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Editorial

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Editorial

Dear readers,

The need for postsecondary education or training in order to secure a living wage job has become increasingly clear; indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it painfully so. Those who work in low-wage, low-skill service jobs are especially vulnerable during a crisis. While philanthropy has long supported college scholarships, many education funders have expanded their focus to support a broader range of postsecondary credentialing and to fund the supportive services and outreach needed for those who are seeking a traditional college degree.

Rural communities where it is harder to reach students and families in a cost-effective way require creative strategies to enable access. **Kellogg, Hendrick, Dufour, and Steele** describe Get2College, a model by the Woodward Hines Education Foundation to provide financial aid counseling to Mississippi high school students, focused on increasing the number of students who complete the FAFSA. Get2College's approach to scaling involved a partnership with the state's rurally based community colleges to increase FAFSA completion rates among that population.

The level of attainment of postsecondary credentials is increasingly being considered as part of larger strategies for community well-being. **Eggen, Jennings, O'Keefe, Kelly Pryor, and Clements** share the work of the Humana Foundation. As they shifted the focus of their work to the social determinants of health and promoting health equity, they created a Strategic Community Investment Program, which includes an emphasis on postsecondary attainment and sustaining employment. This article shares key learnings and suggestions for other foundations interested in addressing postsecondary attainment and other social determinants of health to better meet the challenges and opportunities of the communities they serve.

While multi-faceted strategies are needed to address complex issues, such as reforming education policy or practice, coordinating multiple prongs of work is difficult. **McCambly and Anderson** introduce a tool, rooted in organizational research, to understand and predict the circumstances under which different combinations of strategies are likely to lead to lasting change. The intellectual work of integrating multiple strategies is daunting, and tools that support this work are sorely needed.

One part of many education funders' toolkits is advocacy and policy work. **AlQaisi and Warick** describe a recent grantmaking initiative designed to improve education advocacy efforts through financial and capacity-building support. They also detail the key conditions conducive to policy change and the supports needed for different conditions.

Learning and adaptation as policy environments and local conditions change is critical. This journal has previously published several articles related to emergent learning

(e.g., Darling, Gruber, Smith & Stiles, 2016; Chubinski, Adcock & Sprigg, 2019). **Hanauer, Sneed, and DeBaun** reflect on how an emergent learning framework contributed to the continued development of the Get2College Pilot School Program.

Organizational policies are an important and often under-emphasized part of the policy mix. **Strickland and McCallum** share their reflections on the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation's Community Scholarship Program, which shifted from the traditional scholarship programs operated by the foundation to one that provides multi-year scholarships to students who are first generation, from low-income families, and youth of color. This shift in the foundation's approach to managing scholarships is an example of the potential impact of organizational policy.

Working with the right partners is another key aspect of organizational policy. **Pennington** reflects on lessons learned by foundation staff and their rural partners to expand access to postsecondary education.

At this writing, we are looking at a major shift in national education policy with a new administration in Washington arriving in 2021. These articles offer some examples of programs, tools, and local policies to consider as this shift occurs.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Teresa Behrens".

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