



Fall 2019 Grantmaking Update

This August, Ascendium's board of directors approved funding for several new grant projects. This round of grants is especially significant because it represents the first big batch since we launched our **refreshed funding strategy** this past spring. The new projects will:

- Support a data fellows pilot program through the **Association of Public and Land-grant Universities** with the goal of improving data literacy among faculty and staff to foster increased use of student data to inform strategic, tactical and operational decisions
- Enable the **Institute for Evidence-Based Change** to increase student retention by cultivating caring campus environments and allow the Community College Research Center to evaluate the initiative's impact on students, faculty and staff
- Provide resources to the **Education Finance Institute** so they can develop an income share agreement (ISA) and enable **MDRC** to assess the operational feasibility of an ISA specifically structured to improve outcomes for students from low-income backgrounds
- Pool funds with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Kresge Foundation to amplify the impact and reach of **Strong Start to Finish** by providing technical assistance to six state systems around emergent needs and advising other state systems eager to replicate their success and implement developmental education reforms at scale
- Operationalize The **Aspen Institute's Workforce Playbook** by engaging community college leaders in a variety of contexts through additional curricular materials and embedding the playbook into the existing guided pathways framework
- Support the development or expansion of high quality prison-based postsecondary education programs to fully support incarcerated learners along a defined educational and reentry pathway, increase student enrollment capacity and improve student success outcomes

"We're excited about each of these new initiatives because they build on work already in progress or increase our knowledge about promising ideas," said Vice President of Education Philanthropy Amy Kerwin. "Most importantly, they all contribute toward helping more learners from low-income backgrounds achieve their academic and career goals."



Celebrating a New Campus in Our Own Community

Madison, Wisconsin, where Ascendium is headquartered, is home to **Madison College**, a two-year institution with a strong track record of preparing area residents for family-supporting careers. But for residents of the city's South Side, geography and scheduling limitations have long presented obstacles to the pursuit of a postsecondary credential.

Two years ago, the college announced plans to address those issues by building a new campus on the South Side. Seizing the opportunity to accelerate the project timeline, **Ascendium committed a total of \$10.2 million** to enable completion of the campus in a single phase rather than the three-phase, multiyear timeframe originally proposed. As the first capital grant we have ever made, this gift represents a departure from our normal philanthropic approach.

Madison College's Goodman South Campus was completed in time to welcome students this fall, and the community celebrated with a grand opening on September 28. We're excited about the opportunities the new campus presents for students in our hometown.

Danielle Vetter to Join Education Grantmaking Team

We're pleased to announce that Danielle Vetter has joined Ascendium's Education Grantmaking team as a senior program officer. Danielle is passionate about using data-centric approaches to strengthen communities, and will spearhead the growth of our Rural Education and Workforce Training focus area.

"Danielle is a great addition to our team," said Director of Education Grantmaking Rebecca Villarreal. "Her firsthand experience creating strategic corporate partnerships and developing employer-driven workforce pipelines in rural communities will help advance our work in that space."



Danielle held positions in diversity and inclusion and managing grantmaking through the Cummins Foundation as a member of the Corporate Responsibility team. Danielle has earlier experience with KaBOOM!, a national community development nonprofit. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Indiana University-Bloomington, and is certified in project management, human centered design and Six Sigma.

On the Go: Find Ascendium Staff in the Field

National Conference on Higher Education in Prison
November 14-17, St. Louis, MO

CAPR 2019 Conference: Reimagining Developmental Education
November 21-22, New York, NY

We're Hiring a Deputy Director

Ascendium is looking for an experienced grantmaker to develop and execute strategies to support specific focus areas and lead our team of program officers as they manage grants. **Read more and apply.**