improvement

Earlier this year, we asked the [Center for Effective Philanthropy](#) (CEP) to conduct a survey of our grantees and applicants to gauge their perceptions of our philanthropy work. Their anonymous responses were benchmarked against both a diverse dataset of 300 funders and a custom cohort of 12 education-focused funders. CEP presented their report of key findings and recommendations to us in July.

Overall we're very pleased with the results, which show strong improvement in several areas since our [last survey in 2014](#). The feedback we received on the strength of grantees' relationship with Great Lakes was particularly gratifying. On that measure, we rated in the top 20 percent of funders in the entire CEP dataset and near the top of the custom cohort. We've worked hard to be true partners to our grantees rather than just compliance officers, and survey responses confirm that we're making progress on that front.

At the same time, the survey also shines a light on areas in which we can do a lot better. Some of the feedback we received suggests a need to get to know our grantees and their day-to-day challenges better. Our grantmaking team is in the process of developing a detailed plan for continued improvement in response to the survey. As that process unfolds over the coming months, we wanted to share with you [Great Lakes CEO Richard George's preliminary reflections](#) on the candid feedback we received from grantees and applicants.



## Text Steps Project Helping 15 Wisconsin School Districts Combat Summer Melt

Up to 40% of high school graduates from underserved communities who have been accepted to college don't start classes in the fall. The reason? Without the continued support of high school counselors who guided them through the admission and financial aid application processes, many students are unable to complete critical tasks over the summer, like finalizing financial aid packages, registering for orientation and confirming campus housing. This phenomenon is known as "summer melt."

Research shows that a series of text nudges sent by high school counselors over the summer can increase the number of students who clear those final hurdles and enroll in the fall. Our Text Steps project will engage a learning community of 15 Wisconsin public school districts as they launch summer texting programs. Over the next two years, our dedicated program manager will coach the districts through the implementation process and help them advance toward program sustainability. [Learn more](#) about Text Steps and see which Wisconsin school districts are participating.



## Come Hear from Our Grantees at Two GFE Conference Workshops

We're excited to announce that Great Lakes grantees will serve as panelists in two breakout sessions at the 22nd annual Grantmakers for Education (GFE) conference in San Diego next month. Representatives from Great Lakes will moderate both sessions. This year's conference, [The Equity Journey: Investing in the Whole Learner](#), will explore interventions based on behavioral science to better support students on their higher education journey.

Senior Program Manager Sue Cui will facilitate the **Trauma-informed Classroom Practices and Student Supports for Today's Learners** panel on Tuesday, October 16, 2018 from 3:15 to 4:30 p.m. Amy Kerwin, Vice President—Community Investments, will moderate a discussion on **The Role of Behavioral Science in Improving Student Learner Outcomes** on Thursday, October 18, 2018 from 9:00 to 10:15 a.m. We hope those of you attending the conference will join us for these thought-provoking conversations!



## Webinar Addresses Stigma of Student Access to Support Services

As we've learned through our Dash Emergency Grants, food and housing insecurity are surprisingly common on college campuses. But students are often reluctant to seek help due to the stigma associated with accessing available benefits and services. [John Burton Advocates for Youth](#), a San Francisco-based nonprofit that works to improve the quality of life of foster, former foster and homeless youth, is hosting a free webinar on Thursday, September 27 from 2:00 to 3:00 pm PDT exploring ways colleges are overcoming these barriers that prevent students from seeking the help they need. [Check out the webinar](#) to learn more about this important issue.